Q: This is an oral history interview with Fiona Gunnion by Ellie Jones on June 14th at Newman's Shipyard on Swan Island. Also present is Bea Moyes from Thames Festival Trust. Please could you state your full name?

A: Fiona Frances Gunnion.

Q: Whereabouts were you brought up?

A: I was born in Twickenham and I was brought up in the family home by the river in Teddington and then when I was about four, we moved just a little further down the river to Hampton Wick. And again, I was really lucky to be brought up in a house on the river. So yeah, born and brought up along the river.

Q: What are your early memories of the Thames?

A: I guess my early memories of the Thames are that it was always there. Because it was at the bottom of the garden it was where mum and dad worked so, you know, for us it was just--, it was always there. As kids we were--, we'd either be in dinghies or little boats as we got older, playing on the Thames and, you know, mum and dad worked by the river so--,

Q: What are your parents' names?

A: My mother was called Philomena and my father was called Francis. Well he was christened Francis but everyone always knew him as Frank.
Q: And you said they worked on the river, what exactly did they do for a living?

A: Well my father originally did an apprenticeship as a cooper, a master cooper, building barrels and that was his father’s trade and he went on and became an apprentice. But unfortunately, that business didn’t become viable so he was then looking for something else to do that was able to use his skills with wood so he decided to explore the boat business. And he moved here to 1 Strawberry Vale renting part of it about 60-65 years ago and he did boat repairs, a little bit of boat brokerage and the business expanded. They also got involved with industrial generators and heavy machinery for quite a long time but they always retained the boat aspect of it-- boat business. The island at the time was operated by--, owned and operated by a different business and it wasn’t until the year that I was born that my dad had the opportunity to take over the island. And my mum remembers it very well because she was in the local nursing home having just given birth to me and my dad put the paperwork under her nose and said, “Philomena, what do you think of this?” [laughs]. And so that’s when he took over the island as well which at the time was--, there were moorings but they were pleasure moorings rather than residential moorings which they are now. Obviously, this building wasn’t here but a very similar structure was here, mostly timber though. But it was similar in that it was a two-storey building with workshops below and it was actually--, and I found some details on it when I was digging through the paperwork, it was like a gentlemen’s club and there was a bar, there was a dance floor, there was a band, probably like a tiny version of the Eel Pie Island, but quite beautiful. And then there was a boat shed and obviously the boat business going on around it. And when-- yeah, so that’s, kind of, how my dad’s business evolved and my mum and dad always worked side by side. My dad worked downstairs very much hands on, you know, and my mum was upstairs in the office looking after that side of things and ruffling feathers if my dad upset anybody and just generally-- yeah, they were a really good team actually. Because they, you know, they both had different skills which suited each other well and as my sister and I grew up and we went to school just down the road here at St Catherine’s, you know, being dropped off at school and then finishing school and coming here after school was very much a norm to us, you know, we just waited for mum to finish work. We either played by the river or we went in the park, bought an ice-cream before we went home and I think for my brother it was similar. My brother’s older, he’s our half-brother, so we have the same dad but different mum and so as a young boy he has-- he also has very fond memories of, you know, coming down here and playing in the yard and playing by the river. And for us that was just very normal.

Q: Can you think of any particular memories when you were younger here? Did anything spring out while you were growing up spending time here?
A: No, not necessarily river-related. I mean, I can remember as a young child going up into the office with my mum and really enjoying, you know, sitting at a desk and watching what she was doing and if you'd asked me what I was going to be when I grew up I'd say, "I'm going to be an officer like mummy" [laughs]. Obviously wasn't an army officer, it was just somebody that worked in an office [laughs]. But at home, yeah, I mean the river did play a big part because we just--, you know, we were always messing around on the river, you know, we had dinghies and little boats and stuff, we sailed, belonged to the local sailing club. A lot of our friends lived by the river so--, those are probably my most, you know, closest river memories and the fact that the [school aunt 0:06:48] who was also on the river, which you can see out the window here.

Q: Can you tell me anything about the other boatyards your father was involved in on the Thames?

