

**MANX HERITAGE FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT**

‘TIME TO REMEMBER’

Interviewee(s): Mr John William McGowan

Date of birth: 2nd May 1933

Place of birth: Castletown, Isle of Man

Interviewer(s): Elizabeth Ardern-Corris

Recorded by: Elizabeth Ardern-Corris

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Topic(s): Tour of the Nautical Museum in Castletown
Bridge House and the Quayle family
Story about *The Peggy* an 18th century armed yacht
Apprentice builder at the ‘discovery’ of *The Peggy* in 1950
Model of *The Peggy* gifted by John Gawne
RAF men burning floorboards from *The Peggy*
Refurbishment of the Nautical Museum building
Quayle’s Bank and secret mechanism
Yacht racing on Lake Windermere
Working as attendant at the Nautical Museum
Re-roofing of the Nautical Museum
Story about SAS men stationed on *The Lady Elizabeth*
The Brig Lily
Salvaging sewing machines from wreck of *The Clan MacMaster*

John McGowan - Mr M
Elizabeth Ardern-Corris - EA-C

EA-C I'm Elizabeth Ardern-Corris, it's the 28th August 2012 and I'm with Mr John McGowan and we're standing looking at the back of the Nautical Museum in Castletown.

Mr M Now, we're standing here ... we're standing here, the two of us, in a bit of a draughty day today, but we're standing in front of what was the old *Crown Hotel*, which is now number seven and it's now called the *Harbour House*. And directly at its side is the old granary building, and they face the original opening of *The Peggy* opening, which you can see, which is just directly across the harbour. And when we come up to the left we come up to *Bridge House* itself, and you will notice that there's a little annex built on the side of *Bridge House* with a little slit window in it; now that's where the wonderful bag mechanism is – or was. Now, further again to the left, where there's a flight of steps going down onto the rocks, right at the bottom step you'll see a hole missing, now that hole floods the cleansing chamber underneath the lawn of *Bridge House* – floods it out. Now it only floods out at very high tides, now we've got a very high tide today because we've got a Southerly coming in, so it will have probably flooded, and it will also have flooded *The Peggy* boathouse as well. One of the unique things about *Bridge House* is this; it was occupied by the Quayle family and one thing that's always mystified me about *Bridge House* is the southerly facade it's got. There was no cement in those days, in the 1800s, early 1900s, how on earth did they make those slates stick to the wall – I've never been able to find out. Modern times, they stick them in with silicone, but I've never known how they got them slates to stick on.

EA-C Is there a story behind this house, and why it's so tall?

Mr M Well the reason – one of the reasons I've always been told is, by the old fellows, that the reason that it's the tallest is because George Quayle, when he occupied *Bridge House*, now out at the back of him was *Lorne House* where the Governor lived. Now George Quayle wasn't a fan of the Governor, he didn't like the Governor at all, and he took opposition to him because he thought, 'I'll out-do him – he won't be able to see over the harbour what I'm doing,' so he lifted the whole house up another two storeys. So that's how that building is so tall.

EA-C I see that there's a blue flag flying here at the back of the Nautical Museum.

Mr M Hmm.

EA-C What's the story about that?

Mr M That's the company ... well, it's a kind of company that does the whole sites of all ships all over the place, the site of all ships all over the world they do, and that's the flag; and with *The Peggy* being made one of the most authentic pieces of history, she was entitled to fly that flag.

EA-C Tell me about the blocked up entrance here, where *The Peggy* used to be.

Mr M Yes, well, it was blocked up just before his death in 1835. He decided to put *The Peggy* away and the answer was he simply wanted her left for posterity, he didn't want her touched. He brought her in at high tide, he took her right up into the boathouse, ordered were given to block the end in, which they did do, but originally there were two door on here. Now you can still see the wooden frame. You see, right in the corner, you can see the remains of the wooden frames. Now, there were two big doors on there, and when *The Peggy* was operating, doing a little bit of smuggling, or going or coming back from Lake Windermere and all that, he would bring her in and he would shut the doors. Now people used to ask me, down on the dock, how did he shut the doors when *The Peggy* floated in? 'Well,' I said, 'all he did was – he had two ropes tied to the back of the doors, and when *The Peggy* came in, he just simply pulled the ropes to, tied them up and she was locked away.' And that's where she stayed until we all broke into her in 1950.'

EA-C Now tell me about your involvement in this building, the renovation of the Nautical Museum building itself.

Mr M Well, in 1950, when I was working for me uncle – there was seventy of us working, building firm – and we were lucky enough to get the work from the Manx Museum, from Mr Megaw, and in March of 1950, my boss received a letter asking us to assemble down in the lane at the ... just past number ten, or what would be the old Quayle house. We assembled in the lane and we waited, wondering what we were going to do. And then when Mr Megaw come, he gave us orders to break in the door, which is in the lane. We didn't have to break in much, it was more or less open. We forced the door open, we got in, to our amazement the floor and everything, from the Map Room, to the Quayle Room,

and the Cabin Room, was all absolutely immaculate, just as Quayle had left it. But, in 1967 we found out that *The Peggy* had been seen by a gentleman by the name of Mr Gawne. He'd seen it in 1935, because he told us in 1967 when he gave us the model of *The Peggy* in the official opening of it, of the new extension part, that he had heard in 1935 rumours that there might be some kind of an old vessel hidden away in a boat cellar somewhere under the Quayle buildings. So he wrote a letter to Miss Emily Quayle, who was still alive in 1935, and she was the last of the Quayles – a Miss Emily – he said, 'I wrote her a letter,' he said, 'from where I lived Fistard in Port St Mary, and I asked her,' he said, 'in a letter, would she be good enough to let me come down and have a look to see was there a boat hidden in the cellars.' She wrote back and she said to him, 'Certainly you can come down, Mr Gawne,' she said, 'but I think you're going to be disappointed because there's no boat or anything there. There's absolutely nothing left at all.' Now John Gawne was the kind of Manxman that wouldn't be put off by a letter. So he came down on the train, he knocked on the door at number ten where Miss Emily was living at that time, he was invited in for tea and crumpets, he said, and she told him that there was nothing over there but he was quite welcome to go. Now, there no problem to get in, because where the frontage is now, there were two great grey doors on there, all you had to do was open the door and walk in, you thought. No! You couldn't get down that way, because that was the garage where they kept the *Landor*. Now the *Landor* is another story that I've never been able to find out what happened to that *Landor*, but anyway, he came out again, he went through the same door as we would go through years later, he got into the Cabin Room, and just when he went to step into the Cabin Room one foot went down through the rotten floorboards. Down John went, shocked, he pulled himself up out of the hole, kneeled down, looked down the hole, he said, that I'd made, he said, and to my absolute amazement he said, there this boat was, he said, lying on its starboard side, up against the wall. He said, I could see the boat quite clearly he said, because although the stone wall was built at the back of *The Peggy* to seal her in, he said the doorway and the window was missing, so there was daylight coming in, so he said he could see *The Peggy*. He said, 'I took a mental picture of it,' he said, 'I went back out, I told Miss Emily what I'd seen, and she said to me, 'On no account, Mr Gawne, would you ever tell anybody whatsoever that there's a boat hidden in that boat-cellar.' And John never did until he told me in 1967 of how he'd come to find *The Peggy*. So that went down on record so that's actually down on record that he did see her in 1935.

