

## Participant 2: David James

### Location 1: Beginnings

Where did it all start? Well, our family has lived near Pembroke Castle for 300 years continuously, which means that local stories were passed down from father to son, to son, to son...so when I was a small boy, my father told me the tales of Pembroke Dock, about the Japanese warship, and the tree the Captain had planted, and the Japanese graves in Angle: in fact, he can remember the funeral of the Japanese sailors in Angle. So all these little stories sort of stuck with me, and I thought that I mustn't hang onto them, because after my day they'll just be gone. So that's where it all started! Well, my name is David James. I've lived in Pembroke Dock nearly all my life: I grew up in Pembroke Dock, and so this is where my roots are. And growing up in a place you learn a lot about the place, especially if it's come down through the family. Now, I've become a local historian. I mess about building model ships and, surprisingly, people want them! But I build ships that – before I build a ship, I think, 'who would want this ship?' So I say to somebody, 'do you want me to build a model of the Hiei?' 'Oh yes, please!' So I build a model of the Hiei, and off it goes to the museum, which means my wife doesn't have to dust it! So anyway, one of the ships I haven't built is the Caesar: now this is a tale of Victorian Britain. Now in Victorian Britain everybody was very class conscious, which meant that, if you were a labourer, you were a labourer, and your daughter could not marry the vicar's son, he was higher in the class. And if you met somebody with superior class, you stood up, hands by your side, and looked down, and spoke only when you were spoken to. Right – now HMS Caesar, she was planned for July 21st, 1853, that was their launch day. Now on a launch day Pembroke Dock closed, everybody went into the dockyard, people from the surrounding areas came, and you could have as many as 10,000 people in the dockyard to see this, especially when the railway came – they would have excursions from Cardiff and Swansea and the Welsh valleys to come down to see, especially the royal yacht of 1899.

Anyway, going back to HMS Caesar: everybody was flocking in, all in their Sunday best – nice white shirts, and shiny shoes – and Betty Foggy turns up with her daughter. Now Betty Foggy was rather scruffy, she didn't like soap very much, and there was a sort of aura about her...and she got to the gate, and somebody says, 'Betty, you can't come in here, you're too scruffy and dirty!'

'You're going in? I'm coming in!'

'Oh, no you aren't!'

'I *am* now!'

Anyway, there was a real commotion, and the captain superintendent of the dockyard came down, you know, with all his medals, his sword, his tricorn hat, and he came up. And the people said, 'look, don't let her in, she's too dirty – go away!' And so the captain turns to Betty Foggy: 'I'm terribly sorry, my dear, but I think it would be better if you went home.' She looked him in the eye, and pulled up a grubby finger and almost poked him in the chest, and said, 'if you sent me home you better send all these home, there will be no launching today!' And she stormed off up the street and grumbling and mumbling – you know how it is. Anyway the captain superintendent was shocked – I mean, if that had happened on a ship she'd have been flogged, it was as simple as that. Anyway they all went down and listened to the speeches, the bottle of champagne cracked open, they pulled the lever...the ship slip halfway down the dock and stuck. So there was no launching! They say Betty

Foggy put a spell on it – but really, what happened is they had soft wood in the ways, so as the ship slid, she stuck. But she hung there for 17 days and the dockyard mateys couldn't go home – they were all in their Sunday best trying to save the ship. They got it off after 17 days anyway – but telling the story about the witchcraft is much more interesting than the sticking on the firs!

## **Location 2: Japanese Memorial**

I very often get asked to go and address groups, you know, the Pembrokeshire History Society and the Pembroke and Monkton History Society and people like that. And I go around and I meet fascinating people, you know. Really, I think the most important story is the Japanese war grave in Angle, plus the Hiei battleship and the ginkgo tree. One of the tales my father told me was that he remembered some Japanese sailors being buried in Angle cemetery in 1918: he was 13 then. So I remember that! And, I mean, I grew up, married, got a family, got a mortgage, and when everything was settled, I thought, 'what's that in dad's tale?' So I went down to Angle and saw the vicar and said, 'look, my dad told me about some Japanese sailors being buried here.' 'That's right – come and look at the burial record.' There it was. They gave the name of the ship and the name of one of the men – because one of the men was a steward, and he had on his jacket the name of the ship and his own name. So I thought, 'right – I know the ship.' So I went away, and I thought, 'I will build a memorial,' because their memorial have gone. And in World War 1, Japan was our ally. So I got hold of the War Graves Commission and said, 'there's a grave here with no memorial: will you put a memorial on it?' 'No, because they're merchant seamen.'

If they were servicemen, they would have done, you know? But merchant seamen – 'oh right, there we are, fair enough.' So I thought about it; I designed them a memorial, took it to the vicar and asked would the church except this – yes – so I started raising funds. Then my wife had a brainwave: she said, 'you know the name of the ship; why don't you Google it and see if the company that owned the ship is still going?' So I did that, and lo and behold up it popped! So I sent an email to Tokyo: two days later back they came: 'we're sending some people to see you.' So two people from their office in London came down to see me – very pleasant. So I took them to Angle and said, 'look, there's the burial record.' 'Oh, this is wonderful!'