A: Yeah. He became involved in a large boatyard up in Scotland in Dunoon on the Clyde Estuary which we used to visit quite often in the holidays 'cause there was a little cottage on the boatyard site which we used to go up to and--., so we had quite a few summer holidays up there in Scotland which was lovely, and Dad would regularly drive up there. I mean, he was never a man to be still, he was always busy. He didn't really have a Sunday, he worked quite often seven days a week and so he would think nothing of driving up to Scotland to see how the boatyard was doing up there. He also had, not a boatyard but he had a business down in Ramsgate where he sold Perkins engines so--., Perkins engines for boats, so he was one of the--., he had one of the biggest Perkins dealerships. And he had the boatyard here and then later on, probably in--., gosh I was still at school and I was probably around about 12, he became involved with Toughs Boatyard just--., you may well have already spoken to people from Toughs, John Tough I'm sure--., you've got in touch with him I hope because he would be a wealth of information. So, John and I are similar ages, his father Bob and my dad became business partners in Toughs and that was really exciting 'cause that was a big boatyard. They were building big boats and ships, boats for the Port of London Authority but also beautiful pleasure yachts. In particular, he built a lovely big yacht for Sir Donald Gosling which I think was about 115 foot long and that was really exciting. I can remember that as a child going in there because they actually extended the whole--., they rebuilt the boat shed just to accommodate it 'cause it was such a massive task but also such a wealth of use of craftsmen because there were so many different skills being used on board the boat because it was, you know, Sir Donald lived just down the river. He was actually our neighbour so I grew up with his kids and--., yeah it was fabulous seeing something so impressive being built on our doorstep. And dad was involved in Toughs until it was closed and sold. You're going to ask me when that was and I can't quite remember but hopefully--., picked up the timeline on that one [laughs].
Q: Did you always know you’d go on to run the shipyard after your father--,

A: No, I had no clue whatsoever. When I--, obviously family business it was very much a part of my growing up and, you know, messing around on the river was a very big part of my teens but no, I didn’t anticipate being here. And I actually finished my education, I worked for a computer company in Kingston then I travelled for quite a long time and I lived abroad for quite a long time and it wasn’t until I came back from living abroad in my mid-20s--. And it wasn’t, it was my--. I’d turned 30, I went away in my mid-20s came back in my early 30’s and I went back and did some more studying and I was just really trying to decide what I wanted to do and my dad just said to me, “Would you come down and give me a hand at the boatyard?” And I did and I kind of thought it would be a stopgap while I decided what I wanted to do with the rest of my life and I really enjoyed working alongside my dad actually. He was, you know, by that stage he was still very active, he was still coming to work every day but slowing down a little bit and I think he was grateful to have somebody else here full time and it just--. And I didn’t even, I mean, it wasn’t planned, it was just a natural progression and before I knew it, you know, I’d been here a year and then probably after about five years my dad slowed down, his health failed him a bit so he would spend more time at home and talking to me on the telephone rather than coming to work [laughs]. He gradually just took a backseat but he taught me such a lot and, yeah here I am, I’m still here and that’s 20 years later [laughs]. So, it was very unplanned but I wouldn’t say I regret it at all. Yeah, I think it’s a great thing to be able to get involved in a family business but it’s also, you know, of all the places you could pick to work, there aren’t many nicer. I don’t miss working in a big city in a big corporate environment. To me, this is much more working in the real world and it’s an interesting environment because, you know, we have 40 residential houseboats here so we have a whole community of people who live here, and then we have this big community of people who also work here with an incredibly diverse range of businesses. Some of them are river-related but most of them aren’t. But it’s a great community and everybody’s local and everybody knows each other. You know, I consider myself very lucky. But I would never had said--. if you’d asked me that 20 years ago I’d have probably laughed at you and said, “You must be joking” [laughs].

Q: I’m just going to go back a bit to when you first came back to work at the yard, can you remember what the yard generally was like then when you--,

A: As a child or when I first came to work here?

Q: When you came back after travelling, yeah sorry.
When I came back after travelling it was quite interesting because the business aspect on the island has always been pretty similar. It's always been a working boatyard, the slipway’s played an active part, we’ve always had the moorings but they had gone from being pleasure moorings to becoming residential moorings and they’d also increased in number as we put out pontoons and gangways. So, I think looking back at some of the early photos, you would have seen more going boats on the moorings here and probably only about half of them because we didn’t have the outer pontoon. So that aspect had changed and on the mainland, we had had a big industrial generator business there which we moved up north and so then we started letting out a lot of the buildings. When I first worked here I worked in the big building on the mainland, I didn’t work over here because the island was actually let out so it was being operated as a boatyard but by somebody else. And it wasn’t until later on that the lease on that expired and dad decided to take this part of the business back and run it himself and then we moved over here. But that was very shortly after I started working for him so I was quite closely involved in moving out of that building--; I was very actively involved in this building being built because the old building had become quite run down so we demolished it. We also raised the level on the island quite considerably to avoid risk of flooding. So that was quite exciting actually being involved in all of that because I’d never been involved in construction of any kind, so it was exciting getting all the plans for this drawn up and watching it being built. And then once it was completed we vacated that building and let it and moved over here and probably the emphasis of the business then became on running the moorings, running the boats, the slipway and we started to let out the buildings that we didn’t need ourselves.

