

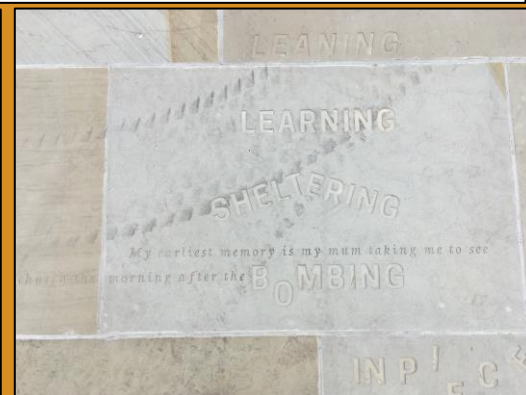
The value of public history in understanding Grimsby's heritage



The **Fishermen's Memorial statue** commemorates the many fishermen who were lost at sea. It has recently been returned to St James' Square in the town centre on a new raised plinth following a redevelopment which has improved public seating and the square itself, which now features engravings of extracts from local people's stories and information about the history of Grimsby (Craig, 2021). The renovation is part of a wider, recent trend towards celebrating heritage in Grimsby, and the restoration of the statue as part of this is significant, as it is one of the only features of the square to remain, highlighting the clear value of the memorial to the local authorities and residents.



The engravings in **St James' Square** range from listing different ways Grimsby has been spelled throughout its existence, to snippets of local dialect and extracts from local recollections. The captioned example is directly in front of Grimsby Minster, which was bombed in 1943. This use of positioning and place is striking. According to Yi-Fu Tuan the 'affective bond between people and place' is crucial in how humans experience and learn about the world around them (1974). In St James' Square the public are made aware of the coexistence of the present and the past. The first-person account's location is deliberate, so that people can stand in front of the church and imagine what it would have looked like, and how the individual remembering their childhood might have felt in the same spot 78 years ago.



Text reads 'My earliest memory is my mum taking me to see the church the morning after the bombing'.

The **Grimsby Fishing Heritage Centre (GFHC)** guides members of the public through exhibits representing different locations which were significant to the industrial and social history of Grimsby, starting with the backyard of a typical 1950s terraced house and ending with a recreation of pub The Freeman's Arms, via different sections of a trawler such as the bridge, the radio room, the boiler room and the galley. Original artefacts, sounds (atmospheric and recordings of oral histories), smells, and waxworks are used to represent what these places would have been like, and what hardships were endured by trawlermen. De Groot (2016) discusses that waxworks 'involve a conscious dissonance, being obviously not human but embodying and representing a clear replica of the past.' The museum would benefit from more emphasis on the experiences of the women left behind, who are underrepresented in the exhibits but featured significantly in managing the household while the trawlermen were away at sea for weeks at a time, the attitudes and experiences of whom form a distinct part of Grimsby's cultural heritage.



The **Ross Tiger** is the 'earliest diesel side-trawler of her kind, left in the UK' which is docked next to and forms part of the GFHC. Tours are conducted by former trawlermen, some of whom were once part of the Ross Tiger's crew. This is an example of a museum utilising 'the power of the real' to successfully engage the public (Moore, 1997). This contrasts with the 'conscious dissonance' of the exhibits within the museum (De Groot, 2016). Visitors to the Ross Tiger hear from someone with experience of working and living on a trawler whilst they duck through doorways, climb down ladders, see the size of the sleeping quarters and the bridge and listen to the noises of the ship, engaging in learning via sensory experiences and interactions with a real version of the people represented in waxworks inside the GFHC.

One display that stands out in the GFHC as an example of an effective and unique approach to public history is a to-scale representation of what the crew members on a fishing trawler would eat throughout the day. Sharon Macdonald argues that 'Food is materially and sensually evocative, a powerful 'conveyor' of memory' (2013). The sheer number of meals demonstrates the length of a crew member's day in terms the public can relate to. It also forces the visitor to consider both the work of the ship's cook and how strenuous a day's work was in order to require so much food and *thirteen* cups of tea. The display provides a valuable insight into life on a fishing trawler and would not be as striking if it took the form of a written list.



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