EA-C Has the harbour itself changed much over the years?

Mr M No, the harbour hasn't changed anything at all, it's exactly the same now, all my lifetime and me grandfather's lifetime was here, it's never, never changed, never, never, no, and it's never changed. But I would point out that the work that the Quayle fellows had to do to get that opening, that archway that you see over there, they had to hack away the rocks to make the opening, as you can see, so that was some feat to do that. So probably, the same rocks that they hacked out, done to build up the archway. But even building up the archway today, does not stop the tide from coming in. It still comes in up *The Peggy*, yes, still floods in, and it doesn't do *The Peggy* any harm because it's salt water, and salt water is a good preservative.

EA-C Which of the buildings would have formed part of the Quayle property? How many of the buildings?

Mr M The whole lot, right from there, right down to where the lane is. All properties of the Quayle owned ... the Quayle's owned was at the foot ... from the entrance to the footbridge, which you see now, that little building there, then we go to *Bridge House* with its wonderful slate facade on it to keep the weather out, then we go to the right where number ten is, that's where the Quayle's mostly lived, and all these buildings here in front of us now, here where the flag is flying, are the old stables, and where they stored the hay and where they stored the grain to feed the horses that pulled the little *Landor* around Castletown. So that's the whole ... that's the whole piece of property that the Quayle's owned. And it finally went into receivership ... not receivership, but went into the hands of the Trustees in 1941 at the beginning of the war. Now, at the beginning of the war, we were plunged into war we were, in the Isle of Man here, and they were building huge radar stations out at Scarlett Point, and there were six radar gentleman actually billeted in *Bridge House*, and one of the most fantastic things that ever happened to me in all my life in there, happened when I was the guide in there in 19 ... in the year 2000 it was, quarter past four, at the end of October, when the horrible weather – it was a horrible day, it was raining – it was an east wind, a gentleman came in, and he said to me, 'I believe,' he said, 'there's still an old boat in here?' I said, 'Yes, there is, *The Peggy*.' 'Oh, I don't know what the name of it is,' he said, 'but,' he said, 'I know that there was a boat in here in the wartime.' Now when we were re-doing *The Peggy*, putting the new keel into it and the new garbet [garboard] planks into her, nobody knew

what happened to the floorboards, because that was the only thing that was missing from *The Peggy* apart from half the rudder. Now we had assumed that the floorboards had been thrown out by George Quayle and his crew to lighten the load so that they could drag her up in for the final time. Totally and absolutely wrong, because in the year 2000 this lovely old gentleman came into us in the Nautical, I was sitting on the chair, and he said about this boat in this cellar. He said, 'Well, I'm going to tell you something,' he said, 'I've never mentioned before,' he said, 'you'd be wondering,' he said, 'why you didn't find any floorboards in *The Peggy*.' I said, 'Yes, we've always wondered that,' I said, 'they were probably thrown out and rotted.' 'No,' he said, 'they weren't.' He said, 'When we were billeted in *Bridge House*,' he said, 'it was so cold in there,' he said, 'we used to go around gathering wood round the harbour, out Scarlett,' he said, 'we used to light the fire, whose ever turn was. And one Sunday,' he said, 'we decided to have a walk along Bridge Street, along towards Douglas Street, and,' he said, 'we opened this big grey door,' he said, 'we peered in, and,' he said, 'there was a rotten old floor in there,' he said. 'We walked a bit further into the lane,' he said, 'we pushed the grey door open,' that we did, 'went in,' he said, 'and we went down through a hatch cover – as a matter of fact,' he said, 'there was six hatch covers there on the floor,' – now there's only one – 'went down through the hatch covers, little ladder, down he went, and here this huge vessel was,' he said, 'lying in the cellar. And scattered all over the floor,' he said, 'was a mass of floorboards – just the job! They were all gathered up, we took them into *Bridge House*, we chopped them all up,' he said, 'and we had some wonderful fires for about three months with these floorboards. Now,' he said, 'only we were re-posted,' he said, 'from *Bridge House* out to Scarlett,' he said, 'believe you me, John,' he said, 'we would ... you would never had any *Peggy* because,' he said, 'we'd have chopped *The Peggy* up as well!' So that's how we found out where the floorboards went. There is one thing you'll notice, when you're looking at the opening of *The Peggy*, the arched opening, just on the right-hand side there's a little tower-like building. Well that, apparently, was a little lookout, because out in Castletown Bay in George Quayle's day, there were quite a number of pirates out there, and of course he kept an eye on them, out through that little tower. There was a little window in it but it was taken down and lowered down to make the whole thing level. Up the top – up at the top of the harbour up here, where the dole office is now, there used to be a building in front of there and that was the Customs House. Now I can remember me grandfather telling me that the customs men used to sit in the little tower on there, keeping an eye on the harbour to see what

was coming in and going out, but they never, never ever caught George Quayle coming in and out – never caught George. And when we get over to the other side, we'll see why. We're now inside the Nautical Museum itself. It's not a name I was familiar with because I always like to call it *The Peggy Story* because that's what it is. It's *The Peggy Story* and the Quayle Story. But we're looking forward now into the brand new – well, almost brand new – reception area. Now up until 1964, out there, and down at the fishing gallery, was a virtual ruin, so there was nothing ever touched in there, nothing ever touched until 1964, when the Manx Museum decided then to break through from here where we are now in what we call the Map Room, we broke through, we got into there, walked on the rotten room floor, we spent the whole winter re-flooring it, re-doing the ceiling and also re-doing the fishing gallery. The big job in the fishing gallery was that we had to get the net-knitting machine in which weighed almost two ton. Now we had to get the net-knitting machine in before the new front went in because there was two big grey doors in there. And in came the net-knitting machine. Now the net-knitting machine weighing two tons was brought down. It had been in Qualtrough's yard for a number of years and I can remember me father telling me that the last time he thought that the net-knitting machine was used was 1935 – the very last time it was used – then it was given to the Manx Museum, it was brought down here and it is now exhibited in the fishing gallery. But this is the part that George Quayle frequented pretty often, and one of my pet things is about this little building here, that I like to think that these being the original floors that my old 'mate,' Captain Bligh, that was married in the Isle of Man, and of course with the Quayle family being such an affluent family, Captain of the local militia in the Castle, Member of the House of Keys, I quite believe that Bligh, although there's no mention of it, I'm quite sure that Bligh walked on these floorboards. I hope he did, and eventually when I get 'up there' with them, I'll ask George, did he, and I'll ask him as well, seeing had he ever walked on the floors in number ten.