Can you say anything about the type of-- well a bit more about the type of vessels that were being worked on at the yard?

Yeah so, we’ve never actually built boats on Swan Island. It’s been very much about repairs and maintenance. So, we can slip boats here, anything from small dinghies up to about 70 foot, so fairly large boats. I mean, the largest boats that we tend to have here on the slipway would be the two boats that run on the river for the fire brigade but also the large pleasure boats. There’s one particular company called Parr’s and we look after all of their pleasure boats so they all have to come out every year for annual maintenance and also for insurance and public liability checks and stuff. So, we slip all of those boats but we also will slip anything from a small cabin cruiser or a larger dinghy, it just really depends but probably the average size of boat that we slip here would be about 10 metres. Most of the boats here that are on the moorings will also get slipped at various times either for maintenance or for a, sort of, three to five year survey to just make sure they’re all sound and river worthy.
Q: Can you tell me how many people worked at the boatyard when you first started? Has it changed since you arrived?

A: Yes, it has changed a lot. When I first came here we had-- I mean, never any more than half a dozen people because often we used contractors, specialist workers like Joe [Eves 0:18:45] does a lot of work for us. Joe actually lives here as well but he’s independent and he works for us on a, you know-- he’ll help quote for repairs and works but he’s not an employee of Newman Shipyards. So, we used to have a couple more people working with us but we just found that actually the boat repairs side of things has lessened over the years so we’ve done a lot less boat repairs. We will do a lot more maintenance where it’s a case of bringing a boat out the water, pressure washing it, perhaps anti-fouling it and putting it back in the water rather than actually major repairs and refurbs and rebuilding on boats. We just don’t do that anymore. The sad part of that is that it’s very skilled to work on a timber boat so for somebody to have the skills to properly plank a boat and repair it, it’s a dying art. You know, Joe who’s very capable of doing that, he’s probably seriously thinking about retiring soon [laughs] and we don’t have those skills here unfortunately.

Q: Do you have any particular memories about some of the people that were working here when you first-- when you came back?

A: I’d love to say I could give you some-- lots of anecdotal stories, I can’t actually think of anything in particular. I mean I would say, all the people that you meet who work on the river are great characters and I’m sure that you’ve met a lot of them. I mean, one in particular who I think is great is Pat Walsh, you know, he’s a real character. Incredibly friendly, just very real people. It’s quite a community that live and work on the river. You’ll find that most people know of each other. Yeah.

Q: Was there quite a social life or is there now as well with everybody, the people who work here? Do they all get along really well?

A: I mean all of the people that work here tend to be very friendly. I don’t know as they particularly socialise together but everybody will always stop and have a chat, have a cup of tea, have a drink at Christmas and then the community of people that live on the houseboats here, it’s a pretty tight-knit community. Everybody knows everybody else, I think just by virtue of the fact that you live on the water so you’re all very close to each other means that you do tend to know your neighbours probably a lot more closely than you would, you know, living on a street somewhere.
Q: What is the relationship between the boatyard and the local residents like?

A: Do you know, it's not that close but not because we don't want to be but I think because we're probably the best kept secret in Twickenham. An awful lot of people don't even realise there's an island here and I think because our entrance from the road is quite small--, I mean a lot of people just mosey in and have a look around but I think because we're-- we've got the park on one side and then Mercury Motors another business right next to us, we don't bother the community or the neighbours so we don't actually have-- I wouldn't say we have a close relationship with them. But that's not a bad thing, it's not because we've kept ourselves separate but I think just purely by location and the fact that a lot of people don't even know we're here [laughs].

Q: How many, roughly, boats are permanently moored here?

A: We've got I think it's 38 residential boats here at the moment and those are a mixture of purpose-built houseboats, some boats that have been converted into houseboats and on the outer pontoon they're all actually going boats but they are boats that people live aboard but they're very much boats that can still go off cruising. But yeah, 38 at the moment. And that really doesn't change very much. We have a set meterage of moorings, so the only time a mooring would ever become available would be if somebody took their boat away. But that happens so rarely because there just aren't many-- you know, there's nowhere you could go unless you've got a going boat and you could go into a marina or you were going to the coast. If you've got a houseboat, there isn't the option to just get it towed somewhere else because there just aren't that many residential moorings.