And I took them over to the grave: 'oh, I see what you mean!' They were over the moon. And then one of them said, 'how much money do you want?' I said, 'I'll need three and a half thousand more pounds. 'You've got it.' As quick as that! So I appointed the stonemason, we had the memorial carved – and my big fear was, I wanted the inscription in Japanese *and* Welsh *and* English. And I thought, 'well, I don't know Japanese – supposing somebody puts it on there, and a Japanese gentleman comes along and says, 'why does it say No Parking?!' Anyway, I did some research and I found there's a Japanese lady living in Manorbier, Pembrokeshire. So I rang her up and explained the circumstances and she said, 'do you want me to instruct the stonemason?' I didn't even have to ask! And since then we've become close friends. The feeling I get is that the Japanese people are very conscious of their ancestors, they revere their ancestors – and because I'm British and doing something for their ancestors, they really want to help.

Anyway, the date was the 4<sup>th</sup> of October 1918 the ship went down. So on the centenary, the 4<sup>th</sup> of October 2018, I arranged for it – and I managed to persuade his Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester to come down, our Lord Lieutenant was

there, and dignitaries from Pembrokeshire County Council and other dignitaries – and of course, the Angle people themselves. And there was a diplomat from the Japanese embassy and several other envoys from the embassy, a Japanese film crew. Anyway from that I thought, I've unveiled a memorial that will not disappear. But no – this Japanese lady that helped me a lot, she said, 'David, you have erected a memorial; I wish to have an Obon Festival on it.' I said, 'I'm sorry, I don't know what an Obon Festival is.'

'We go there on a day in August and we put flowers: we remember our ancestors and have a party. Would I like to go?'

'Well, why not?'

So I went there, and suddenly found I was in a leading role, you know – I had to lead the prayers and things, which is fine, you know. So I led the prayers. And the party after was great fun! So, strangely, the Japanese people go down there very often to clean the memorial and lay flowers – that's the degree of respect they have. And on the unveiling day, there were several people from Tokyo. They'd flown over especially from Tokyo – and one of them came up to me, and she said, 'not only have you remembered my ancestors, but you've done something about it so they won't be forgotten.' Could she be my granddaughter? So I looked at my wife ... so she's now my honorary granddaughter! And we exchange emails about everything, you know – so the world is awfully small place!

### **Location 3: Heritage Centre (Model Ship Hiei), Gingko Tree**

So the story changes then. During all this campaigning to raise the memorial, whenever I came into contact with Japanese journalists, dignitaries, and people like that, I would make sure that they saw everything connected with Japan in Pembrokeshire – I mean, I've got to blow the trumpet! So after seeing the grave, I took them into the dockyard and the heritage centre; I showed them the model Hiei that I built; I took them into the master shipwrights house and said, 'look – this is the tree that Admiral Togo planted,' and they said, 'okay, what's the story?' Well, in 1877 Japan had no navy. So they came to Britain to build a Navy for them – Britain built everybody's navy in those days! So they built three ships. One of them was in Pembroke Dock, and that was the Hiei, – but it wasn't in the dock here, it was in a private yard. It was launched in 1877, and the Japanese ambassador came down – Prince Hatchisuka from Japan; Schliemann who discovered Troy was there, Reuters, founder of the news agency was there – great festivities! Now the first lieutenant on the ship could little man call Heihachirō Tōgō. Now, he rose up through the Japanese Navy – had a meteoric rise – and he was the man that destroyed the Russian fleet at Tsushima in 1905. So all of a sudden, I said 'well, okay, he had this ship, and when he left Britain, he sent a tree back. And the message was "please plant this tree to show my appreciation of your kindness to me during my stay in Pembroke Dock." The tree was planted, the tree grew...' and all the Japanese people's eyes lit up: 'Oh David, can I bless the tree?' – you know, put their hands on the tree and said a little prayer. And since then the whole thing's escalated! One of them turned to me and said, 'David, you've got to get a cutting off this tree.' I said, 'what for?' 'I would like to take it back to Tokyo and plant it a place of honour for Admiral Togo.' Alright – so I got in touch with the National Botanic Garden of Wales: their staff came down and took the cuttings, and fortunately they took about 30. They took them to the Botanic Garden, potted them, grew them on nicely, and all of a sudden I had inquiries from all over Japan! 'Can we have a gingko tree? Can we have Admiral Togo's tree?' It's almost like blue plaques here, you know – Admiral

Togo slept here – right, a tree goes there! It's terrific! And one of them – the name of the town escapes for me for the moment...Kagoshima. Our granddaughter was going there, and she said, 'David, you'll have to come.' I said, 'look, I'm rather ill, I'm quite seriously ill, and I can't fly.' And I said to her, would she act on my behalf, because they asked me to make a speech. So I thought, 'crumbs! You know, that would be something!' So I wrote my speech, emailed it to her, she translated it into Japanese, and there she is standing up in front of all these gentlemen, reading my speech, and I thought, 'wow!' So it really is a tiny world! And of course it's still rolling on.

