

Q: Please can you tell me your full name?

A: My name's John Watson.

Q: Where were you born?

A: I was born in Nottingham.

Q: And what are your early memories of being on and around boats?

A: Childhood sailing trips, mostly dinghies and lakes and very small stuff. My family was not involved in sailing in particular or boats in particular, we used to go on Broads holidays and canal holidays when we were young so those are my first--, first memories.

Q: Did you spend a lot of time on houseboats then?

A: No, no, I didn't even know houseboats existed until quite recently, so not at all.

Q: Before you went to train as a boat builder what did you do?

A: I was a solicitor back in the day and I went to America with the company I worked for, which was a large engineering company, to Houston. And I spent 20 years in America, ten years with that company and then ten years running my own business which was a retail business in the Texas Hill Country, so that was before I came back to England in the early 2000s, the noughties I suppose, yes, yeah.

Q: What brought you back to England?

A: Erm, change of circumstances, and I came back to look after my mother who was sick and just gradually drifted back in a sense of wanting to be home having been away for so long.

Q: Is home--, was home close to the Thames?

A: No, home was in Derbyshire. But I lived in--, in England I lived in London, I lived in Manchester for a while, I lived in Leicester for a while, so--, but not near the Thames.

Q: So what made you want to train to be a boat builder?

A: It was at that age when you're thinking about retirement and, er, but yet nowhere near ready to do that and I felt I wanted to find an occupation that I could really enjoy that would use my physical skills as well as my brain. And so it seemed like a nice choice to make, having good memories of boats and messing around on the water.

Q: And do you--, you enjoy making things and using your hands [inaudible 00:02:40]--,

A: Yes. Yes, yes, yeah.

Q: Where did you train to build boats?

A: I trained at the boat building academy in Lyme Regis for a year, which was a wonderful experience. It was a full time course and we actually got to build our own boats and drive them away--, sail them away at the end of the course. And, yes, that was very--, a very--, very good experience down there.

Q: Could you describe building a boat from scratch for me?

A: Well, we did--, at the course we spent the first month, I suppose, honing up our carpentry skills and remembering how to sharpen chisels, which is about the most important thing you can do in terms of building a boat. But starting with identifying a plan of a boat that you want to build, you then take that plan and you lay it out and create a full sized design, it's called lofting--, lofting a boat so that all of the components appear in full size and you can measure them up and cut them and start assembling the boat. And basically you assemble a frame--, the boat I built was glued planks around a series of frames set out on a stand and then covered in fibreglass. And once you've got the shell fixed from the outside and then turn the boat over and you're about half way, and you can start finishing out the inside with all of your seats and decks and whatnot. And it was a--, yeah, it was a very interesting experience. And we made our own masts and spars and rudders and keels and the whole nine yards, it was a very busy time, takes a long time.

Q: How long does it take?

A: We were there for, er, a year, and it took the best part of nine months. My boat that I built--, my boat what I built, 12 and a half feet long, it's a little day sailer, so not a very big boat and not a very complicated boat but it still--, it still is a lot of manual effort.

Q: Was there--, are there specific skills that you were taught, a sort of checklist of skills [on the course 00:05:13]?

A: Well, it was woodworking skills, basic carpentry skills, basic maths skills really in terms of being able to layout and drawings and measure off drawings in different dimensions. Identifying different woods and the right wood to use in different situations, all of the different names of the different components, most of which I've forgotten 'cause I'm old like that. And so--, and there's--, but there's a lot of common sense stuff that, you know, a task may look very intimidating but, you know, if you break it down into components then it becomes a series of common sense steps. And a lot of that's to do with confidence rather than having a specific skill, so.

Q: Which part--, which particular process did you enjoy the most?

A: I think I enjoyed the mast making. That's taking a square piece of wood, cutting it in half, turning one half around so you've got opposing forces, gluing it together and then scribing finer and finer angles. And using the old pull saws and whatnot, quite--, I found that very peaceful and therapeutic, so I enjoyed that, yeah.

Q: Can you tell me what a pull saw is, I'm sorry?

A: Well I probably give... it's not--, it's--, I can't remember what it's called, no.

Q: Okay. And at the end did you receive a qualification?

A: I did, it was City & Guilds Level Three Boat Building course, you have the piece of paper but you essentially know nothing, so off you go into the outside world to try and--, that's the point at which you really start to learn, so yeah.