Q: Did you experience, I don't know-- what was your experience like as a woman, kind of, been? I would say, growing up around the boatyard environment? Do you have any feelings about being a woman managing it now or...?

A: No, I think probably because I've grown up coming here and I've always been-- you know, everyone's always known me or known of me, I've always been 'Frank and Philomena's daughter' and I'd come here from school and so as I grew up, I've known everyone and they've known me and when I came to work here it was-- I just came really to help out, I didn't come with the intention of it becoming a full time role so yeah, I've never had any problems. I mean, very occasionally you'll come across somebody who's a bit snifty about dealing with a woman but I just think 'what's their problem', you know.
Q: How do the tides and being on an island affect the work you do here?

A: They affect our slipping greatly because obviously we can only slip on the top of a tide so all of our slipping work is governed by the tides. So, it's very cyclical so, you know, we couldn't say to someone, "Oh we'll get you out tomorrow and we'll put you back in three days later" because if there isn't water-- you know, if we don't have high water and it's not at the right time of the day then it's not going to happen. In terms of the work we do, it doesn't really affect us because most of the work is land-based and on the island, we're not bothered by the tide. It's just the getting the boats in and out of the water.

Q: And is that-- going back to when you said you raised the level of the island, was that because of the--

A: Yeah that's really climate change and, you know, how the levels of the Thames have gone up. And so, when we raised the level on the island it was because we were at risk of during high tide and extreme weather conditions, of the water coming up over the island. So, my dad took the very wise decision of while he was rebuilding this building to just raise the whole level on the island. We don't flood here but then saying that, as we all know, there have been some extreme weather changes where you've got high tides, winds in the wrong direction and things have happened that nobody's ever expected. So, whilst people say, "Well do you flood here?" and we'll go, "No", you don't know what might happen. But it was a very good move because if we'd stayed-- Michael will know exactly how many inches it was raised up but if we hadn't done that, then we would be in trouble.

Q: Do you have any particularly proud achievement through your career here that you--

A: Hmmm, gosh [laughs]. I think probably the redevelopment of this building I think was a really big achievement. Personally, because I'd never been involved in something as big as this and also because I think it was a very good replication of what was already here and it was very fitting for a river building and it was a nice combination of retaining the boat shed and the boat building aspect of things. The original building all being timber had the balcony and it was just I think, you know, we're all able to look back on that and think "Yeah, actually that was a really good job." It was a nice sense of achievement. Personally, I think-- it's funny boatyards are quite ramshackle, can be a bit untidy looking places, they're not very polished looking but when I look around here and I look at how it used to be, I feel a sense of achievement in that it's-- I think it runs really well, it's much more efficient, it's much more up
to date than it used to be and it serves its purpose well. And we let out a lot of the buildings that we didn’t use to, so although again they’re quite dated, it’s quite nice that they’ve been turned into workspaces for other people, and affordable workspaces as well because when you look around, you know, so many places are being flattened and workspaces that are unaffordable but here we have a lot of small workshops, small workspaces for local businesses, diverse businesses. Yeah and I do, I guess if I sit back and think about it I do feel quite proud that it’s a really nice community here, and the fact that the residents and the business community all work well together, yeah.

Q: Would you recommend working in this industry to the next generation?

A: I would recommend it but do you know, I don’t know how sustainable that is. That’s the sad part about it. You know, my daughter says to me, “Oh mummy maybe I’ll come and work at the boatyard,” and it’s a nice idea for a young child to have but in reality, I don’t know if that will be, you know--, I don’t know how achievable that is.

Q: What do you think the future for the boatyards on the-- , what do you think is the future for the boatyards on the Thames?

A: If you're looking purely at the boatyard aspect of our business so that's slipping, boat repairs, maintenance, take out the moorings, that aspect of the business isn’t very sustainable because it just doesn’t make much money. And it’s strange because if you took your car to the garage and you took it in for repair you would pay basically whatever you had to pay and as we all know, garages will charge upwards of £60 an hour to fix your car. People with boats won’t pay that kind of money and so there’s a ceiling as to what you can charge and there’s a ceiling as to what people will spend and I just don’t think that people either have the money or want to spend the money on boats. I mean, you go into so many marinas and you see all these beautiful boats and they never go anywhere, they just sit there on their moorings and then suddenly something goes wrong and they want it fixed but they don’t want to pay for it. So, it’s very hard for us to sustain that and the reason that we keep the boat building going is because we have the moorings and because we have all the other business income to support it but as a standalone business, it’s not viable. And that’s the sad part about it.