EA-C We're in the Map Room, John, just talk me through all the different things that I'm seeing here.

Mr M Well, we're in the Map Room now, and before all these staircases went in, were the opening is to go down into *The Peggy*, was six hatch covers there originally, six. Now why there was six hatch covers there, that'll come to light when we get down into the dock where *The Peggy* is – we'll find out why there was six

hatch covers there. Now the grapeshot cannons that you see on display here, there's one, two, three, four, five, six – there's eight of them, four down each gunnel. Now when me aunt was down here, when she was curator in the '70s, a lovely gentleman came in with a bag – big bag, and he lifted one of them, and it was on a ... they found it ... eventually they found the cannon on a pub counter in Liverpool. And when the proprietor was doing his last legs, he bequeathed it and it came back to us. Now which one it is, I don't know. I suspect it's the one with the red band on it, but those are the grapeshots. Now people used to ask me in here, 'Why on earth would *The Peggy* want to be armed?' Well, you see, they were nasty times in them days. There was a lot of pirates about, people who would steal things, pillage the boats coming in. Now Quayle didn't want that, so he armed *The Peggy*. He armed *The Peggy* fully. Yea, sorry, there's only seven now – I thought the other one came back, but apparently it hasn't, so there's only seven. One was stolen here when me aunt was curator in here in the early 70s.

EA-C Who was your aunt?

Mr M Mrs Crebbin, her name was. She was in here on her own – she used to be only on her own. She was on the desk on her own, she done the tour on her own, and she was here seven days a week for six years.

EA-C And what would they have charged to come in in those days?

Mr M 2/6d – 2/6d to come in in them days, yes. 1/6d children. But going back to the days when we opened up – when we first opened up in 1950 – '51, it was only 6d to come in, and the pay-desk was just here, where the toilet is, yea.

EA-C Tell me about all these charts on the walls.

Mr M Well, these charts are ancient charts – there's not much you can say about them really, because they're out of proportion, really, for what they are. You know, so I don't really know too much about the maps, I'm not a map-reader too much. So ... all I know is they're ancient maps. Now looking at the door where we broke in in 1950, it isn't the same door, because I'm looking at the frame and it's done the modern way, and the door's done the modern way, so they must have decided a number of years ago to replace the door, because that's what – we didn't have to break in, all we had to do was pull the door and we were in –

it was as simple as that! And of course we all got in here, there was no toilet there, we just walked in – here we are – we’re in, what are we going to find? And this is what we found. Okay, now we’ve come into the little Quayle Room now, and we’re looking at a picture of this little boy, George Quayle. Now for many, many years I tossed with the idea of where on earth did he get educated, because he was a very, very educated lad. And it came to light when I was researching down the Manx Museum that he was actually educated in France ... educated in France. This was the room with many little objects in it. Up here ... up here in this little cupboard up here, when it was opened up – it had been wallpapered over, they split it open and that’s where they found all these accounts hidden in there and many others as well.

EA-C What did the accounts show?

Mr M Now these are the accounts of the building of the boathouse, right. Now one of the strangest things on here is a company called ... they were a stone dealer, they used to haul stone all the way from Douglas to Castletown, and they were a haulage firm called Cretney’s. Now Cretney’s had been going in the 1700s in Douglas and they only packed up in the 1950s, so they were a very, very old firm. And you can read on there about everything that it cost for to build the boat – not only to build the boathouse, but also to build *The Peggy*. Now the boathouse itself, now I came across an old newspaper, Manx newspaper called *The Sun*, and was looking through it and it was hard to read and I was looking through it and there was a little piece in this paper that George Quayle had written in it, and this is what it said, quote, ‘The boathouse is growing a pace, and we hope to make trial of the young *Neptune* on Easter Monday. The house will be built to accommodate both vessels and the Cabin Room above it will be quite an oddity because all the ornaments, alterations and decorations are never to be seen by the poor and always explained to the elite,’ unquote. And that’s a little piece that was put in *The Sun* newspaper.

EA-C What was *The Neptune*?

Mr M *The Neptune* was the first little boat they ever built. It’s only about a third of the size of *The Peggy*. Now what happened to *The Neptune* we can only guess; she was ... when *The Peggy* came on the scene, a bigger boat, there wasn’t room for two down there, so she was left in the harbour and, of course, she rotted away, so that was the end.

EA-C Talk me through the furniture in this room.

Mr M When George Quayle opened the bank in *Bridge House* in 1805, known as the Quayle Bank, along with his brother ... along with his two or three brothers, the banking over there, this little desk, was over there in the banking room, and for some strange reason, I think, that when Mr Gabriel, who was the only occupant of *Bridge House* in the 70s, when Mr Gabriel took over, he gave this to us and it was brought over and put here, so it is the original bank desk that was over in *Bridge House* when George Quayle had opened the Quayle Bank in 1805. Now there's another little cupboard in here, where there were things hidden in it as well, there were things hidden in there, all kinds of little bits and pieces. Now this ... this was a drawing of an invasion barge, right. And what George had drawn up was this invasion barge which was to carry 30,000 troops in one big barge across the channel in order to invade Napoleonic France. So that was hidden in there. Now this cupboard, when this cupboard was opened up, right, like that, it'd been sealed up and opened out so they decided they'd make use of it, the Museum people, to put that drawing, which was which was found up in this cupboard, in there. But it had a sinister use, this cupboard, and you'll see why when we get into the other room, because there's two little 'V' cuts on this here, see? The 'V' cut on there and a little angle cut on there, see? Now you'll see why when we get in the other room. Now the window area was a unique piece of structure because it was actually a fireplace. Now you would never ever think that you could light a fire in a fireplace – you'd think that you'd never be able to do it – Quayle did it. Because at the back of here, where the chimney is, right. There's a chimney up there, chimney stack up there, and underneath this wooden board there was a metal place, and the metal plate had a hole in it, and it was constructed so the fumes and the smoke were diverted up through there and up into there. So that was a fireplace in a window.

EA-C Mr Quayle was quite an ingenious man.

Mr M He was an ingenious man – a very inventive man was George; loved lots of practical jokes because he had a practical joke in the Cabin Room that was absolutely fantastic – we'll see when we get in there. But it's original – apart from the odd patch on the floor in here, it is all the original floor ... all the original floor. All the little doors and everything that opened and shut, they are all still original, the knobs, the catches, the dado rail round it, everything is original.

EA-C Tell me what else you know about George Quayle.