There's one thing about it: the master shipwright's house where the tree is growing has changed hands recently, and I was terrified that the new owner would chop the tree down. So I thought, 'I can't have this!' so I went to see him to introduce myself. I said, 'do you realize the significance of that ginkgo tree there?' 'No!' So I told him the story. Now the master shipwright's house is a lovely old house built in about 1815, 1816, and it's four stories high. Now he's converting the top two stories, but he's giving them a Japanese decor. And he's saying, 'Japanese people, come and stay here, stay in the house where Admiral Togo lived.' And they can go down the garden and bless Admiral Togo's tree. So all these things are coming together, you know? You know, my favourite places in Pembroke Dock would probably be the Master Shipwright's house with the ginkgo tree, the Heritage Centre and the dockyard, because those are things I can relate to and I feel intimate with, and the people there, they know, and they can feed me with information – it's a two-way thing, you know, it's got to be.

#### **Location 4: The street David grew up on**

I tell you what, I'll start with my family because that will lead on to a natural progression. Now in 1926, the Pembroke Dockyard closed. My father lost his job. So he had to leave and go to London to look for a job. He married mother, then I turned up – great! And then the bloke with the little moustache blew our house to bits in the blitz, you know, and Dad said, 'right – I think we'll go home.' Now Mother was a very strong woman, you know, she was a lovely woman and she was strong. None of this post-traumatic stress thing, right? 'We're all alive. We're all safe. We'll go back to Wales.' Then on the train on the way back, there was a raid in Pembroke Dock that destroyed *that* house.

So we moved then into a farm in Cosheston, where I am now. We lived there for a couple of years, and then we got a house in Pembroke Dock when I was about five. So I grew up in a little terraced street. It was a nice house, it had about seven or eight rooms – at the time, it had an outside toilet, and the tap in the backyard, oh that was luxury! Anyway as the years went on I grew up, and gradually we got ourselves a bathroom and water inside. They were very happy times.

But as a small boy, I was forever messing about on the beach because it was only down the road and around the corner – sort of fiddling about with boats and fishing and looking for crabs and things like that. I can remember one occasion when I came home, and I had a jacket on, and mother said to me, 'what have you got in your pocket, it's moving?' 'Oh, I've got an eel Mum!' I'd caught an eel and shoved it in my pocket! Mother was not impressed. They didn't own it, they rented it, you know? So when they died that was the end, there was a whole new chapter then. But it was a nice house, and you know what it's like, you get to make friends with all the kids in the street, and the railway was down the bottom of the street. And they say I was forever messing about on the beach and in and out of boats, fishing and pottering about. We never had any money, but we were happy. We were doing things that we

didn't realize, but we were learning a heck of a lot about nature. Like, how many species of crabs can I find? When you're a 10 year old boy, how many different crabs can I find? And it's surprising, if you know where to look, how many there are! I mean, I had an innate curiosity about life and nature and the world around me. Anyway, I grew up and then I got a job as a plumber. And then when that finished I was conscripted into the British army with national service, you know, and I did two years. The first year, they sent our regiment to Libya, to a place called Benghazi, and that was good fun. We were only playing cowboys and Indians, they never gave us real ammunition, not surprising! And then we came home on a troop ship, the entire regiment. And then a few weeks later they shipped us out to Berlin in Germany, you know: at the time, the Russians were very much in control, and I was there in August 1961 when they built the Berlin Wall. The first I knew of it was – I'd been out on the beer with the boys, you know what soldiers are like! – and we were sort of wandering through the barrack gate, not very straight, and I walked straight into the RSM, and he looked at me, and he said, 'rocking horse.' I thought, 'oh God, not that!' So I shot into the guard room – 'I'm in, sign me in!' – up to my room, put my battle dress uniform on, down to the armoury, draw the machine gun, the ammunition, and the spare parts, and then stand in the square. So I stood there, and my mate came wandering over, and a truck turns up. 'Okay lads, you two in here!' So in we went and across Berlin. We stopped at a main road: six soldiers got out, one sergeant, and us two on the Bren gun. 'Dig in, lads.' I thought, 'crumbs, the entire red army's 100 yards away, and there's us here!' Anyway, one of our tanks came down the road and the driver stuck his head out: 'hiya boys, how're we doing?' He reversed into a little lane, and we sat there all night thinking, 'what are those silly blighters doing down there?' Then the order came to stand down. And we went back to barracks and I thought, 'well, what *were* they doing?' So when I was off duty I went down, and I arrived at the place where we were dug in, and there was a road and a damaged wall and then a space – and then The Wall. There were lots of people starting on this broken wall looking over. And there was a huge Alsatian dog on his hind legs posed against the Berlin Wall looking over, you know, 'my master's over there,'... and then there was the East German Volkspolizei sort of patrolling, making sure nobody escaped. And I got away with that anyway! But it was fun, you know? And after that, the Berliners thought we were wonderful. 'Oh, you're a British Tommy! We love Tommys!' That was a wonderful posting for a serviceman! Anyway after that I left, and I went back to doing plumbing. And after a while, I thought, 'I'm not going to do this for the rest of my life.' At the time, it was three o'clock in the morning. I was in the middle of a trench in the road, trying to mend a pipe. It was pouring with rain – the rain was going down the back of my neck and coming out of the leg of my trousers. I thought, 'I'm not going to do this for the rest of my life.' So I managed to get promoted, and then I started climbing up, you know, and then eventually, I became a building inspector, which meant that if somebody wanted to build something, the plan would land on my desk. I'd check it, and I'd approve it, and then I'd go on site to do site supervision, you know? So it was a good job. The beauty of it was that if it was raining, I could sit and look at plans in the office, but if the sun shone, like today, I'd say, 'oh blow the office, I'm going out on site!' So I had the best of both worlds! And I found I could work with the builders, you know – I'd sort of walk on site, 'oh hi, how's the family doing? Have you done any fishing lately?' To the foreman, you know, and that used to melt the crustiest foreman going – 'Hang on, this bloke's not throwing his weight around!' – and then we'd talk. 'What are you trying to do?'