Q: Is there anything else you’d like to talk about that I haven’t asked you?

A: No, I think one of the things that I would love to see-- , I mean the river’s wonderful, the river Thames is just fantastic and it’s so under-utilised and I think that’s the one thing that I would
love to see happen is for Londoners and then the powers that be that have that ability, to make more use of it because, you know, it's a wonderful place to work, it's a wonderful place to live. We should be using it as transport more. We should be offering more spaces for people to moor their houseboats to live, you know, we have this massive housing problem and they talk about “where can we build?” – we've got the river, we could offer people homes on the river. It could be affordable. And also in terms of transport, I know the river's very long and winding so to get from A to B can take a lot longer but it's there, it's this lovely beautiful big open space but most people don't get to enjoy it because they don’t--, you know, unless you live on the river or you work on the river or you have a boat, the only chance you ever get to go on it is to get on a pleasure boat for the day but that's not a big river experience, that's not my memory of swimming across the river, speeding down the river in my little dinghy with an outboard that was far too big for it [laughs]. I even had a friend water-skiing behind it once which I shouldn’t have done but, you know, things like that. And I just think those are what memories are made of, capsizing in dinghies on the river. I’d love my daughter to be able to do that but the only way that I can do that 'cause we don't live on the river although I work on the river, is for her to go to a sailing club somewhere but it's all very contrived, it's not the way that I grew up. But the biggest thing that I would love to see is just for the river to be somewhere for everyone to enjoy and I’d just like to see it used more.

Q: Yeah. I don't know if Bea has any more questions to ask?

Q1: Yeah, do you mind if I ask you a couple?

A: No, go for it.

Q1: I had a question which was going back to your parents--,

A: Oh yeah.

Q1: If you could you tell me a little bit more about them? Especially your mum, I’d like to hear a bit more about her.

A: Oh yeah. Well my dad was already--, he’d kind of already moved from being a cooper and he had moved--, he had taken these premises here and he bought a house just down the road. He’s always wanted to be by the water, everywhere he’s lived since he knew my mum has been on the water. Anyway, I digress. He met my mum in the local bank. She worked at
Barclays and she worked on the counter and my dad was a local businessman and that’s how they met and he asked her out and yeah, they started dating. And when they got together, when they got married, my mum came--, she left the bank and she came and worked here and she ran the office for him and he worked on the floor.

Q1: So, she was really useful with her skills coming from the bank.

A: Completely and my mum was incredibly, you know, she was bright, she was organised but she was also fantastic with people. My dad was a very bright--, he was a real entrepreneur, he would never ask anyone to do anything he wasn’t prepared to do himself and he was never happier than when he had his shirt sleeves rolled up and he was doing manual work. He wasn’t one to sit behind a desk and push a pen around at all. So, they complemented each other really well but my dad was very--, as he would say, “I’m Frank by name, I’m frank by nature” so he did quite often upset people ‘cause he was very blunt and my mum was one of those people that was just lovely. Everyone loved her and she got on well with everybody so if my dad ruffled a few feathers, my mum would come along and smooth them down so they complemented each other really well. And I think, you know, because we ended up going to school just down the road so my mum was able to carry on working, it didn’t interfere with us. When we finished school, she finished work and we went home and yeah, they were a good team. A very good team.

Q1: And you said your dad came from being a cooper--,

A: Yeah.

Q1: Why do you think he came to the boatyards? What do you think drew him to it?

A: I think it was--, you know, having been a master cooper building wooden barrels it was a good transition going to repairing boats and understanding how a boat was constructed. So, I think for him, he was obviously looking for some way of using those skills and going from a barrel to a boat worked, although he never ever stopped learning how to build a barrel and in his workshop at home, he--, I mean [laughs] there’s one over there probably slightly more ornate than I would like but, you know, bless him. There’s a couple under the desk over there. Those are all barrels my dad made and he--, you know, that was a skill that he never lost.
Q1: So, when you started working with him was it--, you said you really enjoyed working with him, what was it like? Did you want to change things at all to what he was doing?