Q: So how did you come to be running a boatyard here?

A: Well, I had gone home to Derbyshire after finishing the course and I was doing boatbuilding and repair on a small scale in a barn in the middle of a farm in the middle of a field, about as far away from water as you could possibly get. And that was--, that was alright, and then I had been contacted by the boatbuilding academy who said they were looking for somebody to

take a lease on this abandoned boatyard in the middle of the Thames. And so I came down and looked at it and it was one of those things that you really could not turn down, and I, you know, it was a massive challenge because there was basically nothing here but a couple of old broken down buildings and a electricity supply. But it was just--, it was just one of those things that I knew if I didn't do it, or try and do it, then I would always say I wonder what would've happened with that boatyard, I wonder what happened with that Lot's Ait place, mmm, I wish I'd done that. So it was just a, you know, in a sense, the right thing to do.

Q: How many years ago was that--, how long have you been here?

A: That was 2011, so six years ago, yeah. And coming down here for the first time it was like coming in--, stepping into--, stepping into the past. There were trees growing up through all of the old buildings and everything was abandoned and there was bits--, bits and pieces falling over, it was just such a magical place but just a total mess, so.

Q: Do you know anything about the history of the island before you arrived?

A: I've been--, I'm interested in history generally and particularly in industrial history and so I have been quite interested in learning about what happened to the island and how it became a boatyard in the first place, and something about the past occupiers and what all they got up to.

Q: Could you tell us something about that?

A: Well yes, okay. The--, I mean the history of Brentford is rather the history of boats and boatbuilding because of the junction of the Grand Union Canal just a few hundred yards up the road here--, up the road here with the Thames. And when the Grand Union--, or the Grand Junction Canal as it then was, was put in boats no longer had to hike up to Oxford in order to get up the Oxford Canal to get to Birmingham, they could go straight across and it was a broad canal. And so it became rather a hub of getting commercial traffic from the Port of London into the heart of the Midlands and so they would offload cargos down in London, drag the barges up the river, take them into the transfer station and load them either onto--, well, in the first place onto the canals but later onto the railways. And it was that barge traffic that enabled this island to thrive because this was a place where they would bring those barges to be repaired and maintained, and that was the work that they did here and also across the--, on the mainland. And it was in the 1920s--, so it's not all that long ago when this island was first occupied by the boat repair business, before that the island had been a willow growing, erm, because the market gardens in Ealing needed baskets to put their fruit and veg in to take them off to Covent Garden and so a lot of the little islands on the river were set to willows. But then in the 1920s the boatyard was started here and they put in the finger docks and the slipway and the building was gradually--, were added over time. And this building we're in right now I think was not built until the 1950s. And they did everything here, there was a wood shop and there was a big metal shop, blacksmith's shop, they would melt tar to make things water tight and they would just--, it was just an all--, all around service, they would--, and they built tugs here, they built various vessels here as well. Until, I suppose after the war it started to tail off because the government at the time were discouraging canal traffic and railway traffic and they were starting to encourage lorry traffic as the motorways began to be built and as the container ports were set up further down the river in Tilbury, the lighter traffic bringing the boats from the Port of London up to Brentford basically scaled away to nothing. So by the end of the 1970s there was no--, there was no activity to speak of here, there was about, er, from a--, I suppose a max of over a hundred people working here it was down to about ten or 11. And the last employees from the Thames and General Lighterage Company left here, I think, in 1980 or 1981 and they just abandoned the island. And after that time it was occupied by a series of rather anarchic, erm, scurrilous individuals living here or mooring their boats in the dock or what have you, and it was a place of--, of some--, some ill repute, I think, for a while, and it may or may not have been justified, until the early 2000s when attempts were made to sort of bring it back into commercial operation. And that finally happened in 2010 to 2011 and the landlords, who also were involved in the Ferry Quays flat development across the street, were invited to do something with the island, either let it go completely back to nature and empty it out and just leave it alone or bring it back to some useful commercial activity, and it's the later that they elected to do. As a result of which the bridge got built and the buildings that were too far gone got demolished and they were able to

re-establish use as a, you know, as a boatyard. And then I came along and said alright, I'll have a go at that, and, erm, so that's--, that's where we are today. And so starting from a clean sheet of paper in 2011 we built a business doing repair and restoration of barges, wooden boats, plastic boats, all sorts. And so we have quite a mixed range of businesses in addition to some other activities that we let out spaces for, we have a guitar maker here, we have a couple of general carpenters and joiners, we have an artist, an engineer, an architect. So there are several of us making small living--, I mean small business livings in what was just an abandoned shed really, so it's been a--, it's been a busy and exciting time.