'So and so...'

'Well look, you know that's not right. I'll go away and come back tomorrow and I'm sure it will be right.'

'Oh, yes.'

And that always worked. And then after that, when I retired, whenever I'd meet it was 'hello Dave, how are you getting on?' The builders could see that I was helping them, not hindering them. One of my comrades, oh dear – the sort of man who could start a fight in an empty room – he'd go on a site alone and there'd be fireworks. And I thought, 'what on earth are you doing?' but there's nowt so queer as folk, as they say in Yorkshire!

### **Location 5: Hancock's Yard**

And then of course, when I retired, it took me about 10 minutes to get used to being retired! Before retirement I had joined an organization called the West Wales Maritime Heritage Society, and for 34 years I was their company secretary – which was good fun because it enabled me to build the network that I've got now. And, you know, I kept the network going because I'm feeding emails here there and everywhere, and just keeping the pot boiling. But a couple of years ago, I thought, hang on. This is getting a bit onerous. I'm well into to my 80s. This is getting a bit onerous. So I retired, and left them to it – but their yard is still there, and they've got a few interesting books in there, but nothing connected with Japan. But the yard they're in is known as Hancock's Yard. This could be another bracket now...so the yard the West Wales Maritime Heritage Society is in was once known as Hancock's yard. Now, an ancestor of Hancock bought the yard in 1921. He built trawlers and small coasting vessels. In fact, in the late 1970s, he built four ships for Ireland – the Daunt Rock, the Fastnet Rock, the Scellig Rock and the Tusker Rock, and they went to Ireland. So they were quite active, but the business crashed in 1979. So me being a bit daft, I thought, 'I mustn't lose this,' – so being local, I knew all the men that worked there, so I'd go and see them – 'hello Fred, can you tell me something about your time in Hancock's?' 'Oh, yeah!' But it got ridiculous. I would be going around the supermarket and I'd see somebody, 'oh, hi Alan! You used to work in Hancock's!' And there I'd be in the middle of the aisles, taking notes, you know? The most hilarious one was when I was in the surgery awaiting my appointment, and somebody came in, and then somebody else came in, and I said, 'you two used to work in Hancock's!' And my wife goes, 'oh god, he's at it again!' So there was me interviewing these two in the middle of the doctor's surgery, but everybody else was listening – you know, lightening the mood of it. I brought the book together, and had it printed, and it sold quite well. But on the opening, I managed to find the last of the Hancock's to come down and attend the book launch and say his piece – well in fact, he was kind enough to write the foreword for me, so it's got a stamp of authenticity on it. So he did that and then I did a talk afterwards – and I suddenly realized the room was full of Hancock's men! So I started with one story and all of a sudden at the back, 'that was me! I did that! Fred, you were there as well, you remember that, don't you?' And all of a sudden it wasn't me telling the story, but the audience! All these tales were flying backwards and forwards! I should have taken an hour, but you know it went on for three hours! Nobody wanted to go! But it was fun, you know?