A: No, I didn’t at first. I mean, I guess I was lucky because starting to work with him coincided with working out what to do with this building as it was and then very soon it was demolished and we were commissioning people to come and rebuild it. So, I kind of, went feet first with that. And my dad was never interested in paperwork or the office so for me to take over that side of things and I also started doing the accounts for the company, it was really easy ’cause I could just get on with that and he just wanted to know what the bottom line was, he wasn’t interested in how you got there. So, it was great ’cause he’d be out in the yard, you know, he’d be helping slip a boat or talking to a customer and I’d be running the office side of things so it worked quite well. But I learnt a hell of a lot from him. We fell out every now and again, as all families do [laughs]. I’m not saying it was all perfect but yeah, you know, I always felt I could ask him things and he’d be quite good at asking your opinion. He’d listen to it, he wouldn’t necessarily pay any attention to it at all [laughs].

Q1: And then later when your cousin Michael came to work here?

A: Well Mike came here--, he came here from school, bless him, so he came here as a teenager.

Q1: And he’s worked alongside you ever since?

A: He came before me and so he’s worked with dad since he was a teenager and then when I came to work here--, I mean we’d grown up together, we knew each other. It was really easy to work with him and also because Mike’s not interested in the office side, you know, the paperwork side of things. He’s much more practically minded so again, it’s complemented each other well and it’s really lovely when you work with a family member like that because I have complete trust in him as I hope he does in me, and it’s very much a partnership of equals which I think’s really important. So, yeah.

Q1: I have one more question which is just about--, you were saying about the moorings, people having their boats taken out so they can be repaired etc. Do they do their own work on their boats sometimes?
A: Well that's something we give an option to here. So, you know, if you came to us and you've got a boat you want to bring it out the water, you might ask us to quote to do the work or you might decide that you want to do it yourself and we---, when we bring boats out the water we're quite happy for owners to work on their own boats in the yard. The only time we ask for a--, or we take a commission, would be if you bought an outside contractor in and then you need to pay the yard a commission on that but as an owner you're--, you know, we're happy for you to work on your boat. And that's really--, it works well that way, we don't have a big labour force, we aren't always able to do the work that people need or, you know, quite often people don't want to pay. We'll often quote and they'll go "Oh gosh, that's a bit more expensive than I thought" and you'll go, "Well how much did you pay to service your car last time?" [laughs]. But it's crazy, people with boats just--, either they don't have the money or they don't want to spend the money on them. You know, and when I look back over the last 20 years and I see what we charge our labour out at and what we charge to slip, you know, we really haven't--, we have regular price increases but then they don't really reflect the increased costs and they certainly don't relate to some of the businesses.

Q1: Is that DIY kind of side, has that grown over time then or is it something that's happened all the way through when you've had moorings here?

A: Sorry?

Q1: The, kind of, people working on their own boats, has that always been the case or has that grown?

A: No, I think we've probably encouraged that more because it's just a way of keeping the slipway busy 'cause we can slip boats no problem at all but we can't always--, we don't always have the labour to do the work on them. I mean, for quite a long time we--, once Toughs closed and John took over running the business, he would quote and he would use our boat shed. So, we'd slip the boats, put them in the boat shed and he would do the work on the boat and that was really good because at the time he still had a labour force but he didn't have the yard facilities, whereas we had the yard facilities and not a labour force and it was a very good collaboration. And that went on for quite a number of years but then, you know, as the people that worked with John retired or left, John decided that he was going to, sort of, withdraw from the boat business and we were left with our boat shed which we continue to use but now we actually--, you know, we let out half the boat shed and I would imagine that by the end of the year we'll have probably let out the whole of the boat shed because we just don't have the work, we don't need--, we don't have the boats to put in it.
Q1: Is that primarily for the fire boats that you’re letting it out to?

A: At the moment they’ve got a portion of the boat shed, a section of it’s already been partitioned off and is let out to Seafood & Eat It. But we’re looking at Babcock who look after the fire brigade’s boats actually taking over the whole of the existing boat shed because their work is increasing and they’re looking after a number of smaller boats which they need to be able to get under cover. So that’s great ‘cause then we get to see it still being used as, you know, river related activities albeit not doing it directly ourselves.

Q: Is there anything else that you wanted to say?

A: No, it’s quite fascinating actually that--, I’d love to know how this whole project came into being actually ‘cause it’s such a nice thing to do.

Q1: Yeah, it’s a wonderful--. I mean, it’s been fantastic to collect these stories together.

A: You must have met some real characters [laughs].

Q1: Definitely [laughs].

A: Yeah.

Q1: Shall we end there?

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah well that was lovely, thank you [laughs].

Q1: Thank you so much.

[END OF RECORDING – 0:45:10]