Mr M He was born 1751, died in 1835, so he was about 84 when he died. He was ... it was a good age to live to in them days – 84 – so it shows you how the upper people lived. They lived good – they had good living so they lived longer than what the ordinary people did. But he was captain of the local militia in the Castle, and he instructed the person that had to do with the food. Two barrels of pickled puffins had to be delivered twice a week to the soldiers in the Castle – pickled puffins – what they tasted like I'll never know, but there you are. He was a Member of our House of Keys for most of his lifetime – spent a lot of time in the House of Keys building where *The George Hotel* is now, on the square, that they used to meet in there the House of Keys people until they built a new one. And then of course, George, he loved sailing and he had a good friend whose name was Captain Bacon. Now himself and Captain Bacon, they were good friends 'til they got onto Lake Windermere were Captain Bacon had a yacht almost identical to *The Peggy*. Now *The Peggy* itself was fitted out with a very unique system called the sliding keel system. Now the sliding keel system, we know them today as dagger boards, or drop-keels, right. Now he not only fitted one drop-keel, he fitted two. Now the reason he fitted two sliding keels was because when he took it to Windermere, the strange winds up there, you can drive into a headwind or anywhere, he could vary the depth of the dagger boards so he could vary it, because she was schooner-rigged, *The Peggy*, she was mainsail, foresail and jib-sail, so she was fairly fast – they reckoned she could do six or seven knots, right. So he had the upper hand on Captain Bacon – always had the upper hand on him – so there's a number ... down the Manx Museum you'll see he had a number of wins over Bacon. So apart from that, when you get into the Cabin Room, you'll see the practical side of his life, the practical side, but this is the Quayle Room, and it's wonderful to think that George Quayle was actually in here, breathing the same air as we're breathing, walking on the same floor and here we are, talking about a man that I've bowed down to now for nearly sixty years – wonderful fellow – absolutely! And of course the Museum of this ... the Nautical Museum itself, although it's called the Nautical, I prefer to call it *The Peggy Story*. There are not many places in the world now where you can go into a small Museum like this and walk into it, which is almost 98% original as it was two hundred years ago – and the same with the boat – the boat is exactly the same now as it was two hundred years ago except for a new keel and new garbet [garboard] planks that we put into it. This is the Cabin Room itself which is copied from the stern cabin of the

Nelson ship. Now you remember a few minutes ago I told you about the dado rail that had two little 'V' cuts in it? Well, when you look at this fireplace here, this was a fireplace that had a double action, and down here there's a little bolt down here, see? And when you flick that bolt up, that allowed the whole thing to swing into the other room, right. Now, when he lit the fire in here, right, he not only would say he was lighting a fire in here, but when they went into the other room with all his cronies he could swing the fire out into the other room. But having said that, the Manx Museum come up with, and they said, 'We don't think he did light a fire in it – we think it was a safe. We think ...,' they said it was a safe. And when they took the front off here, they found little bits of various papers in there with writing on them – what they were, I don't know. But that's what they reckon it was. It could have been possibly been his safe. Now this panel, where the plan of the thirty thousand troops in that huge barge, right. Was going to invade Napoleonic France? Right, this panel actually drops down, and when this panel drops down, it's in a direct line, right, through here, right. Now when you pull this out, and when you pull that out, you push this panel up here, it won't stay ... open this door ... now when you open all that up, without being seen, you could stand in the other room, look through that hatchway in the wall when it's dropped down, it was in a direct line right through here, which looked right into the harbour and right into where *The Peggy* came in. So he knew exactly where *The Peggy* was, who was coming in and what they were bringing in. The walkway you see there, never existed. We put that in in 1950 just to make it authentic. But these little doors here see, they all opened. The lid opens up. Now George Quayle was a man who used to excite his guests by hiding in here. And he used to hide in here and when it was time for him to make an entrance he would lift the lock and open up and appear in here – just like that. But when we went in in the 50s, when the Museum people went in, they went down the back of the panelment, up to about there, and they found two big armour breastplates in there. What happened to them? Don't know – stolen, probably. The windows which were slanted, exactly the same as they would be in the stern of a vessel of a Nelson boat, that's the original glass on them two, that isn't, they were broken here in 1950. But as you can see, it's copied from the stern cabin of a Nelson ship. Now here, when you push this back in again ... I'll shut the door after ... just here, on the floor, you'll see ... we can see on the floor here, there's a covered-in hatchway. It goes from there along to there, up to there and back again – you see, Elizabeth – see that hatch?

EA-C I do.

Mr M Yea. To get access down directly into *The Peggy*, you just lifted the hatch up, and you simply dropped into *The Peggy* – right onto her thwarts or onto her seats, jumped on. But one of the magical things in here is over in this corner here. They wondered about this panel on the door, so you can see where they ‘wratched’ it open – see? Those are the marks where they ‘wratched’ it open. Now when they opened that door up, they found two empty wine bottles in there. So they then come to the conclusion that this is where he kept the wine for his guests or his cronies as they came in. But it had on it a very, very ... a very, very cunning locking system. Now it had a little wooden button on here. Now people would say to me, ‘How did he lock the door, how did he put that little wooden button on to lock it?’ Well the answer was easy, because the back of that cupboard opens up in there, so he could reach through. Now in the back of here, there’s a wiring system that goes up through here, like a rod. And it goes up through the top of the cupboard here, and then, in 1951, when we traced it, we traced the wire, it goes along ... along the joists up here, right. It goes down the back of ... see the centre of the window, the centre of the window there? What we call the mullion of the window? To open this door, when we opened this door, they found what looked like a little crocheting needle; and when you went up on top of here, the crocheting needle ... you pulled this little plug out and hidden behind there was where the wire went past. Now to open this door, you placed your crocheting needle look-alike, through the hole, you hooked the wire, you pulled it – it pulled the wire along here and released the latches on the little cupboard. Now when you were finished you put the little cap back on here like that. Now we’re still in the Cabin Room and we’re facing the Chart Lockers. Now over on the left-hand side are the Chart Lockers. I would have on a tour maybe about ten – twelve people in here, and I would say to them, when I was giving them the spiel in here, every tour that I took round here, the two people that sat there fell asleep every time I started the lecture – they fell asleep. So I used to say to the other ones, ‘A funny thing happens in the Cabin Room here. Look at the lady and gentleman, or the two ladies sitting – they’re fast asleep in the corner!’ (*laughter*) And they all used to look in amazement. And that used to happen nine times out of ten when I had a tour in this room – they would fall asleep. If there was a whole row of them they would fall asleep.

EA-C Have you any explanation for why that happens?

Mr M No, no explanation at all. The only explanation I can think of is that that's where George Quayle sat, and he had a sleep in that corner, so it's carried on from there.

EA-C Do you think there might have ever been cushions on here? It looks hard.

Mr M No, I shouldn't think so. Mind you, I don't know, but I don't think so. It was only made for his cronies, you see, all the cronies would be up here – and the crew – six of the crew in *The Peggy*.

EA-C And what kind of conversations do you think would have gone on in here?

Mr M Oh, I ... (*laughter*) well, a lot of men together ... (*laughter*) I would hate to say – I don't know, yea. They'd be talking about Napoleonic wars, I suppose, you know, and one thing and another. I've got a copy of *The Times* from 1789 at home, and it gives an account of the ... of Wellington's war and all that, you know, yea. So they'd be talking about general topics. He'd be talking about the House of Keys, about what'd be going on in the House of Keys. He'd be talking about what happened in the Castle, and ... all that kind of stuff – you know. Same as we were doing here.