Q: Oh, that's fantastic, sounds like you're reviving a very old tradition and, erm, what kind of boats do you make here?

A: Well, my training is in wooden boats, we have done less making than restoring and repairing, but hopefully as time goes on we'll be able to get back into making boats. The boats that have been built here have been basically a series of do it yourself hobbyists who have been down here making small rowing boats and small sailing boats, which has been really great because, you know, we encourage people who come from outside and they want to do their own thing, have their own projects, which--, and that goes back to the confidence thing. So very often people say yeah, I'd love to build a boat but I can't because I don't quite know how to do it and I don't quite have a place to do it. We can provide the place and we can also provide a sort of safety net of expertise so that if somebody gets into a mess trying to bend wood in a way that it doesn't want to go we can, you know, we can do that and we can help them over those hurdles. And so that's--, that's worked very well and there's several people who have learned, you know, both traditional and modern boat building techniques and have floated off in their own boats to do--, to do their own thing. We had a guy last year who had built a skiff to put into the, erm, one of the--, the Great River Race down the Thames, which is, erm, they travel from--, I can't remember which way, they travel from up the river and all the way down to the Port of London or the other way round. And he actually launched his boat the day before, sailed it down the river, got there at one o'clock in the morning ready to turn around and enter the race at ten o'clock the next day, so that was exciting--, well, exciting for him I guess.

Q: Do you have a ceremony to launch a boat or--,

A: Well, some people have different--, different feelings about their own boats, but normally yeah, we have a little bottle of something and a glass and a bit of a God bless her and all who sail in her going on as they float off down the slipway. So yeah, that's fun.

Q: Do you have official apprentices or is it more a sort of informal [inaudible 00:18:27]--,

A: It's informal, you know, but people say well you're a small business, you really need to be having apprentices. Well we don't have apprentices because we don't have that formal structure, but we have had several people who have, you know, have graduated from a boatbuilding school and they will come down here and work with us on different projects and so to, you know, to add that initial level of actual practical skills. And so in effect, yeah, we are, you know, we are teaching people and bringing people on in a traditional industry, which is--, which is very satisfying, it's very good.

Q: Can you tell me a bit more about who you have here at the moment?

A: We have--, well, we--, as I say, we have a mix of do it yourself projects here and projects that we are working on with independent craftsmen. I have, erm... four traditional wooden boat builders, I have a couple of people who--, whose skill is welding who are doing metalwork, working on the old barges, I have a guy who does electrics and mechanical, another guy who does electrical work and, erm, so yeah, on a busy day it can be--, it can be quite busy down here. So from--, and that's not including, you know, Dave making his guitars and Robbie making his staircases and, er, we did have a guy down here who made an old wooden aeroplane in bits, he was one of my first tenants but he's finished and he took his aeroplane off to Wales and flew off into the sunset, so we have had some different projects going on here.

Q: And do people come to you from all over the UK or is it even wider than that?

A: Erm, it's mostly people who are in London and, erm... because this is--, this is the population base, I mean the people coming from the boatbuilding schools either in Lowestoft and Lyme Regis are people who, you know, they want--, they want to move to London and carry on their craft here. The people--, the do it yourself people are obviously people who tend to be fairly local and they just are looking for a space to do what it is that they want to do, but their back garden isn't big enough and, er...

Q: Yes [laughs]. If we were to walk through the yard, can you describe what we'd see, hear and smell?

A: Yes, you will see a variety of different projects being worked on, right now we have three wooden boats which are requiring very traditional boatbuilding skills, copper nails and caulking and, you know, what you'd imagine would've taken to build a wooden boat for hundreds of years. We have a glass fibre boat which has wooden trim on it which is being renovated and we have five--, one, two, yeah, about five metal boats. From a 40 foot narrowboat up to a 75 foot [inaudible 00:22:01] that are in various stages of refit which require, you know, metalwork and they require internal fit out, you know, the carpentry and plumbing and electrics and all of the house--, all the skills you'd expect to find somebody actually building a house that doesn't have any straight corners--, or any square corners, so a good variety--, a good variety of skills. And I work with one of the other boatyards on one of my projects 'cause I have more room than people and he has more people than room, and so we get some cross fertilization between the businesses up and down the river that way, which is very good.

