

Dennis Allen – born in Scarborough 1938.

The Allen family has been fishermen in Scarborough since the 1840's. They originally came from Lowestoft where the family name can be spelt differently. Robert Allen, Dennis's great great grandfather owned the "Trio" (SH76) which was lost at sea in 1895. James Swan Allen was Dennis's great grandfather. James Allen was Dennis's grandfather and Jane Elizabeth Sheader was his grandmother. Dennis's father was Wilfred Allen who was born in 1903 and died at the age of 41 when the steam trawler he was on, "Noreen Mary" was shelled by U247 in The Minch off Scotland (5th July 1944). There were only 2 survivors from the crew of 10. Dennis has the original telegram and letter from the Ministry of War Transport to Mrs Allen commiserating with her loss. Dennis's older brother James Wilfred Allen was torpedoed in the North Atlantic and stayed in Canada at the end of the war. Overall he has lost at least 7 relatives at sea. Now, none of the family work at sea.

Dennis was born in Cross Street and had 2 brothers and 6 sisters. He remembers watching huge Tunny fish being landed at Scarborough and also gathering up dropped Herring and selling them to tourists on a makeshift stall made up of fish boxes. The family also lived in Crazy Cottage, 25 Quay Street. 9 children and parents lived in 5 rooms. Sometimes 3 children were in a bed, top to tail. They had an outside toilet and a zinc tin bath. His grandmother skeined mussels and they got paid six pence to tip the shells off the Marine Drive. They often ate fish for dinner and pickled Herrings in jars.

Dennis went to sea age 16 as a deck hand in the Merchant Navy. He trained on a clipper ship and in 1954 joined the Royal Mail Line. On his first ship he sailed through the Panama Canal and under the Golden Gate Bridge. The cargo ships were loaded by hand and crane with timber, grain and cotton. On his first voyage home he got caught in the worst storm recorded. 11 ships sunk off the coast and 23 drowned. His ship returned to Liverpool to repair damage. Dennis served on 14 ships in 10 years. On an oil tanker he went to Venezuela and the West Indies and New Jersey. Unfortunately his duties meant he was working in the cabin when they had good weather and outside when they had bad weather.

Dennis started work for the Post Office in 1962 and during an extremely bad winter had to repair telephone cables brought down by the weight of ice. He was involved in the move of the old manual telephone exchange in Aberdeen Walk to the new electronic exchange in Northway. Fibre Optic cables came in before Dennis retired 16 years ago. Dennis now spends his time researching his ancestors and transcribing old Ship's Logs for the National Archives.