EA-C And of course he was involved in banking.

Mr M He was involved in the banking ... he was involved in the banking. The little bank last for seventeen years. And of course the banking system over there, it's a ... we've got to go in and see that; we've got to make arrangements, 'cos unless you go in, I'll show you the picture of it, you know, it works in an exquisite way, you know – pouring that water down from three [floors up] and it comes down and empties the bucket, down goes the bucket, up comes the wheel, open the door and go in – that's wonderful stuff, you know. Now one day, coming up to the end of October, and you're sitting around here, it's cold, miserable, nobody about, east winds and it's horrible, tide is in, right. I was sitting on this chair – either the left or the right – I can't remember, and a gentleman came in and he said, 'Oh,' he said, 'do you mind if I have a look at the table?' So I said, 'No, go ahead,' I said, 'have you got anything to do ... what, why – what's going on, like?' He said, 'Well,' he said, 'I'm an antique dealer,' he said, 'and I'd love to have a look at that table.' So he looked at it, he lifted it, he tipped it up on its end, he had a little look at it, wobbled the legs,

rolled it about ... and he said, 'Does the Museum own it?' I said, 'Yes,' I said, 'They own it, yes,' said, 'they own the chair as well.' He said, 'I wonder would they sell it? He said, 'I would quite be prepared,' he said, 'to give them £8,000 for that little table.' Well, I nearly fell off the chair, you know, because £8,000 for a little table like that ... and I said, 'Well, what makes it so exquisite for you?' He said, 'Because you cannot see the concealed hinges from the top,' he said, 'that's what makes it so exquisite.' So there it is; the little table – £8,000 worth! You see in front of the door here, there's another little hatchway. Now there were six hatch covers along there, and this is the seventh hatch cover – seventh – that was a hatch as well. Now we're going down to *The Peggy* itself now. Now the Manx Museum had the big idea that they would open another sailing place in here – sailing ... just a sailor's place. It all started to be fitted out 'til the tide – 'til we had a spring tide in October; and the whole place flooded, right. Now in here, underneath ... in here, after Quayle had finished with *The Peggy*, right, in all, he kept two cows in here, because there was two cow-stalls there, see, down there, right. So the cows were brought out of here, they were taken down and they were put out on where it's filled in now; so this was the little cow-house – you wouldn't think so, but it was – cow-house. You know, it was absolute magic when we came in. I mean, I was only the apprentice boat-builder then, I was only the apprentice fellow, you know. And I was kept in me place – I wasn't allowed to do this or do the other, I was kept ... 'Go away, son – get out of the road!' You know. And only I had memories to keep it all, you know, it's just the way it was.

EA-C But you'd be one of the few remaining witnesses ... to that event.

Mr M Yea, that's right. You know I had a little box camera that I took the photographs of the boat-builders down there – I wasn't allowed to be on the picture – 'No, no – not having the young fella on the pictures! No, no, get away, just take the picture.' and that's it, you know. (*laughter*) But that's where the little cow-house was, in there. And it was kept up this high to keep the tide from going in on them, see. Built up the side, to keep ... stop the tide from coming in. But this is the girl herself. This here (*laughter*) ... this is the famous *Peggy* – wonderful – 'Hiya, *Peggy*.' You see, people used to ask me why he built the gunnel up? And I said, 'Well, there's two answers why he built the gunnel up. He blocked the oar ports in, right, he put oar slots on the top, and the reason he built it up was because, when he eventually took her to Lake Windermere, via the Ulverston Canal, when he put this boat into fresh water ... opposed to salt water,

the whole boat went down. And in order to keep her up at the same level and to keep the cannons up high he had to lift this gunnel up before he went to Lake Windermere – he had to do it. Now *The Peggy* herself is 27 foot by ... I think it's about 9 foot wide here, so she's ... *The Peggy*, she's 9 foot wide, she's three times the width as her length – three nines are 27. She's a very slender boat because she was built for speed, right. Now her construction is, her planking, she's what they call clinker-built. Now those boards that she's built of are built with pitch pine. Now why on earth George chose pitch pine we never knew, and after many, many years of wondering why, we found the answer out. When he was building *The Peggy*, instead of putting collar rives [copper roves ?] through there, because copper was very scarce and it was very expensive, so what George decided to do was, he would put wrought iron clinches in her, right, because with an overlap like that you have to clinch the two boards together. Now one of the main reasons why it was pitch pine is because when they were building her and putting the planks on, they'd drill a hole through, right, then when the hole was drilled out, they heated up the clinch, they drove it through red hot, clinched it quickly on the other side. Now it melted ... the natural resin in pitch pine is pitch itself. The pitch melted, sealed the hole up and as the clinch cooled it pulled the planking so tight together that it made it so you didn't have to cork her. She's never – *The Peggy* has never ever been corked – never. Here, feel underneath, it's still lovely and tight all the way round.

EA-C Would it originally have been painted white?

Mr M Yes, this was ... she was painted the same colour ... there's the original colour there – that's the original one, right. All we did in 1950 when we took her from against the wall, when she was dragged out here, when we took her out, she was six tons of wood, jacked up, the keel was so rotten – it was an elm keel in her – it had to be taken out, it was put up in the sail-maker's loft and it's still up there today, and as luck would have it, Mr J D Qualtrough, of Qualtrough's timber yard, he was the Speaker of the House of Keys at the time, and he come down and he said, 'Is there anything I can do for you boys,' he said, 'in the way of timber?' because timber was still rationed after the war. So Mr Gawne and Mr Harrison, this is Mr Harrison the boat-builder, not Mr Harrison from the Museum, he said, 'My word,' he said, 'Mr Qualtrough, we'd love a piece of timber,' he said, 'to put a new keel into her.' He said, 'I'll send you the very piece down.' So he sent us a length of 30 foot block of timber came down – nine inches by about three inches – he said, 'I'll also send you,' he said, 'some