Q: Is there a nice community along the river?

A: It's brilliant, yes. There is obviously a lot of houseboats, we have 14 houseboats here at the yard and that's a community in itself. The community of people working on the river, the different people working at the boatyards and running work boats and doing various bits and pieces of stuff up and down the river, it's a, you know, it's a small community and so, you know, we all get to know each other and--, to the extent that we usually end up doing very different types of work, you know, we can get along very well.

Q: Do the people living in the houseboats--, of which you are one I think--,

A: Yeah, I am indeed, yes, yes.

Q: Do they use your services here?

A: They--, they use my services and they also use the facilities, so if you're living on a houseboat it's terribly expensive to have to call in, you know, a boat builder every time you want to change a tap so, you know, they can come in and they can use the tools and the space and whatnot and if they need help we can give them help. And some of them know more about stuff than I do and so they can help me also, so it's--, it's a lovely exchange of skills and experiences going on and it's--, it's really quite rewarding, you know, when people can just cooperate together and just get along and not just be constantly hiding behind their barriers, [well they're 00:24:28] my skills, [grrr] I'm not going to sell you--, I'm not going to sell you my thing unless... Yeah, it's--, so we try and make it truly a cooperative place to be, so--,

Q: It sounds lovely I must say.

A: Well it's brilliant, I mean, you know, we're still--,

Q: Lovely. Erm [laughs], erm, could you talk me through a typical day for you, a working day here?

A: Well, I get up about lunch time, you know--, no, no, just kidding [both laugh]. No, we start--, start the day around eight o'clock and it's just immensely varied. I mean we have jobs that we do here and I also have, you know, work to do on boats up and down the river, so I might get on the 267 bus and head on down to Richmond or down to Isleworth and go and work on a boat on one of the moorings up and down the river doing bits and pieces. And there is, you know, constantly paperwork that has to be done so usually, you know, I might sit down for a

couple of hours in the morning and send out some bills and count the moneybox and see how long we're going to survive for and do all that sort of stuff. Order paint and order nails and order this and that and the other thing for all the chaps who are working out there. People will come over and want to, you know, if you've got a boat somebody's working on down here they'll come over and they'll want to check on the work and talk to us about what's going on and how's it going and why is it costing so much and how come it's not back in the water already, and so we have all of those meetings and the customer interaction. We tend to, you know, sit down and have a cup of tea in the morning and, you know, people come in and out of the kitchen and customers and different tenants and so forth, so some social interchanges and stuff. It's very different depending on the seasons, in winter it gets brutally cold in here 'cause we're obviously not heated and so we do tend to huddle round the fire a bit more or turn up the heat in the kitchen and just sneak out and do stuff that can be done in the cold. But the nice thing about a day here is, is it's never same, there's always something else to be done. And we are dependent on the tide, so if we are bring boats up and down the slipway we can do that, you know, a couple of times a month because the tides come up and down but we have to do it at a certain time of the day. So if it's, you know, four o'clock on a Thursday afternoon and it's a high tide and we're moving boats then it's all hands to the pump and we're down to the slipway and moving boats in and out, and so that has to be planned fairly carefully. But yeah, variety is--, variety is the great thing.

Q: Is there a wide range of ages of people working here?

A: Yes, and that's brilliant as well. I've, you know, the lads in their 20s who've just come out of a boatbuilding academy or some other course or wanting to start up in business doing something, right up to, well, me I suppose, who should've retired a long time ago. So yeah, lots--, lots of different varieties of ages and different varieties of skills, I mean Dave, my guitar maker, he's an engineer, we have several people with an engineering background. We have people with an artistic background and so, yeah, ages, it's just a big melting pot of different people, you know, rubbing off their skills and experiences on one another and it's--, I believe that is a very beneficial environment to work in. You know, nobody is constrained to say oh you're going to sit down and you're going to be counting this column of numbers and you're going to start when you're 23 and you're going to get up from your desk when you're 65 and that's it. It's just, you know, a lot of variety.

Q: Can you imagine leaving, I mean presumably you imagine staying for the duration [laughs]?