### **Location 6: Medieval Ships**

*The Medieval Ships of Pembrokeshire:* Now in St David's Cathedral, there are

carvings of two medieval ships from about the 11th or 12th centuries. They're on the misericords – for the benefit of your listeners, in the choir stalls the seats are hinged and lift up, and the seats are so thick that if a man is standing up, he can sort of perch himself on the thick edge of the seat with comfort – so it looks as if he's standing up, but he's actually perched on the edge of the seat! Now on the underside of the seat the carpenters were allowed to carve anything – so you go around and you find dragons biting their tails, you find owls, you find Jonah and the Whale and so on. And I found these two little ships, and I went and asked permission, 'do you mind if I photograph these two little ships?' 'Yes, no problem.' And then I said, 'do you have any graffiti in the cathedral?' 'What do you mean?' I said, 'well I've heard in some churches in East Anglia, when a member of the congregation got bored, they'd pull a knife out and actually carve a ship in the stone work of the cathedral. Have you got any of them?' 'Oh, I know what you mean!' So off we went into a little obscure corner and there were two more! 'That's all we have.' 'Oh, we'll have a look at this!' So I photographed them. And then to add to the mix, Haverfordwest town and Tenby town have both got town seals: the Haverfordwest one is 1277 and the Tenby one is 1399. So those were the six ships – and then I started weaving a tale around it, you know, and it's fascinating! I even built a model of the Haverfordwest ship and that's in Haverfordwest now, so again, the wife doesn't have to dust it! Well my ships are scattered about all over the place. There are four in the Heritage Centre, there's one in Haverfordwest, there's one in Milford, there's two in Tenby, so they're scattered about all over the place – but I've got photographs of them.

### **Location 7: Front Street**

I've got a little book somewhere on my bookshelf, *Strange happenings in Pembrokeshire*. It's not a very thick book, but it's got reams and reams of tales. I think I can call one up: 'The savage toads of Trellifant'. Trellifant was a village somewhere in North Pembrokeshire, and it had savage toads. And apparently these toads took to biting one man – I don't know, it was something to do with his sins or something. So how could they keep these toads away from this man? So they put him in a sack and hung the sack in the tree. And the following morning, there were only bones there!

I think another tale is HMS Asp. She was in the Pembroke Dockyard, and there was a sentry standing on the gangplank to stop people going in and out. And he said that he saw a lady walking across the deck. He didn't take much notice because she went in under the fo'c'stle and disappeared. He reported to his sergeant who thought, 'he's a dull boy, there's nothing there!' So anyway, the sergeant came down, she came out again and he was frightened – he went tearing off!

There's one little farm in Pembrokeshire, it used to be called the Gandir's Nest – spelled not as in a male goose, but g-a-n-d-i-r. Some people came down from England and thought, 'this is stupid' so they changed the name of the farm. But I did some digging, and I found that the Vikings had settled in Pembrokeshire, and the Gandir with -ir was some sort of Norse monster! So, I don't know whether that referred to the man that lived there or to some mythical beast in the woods!

There's a tremendous amount of history here in Vikings, because a lot of the towns in Pembrokeshire have still got Viking names. One is called Hubberston after Hubba. He was one of three brothers: there was Hubba, Halfdan and Huingar I think. They landed in East Anglia; Huingar went north, Halfdan went south, and Hubba came due west – I mean, hopping round in the ships and all – and in the winter of 1000 AD he stayed in what is now Hubberston, and drew his ships up on the beach. A few

years ago they built a refinery there. They cleared away all the topsoil, and there was this Viking settlement – so he has been here. And Haverford West is called after another of his chieftains called Havard. Before the Vikings, the Saxons were here, and named everything with Saxon names. So Havard marches up to a town called Deepstowe, takes it by force and says ‘I don’t like the name of Deepstowe: from now on it’ll be Havard’s Fjord – which over the years has mutated to Haverford. And in the 18th or 19th century, they added ‘West,’ because Haverford is very close to Hereford, which is a different town. So they stuck a ‘West’ on the end.

### **Location 8: Dockyard wall/The Dockyard Mateys**

These are the tales of the dockyard mateys in the Pembroke Royal Dockyard in the time of Queen Victoria. Now, the dockyard matey's, they were notorious for stealing things, and so the police – not the local police, the Metropolitan Police from London – came down and manned the gates, and everybody going out was searched. So the dockyard mateys worked out ways to get things past the police! One trick was, a lot of people that came to work from the south side of the Haven came on bicycles; so what they’d do was, they’d take the saddle off the bicycle, pour small contraband like nails and screws into the frame of the bicycle, and put the saddle back on – which was all right until the coppers rumbled it!

The funniest one is Tom the blacksmith. Now Tom, he was a young man. He'd been married about a year, and his wife had just give him a marvellous baby boy. And of course, Tom was full of it – ‘oh, my boy’s gonna grow up to be admiral of the fleet, prime minister, general of the army...’ and all sorts of things. So his mates got a bit fed up with this and said, ‘Tom, how could he be that good? You haven't even got a pram to put him in!’ ‘Ah, um...’ So Tom went away and had a think. ‘I shall make a pram!’ So Tom made all the metal parts, the carpenters made the wooden parts, the sailmakers made the mattress – and they found some lovely shirt material for sheets and the pillow – and the painters painted it, and it was a real work of art. Then Tom had to hide it in the foundry so that nobody could see it and no dust settled on it.

How to get it out?