planking down, some garbet [garboard] planks,' – the garbet [garboard] plank that sits on the keel – he said, 'I'll send you a couple of them down as well, already done.' So they come down and with *The Peggy* jacked up – now I've shown you the picture of John Gawne, when he's sitting just here, just here, sitting here, and he just ... you see all the shavings all around him and the axe and everything, so they fitted the keel in from the stern post right up to the bow stem – completed her. Now the thing that worried them most was, what's going to happen when the tide comes in, right. Nothing ever happened when the tide came in because it's preserved, *The Peggy*. Now what they used to do was, when we used to start the season, Mr Kinley, over the Castle – curator in the Castle – he used to bring a hosepipe over and hose it out with fresh water. Now that's the worse thing to do for a boat, is hose it out with fresh ... especially a wooden boat ... with fresh water, 'cos fresh water hasn't got the same things as salt water has. But anyway, it was only done two or three times and its never been done since. But I'm hoping that this boat – she is spreading a bit – I was in last year measuring, she's spread about an inch and a half – because the cradles are not holding here, so she does need cradling in, she needs an aluminium frame put around her now to hold the whole boat together, because she is deteriorating a bit. You can see where ... people come in, you see, and they pull pieces off her, that's the sad part about it. And if you don't watch them down here they will do that, you know. You get a crowd of fellows down, you know, and they pull bits off, and they think it's clever, but it's not, because we're losing bits of *The Peggy* all the time. Now why's she called *The Peggy*? because George Quayle's mother was called Margaret – thought the world of his mother. George was never married during his lifetime and there are no little Quayles that I know of round Castletown or descendants of George Quayle – he never married. So he christened her *Peggy* after his mother. But she was called *The George Quayle*, Castletown. Now meself, I believe ... people say well, why did he change the name from *Peggy* to *The George Quayle*, Castletown? And the only answer we could all come up with was this; that when his mother died, right. In order to preserve her soul, right. He took the name ... he covered the name *Peggy* over like he would bury it, and he re-named her *The George Quayle*. Now in October, the last two weeks in October, when you come down here to shut the doors and lock up, you get a very strange feeling down here, and you feel as if there's somebody looking at you all the time. Very strange feeling – you keep looking round to see if there's anybody, and there's nobody, but it's a very strange feeling. And it only happens in the last two weeks of October – not September or August or any other – October – last two weeks.

Now six of the crew in *The Peggy*— people say, ‘How do you know there’s six in the crew?’ Because the lifejackets are hanging on these six pegs when we came in – what was left of them – leather lifejackets left hanging on them pegs – still there. You couldn’t touch them because as soon as you touched them they just simply crumbled away. Now, there are only – I think it’s only four big tides a year, isn’t it, four big tides a year. Now normally *The Peggy* would be kept down there. Now you see where it’s filled in? Forget about that for now, because down under that shingle there, is the slipway that goes down, right. Now normally he would keep her in there with the doors shut – I told you how he shut the doors by pulling the ropes and shutting the doors that way, right. Now, he would keep it out there. Now if he wanted to hide *The Peggy* away or do any maintenance on *The Peggy*, the first big high tide nearly in October or November or whenever it happens, he would pull her in. And that’s what that big winching drum up the bow is, there’s a big winching drum up there, and when you look, there’s holes in the floor, and up in the sail-maker’s loft there were two more drums up there connected together. And he used to tie the ropes on the bow of *The Peggy*, go up there with the ropes, put them on the drum, pull the drums and *The Peggy* would come in lovely – only on the water – just easy on the water, right. Now we’re just going up the steps now to have a look inside *Peggy*. Now you’ll notice that there’s no floorboards in *The Peggy* and I’ve told you the reason why there’s no floorboards in *The Peggy*, because they were burnt in *Bridge House* during the war years. Now *The Peggy*, she wasn’t a very strong boat because the ribs that are in her are oak and they were taken from the shape of the tree that they cut them from, so they didn’t have to be shaped very much. They’d look for the tree that they thought was about right and that’s what they cut them from. Now she had two masts, had two masts – a mainsail, a foresail and a jib-sail, and she had a huge boom. Now the boom is on the wall behind us here. These are the masts and of course the boom as well – here they are. And they were originally inside *The Peggy* when we came in in the 50s, and they were taken out and put on the wall and that’s where they’ve stayed ever since. Now when you look at the staking lines of *Peggy*, you’ll see she’s coming apart, you can see daylight through it. Now that’s not good, because unless they’re going to do something and spend some money on *The Peggy* they’re going to lose her eventually. If she splits apart, that’ll be the end of her. But you can see the holes, the cannons were on these little holes here – that’s where ... the original place where the cannons were. Then when he lifted the gunnel up he ... they relocated the cannons in these little holes in here – eight – four down each side. There she is – 27 foot by 9 foot I think it is.

EA-C It looks like they've raised the seats ... where they sat – where people would have sat.

Mr M Well, that's what they call the thwarts. That was the cross-member to keep the boat from falling apart, so it keeps the boat together, you know, the thwarts they call them. Or seats – they use them as seats as well. But that's where the main mast was. Now when you look at the keel of *The Peggy* you'll see there's a slot there, slot for the sliding keel there, see, down at the stern? And there's another slot up there near the bow. This was the first boat ever in the western world to have sliding keels. The only other man that had anything to do with sliding keels was a gentleman by the name of Admiral Shanks. And Admiral Shanks was a man who was in charge of the British Navy. And he had the idea of putting these sliding keels systems in the huge naval boats that he had. They experimented with them; they found no advantage because they simply put ballast in instead. But George Quayle locked onto the idea and of course, when he went to Windermere with these secret things – 'Bob's your uncle' – no problem for George!

EA-C How long did you work as an attendant here?

Mr M Six years. I done six years 'cos when I got to 75 they said, 'Goodbye boy, that's your lot!' so that was the end of that. (*laughter*) But I still love her, I still think about *The Peggy*, the years I've spent down here working, you know. One of the strangest things that ever happened was about sixteen years ago we got a message from the Manx Museum to say that somebody had put a foot through the flooring board. Mr Hemmings, who was the curator – who was the attendant down here then, was told to close the Museum. Unfortunately we didn't get down until one o'clock, down that day, and we couldn't get in. So we took the ladder off the top of the van and we propped it up against the wall in the lane where the door is, and when we looked over we'd seen Mr Hemmings lying on the walkway what we thought maybe he was asleep, but worst of all, we thought he'd died! So we said, 'Right, got to get out of here – we want nothing to do with this!' So we downed ladder, in the van, and when we were putting the ladder on the van he appeared in the window where *The Peggy* is – where the model of *The Peggy* is. Of course we got a fright because we thought he was dead, but he wasn't – he was alive. Mr Hemmings – great old fellow. Yea, that's when we were in the building trade then, you know, we used to come down and put the flagpole up and put the signs up over the harbour.

EA-C Tell me about the time when you were working as an apprentice and you had to clear out all the mud out of the boathouse.

Mr M When we first came in and the wall was taken down, there was about three inches of mud in here because, although the wall was there, the tide came through, but the mud particles had built up and built up until it was about three inches deep. So they said, ‘Well, we’ll have to get the mud cleared out.’ And of course, the apprentice, that was his job. So we got the bucket and the spade and we started. We filled the buckets up, we went up the ladder, tipped it over the harbour and that took nearly three weeks to clean the whole place out – three weeks it took us to clean the whole place out. And then, by that time, *The Peggy* had been up-righted, jacked up and ready to receive her new keel. There she is. And of course it was exciting, because you see, when you come into *The Peggy* Story, or the Nautical Museum, unless you’re prepared to step back two hundred years and try and imagine what they did in here, and try and live with them – with George Quayle, you know. Thinking and guessing what he did – guessing what he did, why he left the lifebelts on the pegs over there, you know. Why he did it and all, just simply left for posterity. He left it for posterity and that’s where she remained – luckily ‘til 1950 ‘til we got into her, yea ... absolutely magic boat, absolutely.