A: Where would I go--, where would I go? [Laughs]. No.

Q: Can you describe how the river has changed in the last ten years, in the time you've been here?

A: Yes, I think, erm, a couple, you know, in not such a good way in a couple of ways, you know. The bankside is becoming much less of activities like this, there is much less variety on the river front. The encroachment of endless blocks of flats on every available lot up and down the river is driving away the variety and driving away the interesting activities that historically have gone on the riverside and nobody seems to be able to do anything to stop that. Everyone talks in fine terms about oh we want to preserve the traditional this and the historical that, but at the end of the day if you can develop a piece of land and get more money out of it by having a flat than an historical whatnot then that's what you're going to do. And so that has been a lot of the change that I have seen even in my short exposure to the river, so I don't like that too terribly much. And the other thing is that the communities living on the river in the houseboats and stuff are just constantly under economic pressure as well, from the raising of the rents and the, you know, the landlords of those properties see, you know, a great deal of demand for living on the river and they're just happy to charge people within an inch of their lives. And that also puts a lot of stress on people who are trying to live on the river or make a living on the river because, you know, everyone ends up worrying about money which is frankly crap, I mean that's--, it's rubbish. So--, and that's a shame--, that's a shame.

Q: Does the Thames Landscape Strategy supporting the--, I read that they're sort of defending Lot's Ait and other--,

A: Well there are a lot of people up and down the river in their various groups, the River Thames Society who are very supportive of Lot's Ait and other similar operations up and down the river. You know, there is a limit to what they can do, you know, on the day that I can't make money I will be gone and, you know, I doubt that there's going to be anybody come back and replace me, so that's going to be an issue. But in terms--, in terms of support yes, I mean the Landscape Strategy and the groups that support it are supportive of maintaining traditional industries on the river. And Hounslow also have us on their radar screen in terms of proposed development of the empty building next door, which we have been trying to push for opening a river skills learning centre so that we would use that facility to actually teach boatbuilding, boat maintenance and other river craft skills so that that would encourage people to be on the river and enjoy their boats and give them more confidence in the different activities. And Hounslow have been very supportive in helping us push that forward, but that's a, you know, that's quite a long term project and that's not going to happen in six minutes, so.

Q: What's the relationship between your boatyard and local residents?

A: Well it's very good really, so far. I know that we're not a particularly noisy activity and we do try and restrict our noisy activities such as they are to, you know, day times and the usual times and we are conscious that we, you know, even the boats right outside the workshop are residential living and so it's a relationship that has to be worked on and maintained and so we do that. And so far so good, we've been able to rub along quite nicely. The flat--, blocks of flats opposite have, you know, they've been occupied, some of them, in the last two or three years so we are a lot more overlooked than we were six years ago, but so far we're not getting the phone calls so we just--, I think they find us quite quaint and interesting so hopefully they'll leave us alone.

Q: Have the types of customers who come to you changed?

A: Erm, no, not really. I mean, you know, the--, the boat owning community is... it's growing, we get customers from, you know, from residential boat owners through to people who have their own little runabout and they want to see it repaired. What has changed is, you know, the--, when I first came down here in--, there were a lot of people looking to start their own little businesses because the economy wasn't so great, and so we had quite a rush of people wanting to, you know, rent spaces and so start off a little business and that has slowed down somewhat. But then again, we get more of the people who now have a bit of money and a bit of time and so we get some more of the hobbyists saying well now I can come down and build a boat. So yeah it's, you know, ebbs and flows but I don't see any sort of lasting change to the customer base, no.

Q: What advice would you give to someone from the next generation who might want to join your industry or embark on a life of boatbuilding?

A: Erm, well... it's not a place where there's a lot of money and so if you're a person who is only interested in making more money in your life then it's probably going to be a very hard battle. However, it is, you know, enormously satisfying, requiring, as I say, that you get good physical skills, good mental skills, just--, it's just a fascinating, variety filled way of life. And so as long as you're content to have enough rather than as much as you can possibly accumulate then it's good, I mean there's--, it's a growing industry but it's a slow growth industry. It's a profitable industry but it's not one of those industries that is ever going to be terribly profitable. It is so labour intensive that, you know, people who are maintaining their boats find it, you know, they find it a challenge to afford the work they need to get done. So it's, you know, it's a tough--, it's a tough row to hoe but for some people that's--, that's what life's about, so.