A few weeks, later, a launch was due. Now, launch days in Pembroke Dock, everybody came. They put their Sunday best on, and they flocked into the yard, and they listened to the speeches and cheered when the champagne broke. So in comes Tom in his Sunday best with his wife, and the baby wrapped up in a Welsh shawl. They came in, and rather than go to the front, they stood at the back of the crowd. Tom slipped away to the foundry, got the pram, and they put the baby in the pram, wrapped him in the shawl, and then after the launch his proud wife pushed the pram up to the police post and the policeman thought, ‘something's wrong here!’ He pulled the shawl back and the little baby grinned at him. ‘Oh, there's a lovely babby! Off you go!’ So Tom goes straight out through the gate with the pram! At the same time, all the dockyard mateys were putting bets on this. ‘How’s he gonna get it out? Will he get caught? Here’s five bob to say he’ll get caught! Here’s ten bob to say he won’t!’

### **Location 9: More Matey Mischief**

Another funny one, the tobacco switch I call it. Royal Navy ships, when they came in for repair to the Pembroke Dockyard, they didn't like to bring them up to the quayside for two reasons: rats would go into the ship from the dock, and the sailors, they weren’t above sort of nipping ashore and going to the local pub, you know? So they’d tie the ship up to a buoy to avoid all this. So the dockyard mateys had to go out to the ship to do whatever needed to be done, and so there was a sort of black

market trade between the sailors and the dockyard matey's. Now, one dockyard matey, he had amassed a great amount of tobacco, and he'd put it in a cardboard box, and he thought, 'how can I get this out? Because if I put it on the back of my bicycle, the policemen are sure to open the box and I'll lose it.' So he thought and he thought, and he had a brainwave – he found a second identical box, and he caught the scrawny dockyard cat, and he put this cat in the box and tied it on the back of his bike with a bit of string, cycled up to the gate and stopped.

'What have you got in there?'

'A cat.'

'No you haven't, you've got some contraband!'

'No I haven't, it's a cat!'

'Open it up.'

'No. If I open it up the cat'll escape!'

'Come on, open it up.'

Anyway, the policeman pulled out his pocketknife, cut the string on the box and of course the cat went. 'There, now you're done it! I've gotta go and catch it again!'

'Well what do you want a cat for?!'

'We've got a rat at home! And now I've gotta go and catch it again, haven't I?'

So back into the yard he went, and he put the second box on, and tied it on with a bit of string, comes up to the policeman: 'I got him boy, I got him!' So, they were crafty!

One old boy wanted a wheelbarrow - now this is a true story, and I know that descendants of this one, but obviously I'm not gonna say who it is! – he wanted a wheelbarrow. So he went over to the foundry and filled it up with soot, wheeled it up to the police post and stopped. The policeman thought, 'I'm being had here,' goes round and around this wheelbarrow, poked it with his truncheon – here's nothing in there. 'So what do you want soot for?'

'I put it on the rhubarb!'

'Oh, we have custard on ours!'

The policeman thought he was being had, but he couldn't see how. So the chap went up the road and around the corner, emptied the wheelbarrow and went home with the empty wheelbarrow!

## **Location 10: Fishing**

Now here's one my dad was actually involved in! The men that lived on the north side of the haven, they would come to work in big six and eight oared gigs. They'd walk from their villages to a place near the yard, get these big gigs, and they'd row, and they'd land on Front Street, tie the gig up and then walk around to the dockyard entrance: in through the gate, do a day's work, and then at the end of the day they'd walk out. Of course their pockets were empty, they are nothing in their lunch boxes...but what they'd done was, they got a huge baulk of timber or whatever they wanted: they wrapped up in canvas tins of paint, copper nails, rows, screws, bolts, everything – they nailed it to this lump of wood, and they threw it over the end of the quay. And of course this was going upriver, because they knew the tides intimately! So they walked around empty handed – 'I haven't got anything, look – no, I've got nothing,' – and into the gigs, and they'd race after it. But the fly in the ointment was my grandfather, who knew they were doing this. So he sent my dad as a small boy down. He said, 'look Reg, go down and pretend to fish off the dockyard bank, in the rowing boat. But you know, about a hundred yards out. And if something falls off the dockyard wall, nip over and see what it is.' So my dad rowed over, and there's this great canvas wrapper stuff: so he pinched that! Now, a ten year old boy, he's got to

race against eight big, burly dockyard mateys, but he had a head start, and the tide was going the right way...so he had to row about two miles, and then pull in to the bottom of his garden, and they brought this stuff into the house and grandfather made a boat in the front room – and they had to take the window out to get the boat out of the front room! Well, it just shows what went on. The tides moved a bit now, it doesn't go anywhere near grandfather's garden – but the house is still there.

There is one other dockyard mateys story: the dockyard mateys were allowed to take home bits of wood, as long as they were no more than 10 inches – in old money, or 250 millimetres long: they'd sort of cycle up to the dockyard gate, these bits of wood on the pannier at the back of the bicycle... trouble is, a lot of 20 feet long planks suddenly became 10 inches long – they'd chopped it all up! How on earth they built ships, I don't know! But they built some really good ships. I think they built about 250 ships in all during the life of the dockyard, and some of them were extremely good ships, you know.