EA-C Would you like to have sailed in it?

Mr M I would love to have sailed in it. I had thought ... I had thought of doing a model of *The Peggy* – half-model of it, you know, so instead of 27 feet I’d do ... but I never got around to it. I got the timber and all to do it, but I never did, I never did. I wouldn’t have the patience anyway. There is one thousand, nine hundred and fifty clinches in *The Peggy* with her being clinker-built.

EA-C How do you know that?

Mr M Because there’s thirteen planks and sixty things in each plank, so it you count them up – thirteen planks each side, sixty in each plank, so that’s thirteen times sixty, thirteen times sixty, plus the odd ones that’s here and there which went up to 1,950. You see, when you’re down ... when you work down here you get a day where you get nobody in, and you can’t just sit. I’m not a great reader, I’m not a great reader, and I used to say, ‘Well, what’ll I do? I know what I’ll do, I’ll go down and I’ll count the clinches in *The Peggy*.’ And I would get down on me

hands and knees and I would count them and count them and count them and I'd put a little chalk mark where I'd got to. I thought, 'Well, I'll leave that, that's enough for today, I'll do a bit more tomorrow.' You see, and that's how it went on, you know. So ...

EA-C Over the years you were working here, how many people do you think you've shown *The Peggy* to?

Mr M Oh, gosh! It's hard to say, it's very, very ... I would say in the region of about 5,000 I would think, yes. Six years ... but I was in here once ... there was a captain in Castletown here, a Captain Kinley, and Captain Kinley was skipper of the Manx Stream Packet boats, and he came into me one day and he says, 'I come in John,' he said, 'to have a look at *The Peggy*,' he said, 'I've never seen her,' he said. So I told him the story about *The Peggy*; and it was in TT week, and there was a whole lot of TT fellows came in and they were standing in the dock, and I was talking to Mr Kinley, and Mr Kinley turned round these six motorcycle fellows in leathers and he said, 'Do you know, boys,' he said, 'of all the years,' he said, 'I've been bringing you people in,' he said, 'on the Steam Packet boat,' he said, 'you were never any trouble.' He said. 'I'd like to thank the six of you now,' you know. And you kind-of fill up, you know, because here he was, a captain, thanking these fellows for being so good on his boat! And he said, 'The people who come for the rally – the car rally,' he said, 'they're totally different,' he said, 'they wreck the blinking place, you know,' he said, 'they're terrible, but,' he said, 'the motorcycle fellows – always been good on the Steam Packet, you know.' Okay, we've come up in now what we call the Fishing Gallery, but there was never a fishing gallery in George Quayle's days – this was the tack room. And right in front of us where there's a blue board with some notices on, behind there is an opening door and a set of steps that brought you in and out of here. Because, if you remember, that hole wasn't there, that didn't happen 'til 1964 so that's just the way in. Now this is where they kept all the leather stuff for the horses. He kept all the kinds of things that you would use to have a horse. So that's the way in. Now out here – let me open the window – if it'll still open – when you open it, it looks down into the yard and you can see the set of steps and the door that would give you access up into here. Now of course in here we've got models, we've got the *Nicky's* punt, which sadly is starting to deteriorate too, see? All these things ... little things are happening to it. Now the Manx fishing fleet, during the 1800s and late 1700s were made up of two vessels; one was called a *Nicky*, which we can see the

model of there – CT11, and the other one was called a *Nobby*, which was a slightly smaller one. Now a *Nobby* – you’ve got a photograph of it there, and when you look at it, it’s got what we call a bow sprit on her, right. The *Nickys* didn’t have a bow sprit, but the *Nobbys* did, and they were slightly smaller.

EA-C What difference would the bow sprit make?

Mr M It would make a lot of difference of the sailing of it, because you could vary it, pull it in to reduce the sail or you could push it out to enhance the sail. So if you pulled it in, you had it ... it was too windy, and of course you didn’t catch the same amount of wind with it pulled in, but when you pushed it out, you got more sail. Six of the crew in the *Nicky* as I said; four of the crew on a *Nobby*. There’s one *Nobby* left now over in Peel called *The White Heather*. She’s the last one, belonging to a gentleman called Mr Clark, and it’s for sale if you’re interested for £50,000 – the last of the *Nobby*’s – the very, very last – *The White Heather* it’s called. Now this is the far part that we re-roofed during the 1970s. We tore the whole roof off, we re-roofed it, we were down here the whole winter and although I can’t remember the year, I know it was the year that Mr Harrison started – the very same year – so whatever year he started was when we done all these roofs. They all had to be done and ...’cos they were in such a bad state, so we did them – spent the whole winter down here.

EA-C Was it dangerous work being up there?

Mr M No, no it wasn’t dangerous at all – no, no, no, wasn’t dangerous. We rather enjoyed it ‘cos it got us away from all the other men. I just had an apprentice with me, we just cracked on all winter, sorting the slates out, putting them on the roof, nailed them down, cutting them – oh, we had a good time. Then, of course, the following winter this place was refurbished. New floor was put down and it had to be strengthened because the net knitting machine had come in, weighing a couple of ton, so it had to be strengthened. Mr Gawne, who I told you about before, who give us the model of *The Peggy* and who came in here in 1935, gave us his little *Nicky*’s punt and this is where it is now, here in front of us – the *Nicky*’s punt. It was ... although it’s got a pair of oars in it, you could never row this little boat because it’s too wide. So what you did, you took an oar out, and you be very familiar with Elizabeth, you sculled it out at this hole at the back, so you sculled it, and that’s how it came out. There it is. We went down to Perwick and when he gave it to us, and when we were putting it on the

lorry, Mr Gawne, he had tears in his eyes – he had tears in his eyes, Mr Gawne, when we went down to collect it from him. So there you go, that's the *Nicky's* punt. Used to get access to the bigger boat that's anchored out in the bay, take food out, take supplies out, so ... and then they brought it behind them for safety's sake.

EA-C But also used for fishing?

Mr M All used for fishing, yea.

EA-C What kind of fish would they have had?

Mr M Herring – mostly herring. And then, you see, in those days, an awful lot of farmers, while the crops were growing, the farmers had to go to sea to fish. Now when the end of the summer came, they all had to go back to harvest the crops, which meant now there wasn't enough men to man the boats. So instead of going for the herring, they all went down to Southern Ireland and fished white fish down there – most of them, but not all of them because they were short of crews now because all the farmers had all gone back to the farms again.

EA-C Hmm.