Q: What's your proudest achievement in your boatbuilding career?

A: Erm, well I suppose looking back, you know, the days get filled with horror stories and little bits and pieces of crises and accomplishment. But when I look back to six years ago and remember walking into this building completely empty, there was no windows, there was, you know, 43 million pigeons been living here for 20 years, and I turned that into something that's actually--, I mean it may not look like much but it's actually a business that works and we are employing people and we are supporting DIY people and projects. I mean that's--, that is

quite satisfying. And then the day that call me Dave Cameron came down to visit was quite exciting, I wouldn't call that my proudest day but it was--, that was different, so.

Q: What brought him here?

A: Well, he was doing an announcement on small--, some small business initiative and Mary Macleod, who was our local MP, who quite likes us down here and she suggested this as a place to come down and that he could give a speech and have it all--, all the... So, er, yes, interesting. Anyway, different.

Q: What do you think is the future for boatyards along tidal Thames?

A: Well, there is a demand, certainly. There are a lot of boats that need repair and maintenance, insurance requirements and the general trend is for licensing authorities to demand higher and higher qualities of this, that and the other thing in order for boats to get insured and licensed on the river, so yes, surely there is work. The opportunities to have places to do the work are becoming very few and far between, there's--, I doubt that you're going to see any new boatyards set up simply because it's just almost impossible to find somewhere to do that. So for the existing operations that can hold off the real estate developers then, you know, this is a good time to be here. But obviously, you know, if you want to turn a piece of land to its most profitable use then boatbuilding is never going to be it. So yes, it's going to continue to be a challenge, but a challenge that, you know, we are meeting a demand, so yeah.

Q: Getting to the end of my list of questions, but I think the final one was is there anything else that you would like to add that I haven't asked?

A: Well that's an--, that's an open ended question [laughs].

Q: Isn't it [laughs].

A: Well I don't know, it's--, I mean it's--, one of the great things about this place is the history and the fact that it's, you know, it's been part of the boatbuilding community for over a hundred years and it's in an area of London that's been boatbuilding and river traffic and whatnot for hundreds of years before that. So it is a very historic place to be working and it is a great privilege to have had the opportunity to, you know, keep a place like this going in some form or another. And also to keep traditional skills going, whether it's with a, you know, qualified--, newly qualified person from a boatbuilding academy or whether it's a DIY--, a DIY boat builder who just wants to build some skills to be able to, you know, contribute to the maintenance and development of those skills, it's--, yes, it's been--, it's been a great privilege. And a lot of fun and as I segue from full time into some kind of a retirement, I don't see myself doing anything different, so that's--, it's all good, all good.

Q: Thank you. Do you have--,

MS1: Any questions from the group?

Q: Any other questions?

FS2: [Inaudible 00:41:27]. If I could ask [inaudible 00:41:30] if that's alright [inaudible 00:41:32]. I suppose the first question I wanted to ask was about your memories of when the bridge went in and what that was like from what was here before and the access to Lot's Ait?

A: Oh, that was a brilliant day, I mean the--, back in the day the access to Lot's Ait was across a series of floating pontoons, and so they would climb downstairs on the far shore, which was owned by the same company, and then they'd wobble across the--, or if the tide was out they'd just walk across the floating pontoons and that was how they got in and out of the island. When I first came down here there was nothing, so there was--, so you could either walking across at low tide or you'd have to wait till--, obviously the water and you could boat across, and that was pretty much how it was from the 1980s through to the time when the yard opened. The day that they put the bridge in was quite spectacular 'cause the bridge had been assembled by MSO up the road and it was a single span and it was loaded onto a big barge and floated down the river. And it was moored up and down the river and the tide went

out and so it basically sat on the bottom, they'd already built the two piers at each end of the--, each side of the bridge and it was a bit like the Saltash bridge, when the tide came up--, and it was a lovely day and there was no wind, the tide comes up and the bridge is hovering about yafar above the place that it's got to land, they swung it around, two people with ropes, nobody shouting, nobody yelling, just pull it around, a couple of pieces of rope, until it was across and sitting above the pillars that it was going to rest on, at the high tide. The tide goes out and the boat--, and the bridge rests down precisely on the pillars that it was designed to rest on, and there we were, connected to the land, it was--, it was a magical moment, there's YouTubes out there to record that [if ever 00:43:34], erm, yeah, that was brilliant--, brilliant.