### **Location 11: Front St and the sea**

Well the county of Cardigan – well, you've probably got places like this in Ireland – Cardigan, until early in the 20th century, had no roads. So, if you wanted to go to a place like Aberaeron or Aberystwyth, you had to go by sea. So, these little 'white van' type boats, they were the ones that were sort of in and out, carry anything, anywhere, anytime, as long as it was a few coppers on the end of it. In Aberaeron or somewhere around there, there was a school mistress in the primary school and she taught navigation – navigation, in a primary school – because the lads there, all they had was subsistence farming. So she said, 'I will give you navigation,' and all these lads, they'd go north to Porthmadog or somewhere like that, where the big slate quarries are, and they got on the big Western Ocean yachts, these were very fast cargo ships that delivered slates by sea all over Europe. And all these kids, they shot up through the ranks, and they became ships' masters in their own right. And when they retired, they all came back to Aberaeron, so you've got rows and rows of lovely houses once occupied by skippers, you know, men like that. She entered a Eisteddfodd and her name was Cranogwen, her pen name in the Eisteddfodd, but I think she was called Sarah Jane Lewis.

I could tell you about the man who met the king of China. Now, a young lad called Prickett lived in the village of Lawrenny. And to go to school, he had to walk down to the quay, catch the ferry – a rowing ferry – across to Cosheston and then he went to Cosheston school. Every day he had to pass a shipyard, Howells and Morgan shipyard. Time came for him to leave school when he was about 12, and his dad said to him, 'well, what do you want to do? Do you want to go down the mines in Martletwy, subsistence farming, or go in the shipyard?'

'Oh Dad, I don't fancy the mines, that's horrible. The Pembrokeshire mines are dreadful. I wanna work in the shipyard.'

Right ho – so this young lad now gets a job in Howells and Morgan's yard. They'd just laid the keel of a boat. Now, this is an ocean going boat. They built boats in Cosheston capable of going to Australia.

So they'd laid the keel of this boat and they were building up, and of course all these dockyard mateys were filling this little lad's head with tales of strange places with funny sounding names and 'oh, you got to go there, you've got to go there!'

Anyway they finished the ship and they launched it, and he signed on as a cabin boy. So off they went. They got to Hong Kong, and the captain was looking for cargoes, and they gave this young lad some shore leave. So I mean, he'd never been a further than 10 miles from home and yet here he was the other side of the world in China. He walks up the street, and he came to a little pavement cafe. So he had a coffee, and he was sitting there listening to all the sounds and seeing all these strange people – and all of a sudden, around the corner came a square of soldiers, with a splendid figure in the middle dressed in red, with Chinese orders across his chest. And young Prickett looked at him and had the strangest déjàvu feeling: 'I know him. I can't – how can I know somebody in Hong Kong? I can't possibly know him!' Of course, all the Chinese scattered, and the Oriental kow tow to him - 'that must be, at the very least, the king of China! Oh wow!' Anyway, this figure disappears into the dockyard. About an hour later he came out, and this figure spotted young Prickett sitting at the table, and he barked an order and the troops swept around the table. Young Prickett was terrified! 'Oh no, what have I done? Oh dear, oh dear!' He was tongue tied! So this splendid figure pulled up a chair: 'now my boy, where are you from?' In a Pembrokeshire accent! And this young lad was so terrified, he could just about get out '... I ... I'm from Lawrenny, in Pembrokeshire.' 'So am I.'

'You what?!

'Yes, I'm from Pembrokeshire – my dad was the ferryman!'

Now this 'king of China,' he'd worked himself up through the ship-building industry and he was chief constructor for the Chinese navy. And there they were, sitting like a old pals, and young Prickett said, 'I thought you were the king of China!' So it's surprising where Pembrokeshire people get to! The man was Thomas Vaughan Jenkins. He never came back to Pembrokeshire – he died, and I think he's buried in Hong Kong.

You know how it is when you're a historian, you pick up a little snippet here and a little snippet there, and there's something else somewhere else – and all of a sudden you find that you've got a great wealth of stories. And it's wrong to keep it under wraps, you know – I must tell them, because they be lost if I don't.

Well, Pembroke Dock, it's had ups and downs: for example, the dockyard started in 1814, and in 1926 it closed, and there were dreadful problems. Hundreds of families, if not thousands, had to move away, and my dad was one of them. But being Welsh, he had to come back – well he had to, because his house was bombed in London. So he came back to Wales. But Pembroke Dock tends to be like that. In the 1930s, the RAF came to Pembroke Dock, and they established a huge RAF flying boat base. And that brought prosperity to Pembroke Dock. That closed in 1956, and that hit Pembroke Dock again. There were little shipyards that sort of popped up and then disappeared – Hancock's was a notable one. So Pembroke Dock seems to be on a roller coaster – it's either in the depths of despair, or on a peak, you know, of success. So I would like to see Pembroke Dock not rushing ahead, but building something steadily – if you believe steadily and gently and carefully, something that's sustainable and lasting.