Mr M Now a steam capstan winch – very unique. We never knew 'til two gentlemen come in one day looking at this capstan winch and these winches were eventually put on board the *Nicky* to pull the nets in, because the nets were over a mile and a half or two mile long. Now to create the steam for them was quite easy because they had plenty of timber and stuff floating about in the water so they lit the fire down underneath, the steam was injected up into this and of course they'd pull the nets in with it. Now these weren't made in the Isle of Man, they came into a company called Knox Engineering who at that time were down in Lake Road, Douglas – that's down now where that new building is that Heritage Homes are building in the little road at the side – Knox Engineering. They brought them in in kits and they were put together in a kit form. And of course they were sold to the fishermen and of course they were a big asset to them because they needn't pull the nets in, they could winch it in, mile and a half net full of fish – a lot to pull in – the winch, that's what the winch was used for. The last time this net-knitting machine was used, according to me father, in Qualtrough's Timber Yard was 1935, the same year that John Gawne found *The*

Peggy. And it was then made obsolete because nylon came in and of course these cotton nets all went out and cotton nets only lasted so long, they had to be coated with a thing called 'bark,' you know, to preserve them, but anyway that went out and of course it went ... it was no longer used, so we got it in here. Ship's biscuits; this machine here, this garbit machine, this machine was originally over in Peel and it used to make ship's biscuits. Now ship's biscuits is a very simple mixture of flour, salt and water – that's all they are. And they were baked 'til they were like concrete. Now when they mixed the pastry for them they used to put the 'dunk' of pastry on top of this – what they call the yeast board. And when the handle was on, you turned the handle, set in motion, the pastry disappeared down this first hole and it crushed it to that thickness – see? Then it went down through the next set of rollers and came out eventually onto the canvas board. Now as you turned the handle they went down, *plop, plop, plop* – out they went, you took them off, put them in the oven and baked like ... baked so hard that you couldn't ... you had to soften them with water or milk. And the reason they took them on board ship was, on the *Nickys* or the *Nobbys* when they went out for two or three days fishing, in case they ran out of rations it was an emergency ration. Now one of the main reasons why they were baked so hard is, because these ships were full of weevils. And the weevils used to attack the flour but they couldn't attack the ship's biscuits because they were so hard, right, that they didn't bother with them, so they kept ship's biscuits. Yea, we're looking at a photograph now of a ship, which I know, is down in the Falkland Islands and she was part of the Karran fleet and she was called *The Lady Elizabeth*. Now when things got hard, times got hard, the Karran family simply left her there. Now one of the unique things that happened to me in here one day was, there were three SAS men came in here. Now I didn't know they were SAS men and these three SAS men said, 'Do you know,' he said, 'when we were down in the Falkland Islands fighting the Falklands war,' he said, 'we were stationed on an old boat,' he said, 'called *The Lady Elizabeth*,' he said, 'we were stationed on it. And,' he said, 'when I go back home,' he said, 'I'll send you a photograph.' So he sent me the photographs of *The Lady Elizabeth*. Now they've got one here – so there she is. And the SAS used it as a base when the Falklands war was on, yea. Now we've come up into the little Exhibition Gallery now, and originally, in George Quayle's day, with them having horses and stuff to drive the *Landor* around, they used to have a stock of hay and stuff up in here. And where we're looking at now, what is now a window, was actually a door which you'd swing open, load the bales of hay in, and of course store them in here until it was time to

feed them. Now when we were repairing this floor in 1967, we found mountains and mountains of corn seed and stuff. And with taking the ceiling down it all disappeared, but they were all trapped underneath – your corn seeds and stuff. But up here – this has all changed since I was here last, three or four years ago, all the exhibition of the different things, all well done by the Manx Museum of course, they do a splendid job when they're exhibiting things – I don't know a great deal about the *Brig Lily*, except she exploded and there was eight or nine killed. But the one I do know about was a ship called *The Clan MacMaster*. Now *The Clan MacMaster* came up, I think, in the '30s. She was heading off for America and she had a load of *Singer* sewing machines, right. And when she came up on the rocks of course, just like the *Lux* toilet soap, people gets the better of people and every house in Cregneash had a *Singer* sewing machine in it, so *The Clan MacMaster*, she was carrying a cargo of *Singer* sewing machines (*laughter*) – I mean, whether you wanted a sewing machine or not, you had to have one because it's for nothing! (*laughter*)

EA-C A nice ornament in the corner of the room!

Mr M That's right – keep it polished!

EA-C Yes.

Mr M But Manx people, when they buy anything they cover everything over, you know, so we've got a new ... we've got a *Singer* sewing machine, with salt water in it, we'll clean it up – we must cover it over because we don't want people to see it! (*laughter*) We're in now what we call the Sail-Maker's Loft. Now this was never ever a sail-maker's loft, it's simply too small. So this is where George Quayle himself worked. And if you look down – when we're looking down at the very end you'll see his bench down there, where he worked on, you'll see his telescope, but all the rest of the things all have to do with sail-making – everything that you see. Fids, mallets, you name it, it's all here – all kinds of stuff; bellows there, all sorts of things for sail-making. But this was never a sail-maker's loft, it was George Quayle's workshop – that's where he worked. Yea, that's the original keel and when you look over on the right hand side on the ledge, that's the original elm keel we took out of *The Peggy* in 1950. It was brought up here – it took six of us to carry it up and put it on there, and that's where it's remained ever since. Elm – the same wood as they make coffins of – well, not now, not unless you want to pay for it – you get chipboard

now. But ... there's the elm keel. Now down on the – when you look at the right-hand side, down under the floor where that bench is, is where the original wire went from the little cupboard out to the end where you hooked it and pulled it and released the lower latches off and you got into the wine cupboard that way. Why the windows were so small? Because houses in those days were taxed on the amount of daylight that came into the houses and that's why up here, you see, there's only two little skylights in here. So if you wanted to work in here, you'd have to bring candles or bring a lamp up, and work in here with a lamp or a candle. But that's ... they were taxed by the amount of light that came through. I mean, in October when you get the dark easterly wind, you know, it's pitch dark in here, it's a different life altogether when it's dark. You know you forget about the outside – you forget about the outside until you walk out through the door and it all floods back in again, doesn't it? But when you walk in like, you're walking back 200 years and that's what you live for an hour and a half, you know. *(laughter)* It's a little living Museum – in Castletown of all places, in Castletown. But did Captain Bligh walk on that floor? Did he walk on the floor? Yes, no, yes, no. *(laughter)*

EA-C It'll always be a mystery.

Mr M Oh, it'll be a mystery – perhaps that's a good thing, perhaps that's a good thing. Always in doubt whether something happened, you know, oh well, did he or did he not? But I believe he did, so I'm going to stick to that. *(laughter)*

EA-C Thank you very much Mr McGowan for this very interesting and fascinating tour of the Nautical Museum in Castletown.

Mr M It's been an absolute pleasure because I love the place so much I could come down and do a tour any time. But unfortunately time has caught up with me and I'm no longer a member of Manx National Heritage, which is very sad. I don't know why they turf you out when you're 75, but there you go. Thank you very much indeed.

END OF INTERVIEW