FS2: Can I ask about--, so you've got the boat out there, Julieta, that apprentices with Mark Edwards are working on. Could you explain a little bit about how that works, I mean the apprentices come here or...?

A: Well the Julieta came in as a fairly simple repair job that we were going to do with our own chaps, and we had a survey done on the boat and it was, erm, turned out that we were going to have to replace planks and ribs and it was quite a--, turned into quite a major job, which was a bit above my pay grade at the time. So I talked to Mark Edwards, who's the--, he's the man in terms of traditional boatbuilding and he happened to have some spare capacity so he sent down a team of chaps with a senior guy and some apprentices and they have been basically working on Julieta together with a couple of my young lads as well. So we've all been, you know, we've all been enjoying the benefit of Mark's experience and the customer has been enjoying the benefit of a project that has, you know, has been wonderful for the yard and it's been--, it's been a brilliant learning experience for us all. And that sort of interchange between, you know, I have the space and Mark has the skills and the people and we bring it all together and we--, we do the business and it's great, and it's really brilliant the way that has worked out. And hopefully we'll be able to do more of that, yeah.

FS2: I suppose I have one last question which is a bit oblique if that's okay? It's really whether--, what your impressions before you came here were of what it would be like to run a boatyard and what the reality was like in comparison?

A: Erm, yes, I think I probably anticipated when I first came down here that I would be, you know, lovingly working on wooden boats and in a quiet space all by myself or maybe with the help of one person and just doing it like that. But I find that, you know, we have eight or ten people working on five or six or seven different boats at any given point in time, and so it's a much busier place than I'd imagined. There's much more variety of skills, you know, now we have welders and electricians and plumbers and all the rest of it, so it's a much--, much more complicated world than I imagined that I would be in at this stage. But it's very satisfying because it's, you know, it calls upon, you know, a lot more skills on me, so, erm, to manage it all, so it's, yeah, different but great at the same time. Yeah.

FS2: Have you got any questions?

FS2: I just want to ask a bit about the stuff you find from the old, you know, the old yard that was here and kind of what you find on the island was--, that, you know, the remains of that and the tools and things. Could you speak a bit about kind of what's still here from that?

A: Yes, I mean, erm, a lot of what was originally part of the--, the old--, the old boat repair business was knocked down during the period prior to my occupation. But obviously this building was part of the old facility and there are a couple of old machines outside, there's the big rolling mill outside which--, and these bits of equipment which are too big to haul off, designed to curve plate to be fitted onto the bottom of a barge. This was an old rolling mill and there's also an old stamping mill at the far end of the island which was in the blacksmith's shop, and that's a big power press that must've been just a nightmare when it was working 'cause there would be just huge forces that just... And as we have, you know, dug around on the island and tried to, you know, establish some planted areas and stuff like that in the back, we dig up more metal than soil and it's all, you know, traditional or there's just rubbish of the ages buried in the island. Metal bits and pieces from past activities and occasionally we'll dig up an old tool or an interesting piece of barge or a great sheet of metal that was--, that means something. And so we have--, now have quite a decent collection of artefacts from the prior occupiers of the island, some of which we can identify and some of which we--, are almost the

same as the tools we use today, and some of which are very historical, dating back to the old wooden sailing barges, some of which were brought up here for repair and restoration back in the day. And it's really quite interesting to have that continuity of activity and, you know, I was looking at this old tool somebody's dug up, well what do you think that was for? Well I don't know what that was for, oh well... And then some of them get picked up and taken off, well I can use that right now, and they do. So it's--, the continuity is fascinating and the amount of history buried on this island is--, is--, I mean we found at one point a little stone ball which someone said oh that was a sort of a Roman catapult ball or trebuchet--, or a little catapult ball. Whether it was or not I don't know but, you know, there is history on this island going back to--, going back to that time and it's--, yeah, it's a great place to study it.

FS2: Any more questions anyone?

MS1: No.

A: Yeah, no more questions from you, thank you [all laugh].

MS1: [Inaudible 00:51:02].

A: Well yeah, tell me about your 16 illegitimate children you've got working on the island [all laugh].

FS2: [Inaudible 00:51:17].

A: Yeah, I've got some for you [laughs].

[END OF RECORDING – 00:51:22]