### **Location 12: Inside the Dockyard entrance**

I don't know if you know of Adrian James, he's being campaigning to save some rather unusual structures in the dockyard, because the Milford Haven Port Authority own the dockyard and they're trying to create a space where they can build wave energy machines. Now, to do that, they have to close in or fill in a very unique

graving dock. You know what a dry dock is, don't you? Where you've got a little semicircular thing that keeps the water out. Well this one was different – it had a wedge shaped gate, so that when the gate was in place, the thing would stay full of water when the tide went out. Or if you wanted it dry, you could let the water out of low tide, or pump the water out, and it would keep the sea out and it would be dry inside. In fact, one of the last boats there was the Daunt Rock, for an Irish company. It was one of four, there was the Daunt Rock, the Fastnet Rock, the Tusker Rock and I can't remember – it might have been the Scellig Rock. They were built for an Irish company, and after that the company, Hancock's, collapsed. And they wanted to fill this in – but the thing is, this is the only dock in possibly the UK that could either keep the water in, or keep the water out. So let's keep a bit of heritage – and they want to fill in the pickling pond. Now a pickling pond is where you cut trees down, and they used to throw them in this pond and leave them in there for a while so that they would season properly underwater, and then they could fish them out and they wouldn't crack and split when they were cut. So they want to fill that, and people like myself and especially Adrian James are fighting hard saying look, this is Pembroke Dock's unique history, do not bury it, do not hide it. 'Well, we'll put something over it, you'll know what it is.' But then it's like the old word 'temporary' – you do something temporarily and it turns out to be permanent. So I don't quite know how that's going, but there's a lot of feeling about it.

### **Location 13: Pater Church Tower**

But Pembroke Dock, especially the dockyard, has got some wonderful buildings in there. So now, if we could exploit them and say, 'look, this is what Pembroke Dock's got to offer – come and see!' And we could build on that, especially with the Japanese connection. When you come off the ferry from Ireland, you actually drive up through all these wonderful old buildings, and you think, 'oh, they're exquisite,' you know. And the beauty of it is, there are gradually places of tourist interest in Pembroke Dock – I mean, the oldest building in Pembroke Dock is called the Pater Church Tower, named after the original family that were called Patrick Church, and it got abbreviated. That dates from about the 12th century. And it seems to be a sort of outpost of Pembroke Castle. Because where it's built, you can see right down the haven: so if there was an enemy fleet coming up the Milford Haven, it wouldn't take long for a man on horse to get Pembroke castle and say, 'hang on lads, something's happening.' Now that's owned by a private gentleman who's a close friend of mine, and he says, 'this, I will preserve: this, I will allow to be viewed by the public.' So you've got that one, you've got the dockyard buildings, you've got the Sunderland trust with the heritage centre; you've got the tower that I sent you a photograph of, there's that, and then there's the Maritime Heritage yard. Now, what I was trying to do is to weld all those together and say, 'look, if a visitor goes to one, he should have a brochure and it says, look, this is where you are now, but these are all the other things on this trail.' So if a visitor comes to Pembroke Dock, he can spend a full day visiting all these places, which would benefit the bed and breakfasts, and the cafes and the restaurants and the pubs. So I think that might be the way to go.

### **Location 14: The view from the Shipwright Pub**

It's heavy industry further down the river, you know, the refineries and things like that, the big power station. But if you base yourself in Pembroke Dock, if you travel upriver, all of a sudden you find yourself in almost a Norwegian fjord, you're sailing up this river. There's great forest, literally forests on both sides, and you're saying, 'I

could be in Norway, I could be on the Amazon, I can't see any houses!' Literally! But the best bit is, you can wander up one of these little side creeks, and all you can see is fields and trees, and the river twists and turns and twists and turns, and then all of a sudden you come around the last bend, and the first thing you see is the pub! On a summer's day, everybody goes to the pub in the boat. You go there on a summer's day and you can't see the water, there are boats and boats and boats and boats all tied up there, and the place is packed! It gets so full that they can't serve beer in the pub, so they open the garage door, and they've got a table in the garage door and a row of barrels. They haven't even got the pumps, so everybody has a pint straight out of the barrel – and you can always tell the locals, because strangers come and say, 'could I have a pint please?' And the locals are saying, 'can I have a pint of fire water?' So you can pick out the locals straight away! It's a lovely old pub called the Cresselly Arms, it's got Virginia creeper over the front and it looks old, you know, it looks like it's been there for a million years – you think, 'this is nice to look at!' It's a pleasant place, you know, on a summer evening, when the tide is in – I mean you've got to get the tide right! Because when you look at the crowd, you can see all the skippers, because the skippers are like this, 'where's my crew, where's my crew, I've got to go!'

To be honest, it's fun. I mean what would I do if it wasn't doing this – probably fishing or something!

Take care then!