

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

The English Fishing Industry 1790 - 1914 :

A Case Study of the Yorkshire Coast

being a thesis submitted for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the University of Hull

by

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June 1984

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Summary of Thesis submitted for Ph.D. degree

by N. W. Robinson

on

The English Fishing Industry 1790-1914: A Case Study of the  
Yorkshire Coast

This thesis contains a detailed study of the activities related to fishing from the Yorkshire coast. It further outlines the broader development of the English Fishing industry, together with the role of the State, whilst tracing its relationship and interaction with other areas of the economy and society during the years under review.

In contrast to the trawling industry based on Hull and Grimsby, the Yorkshire coast communities were long established fishing stations. This thesis seeks to examine the way that the traditional activities of these communities altered, adapted and developed in response to the forces of rapid change that were then prevalent. It looks in particular, at changes in fishing and marketing practices and at alterations in the structure of ownership amongst the fishing fleet, whilst outlining the development of port and harbour facilities for the industry.

An analysis of the causes behind the rapid spread of trawling along the North Sea coast has been undertaken together with an assessment of the value of the Silver Pits to the first smack fishermen. The initial problems and benefits associated with the carriage of fish by rail have also been dealt with in some detail as has the later development of steam fishing.

The work also charts the associated development of the Yorkshire coast herring fishery. It furthermore, seeks to explain the causes of decline which afflicted all sectors of the local industry from the 1880s onwards.

In all areas of this thesis, the research work undertaken has utilised a wide variety of primary sources including records of both local and national organisations.

PREFACE

My initial interest in the fisheries was stimulated by background and upbringing. I was brought up in the shadow of Hull, then the nation's major trawling port and both my parents came from families connected with catching and shore based sectors. Indeed, my father was then a trawlerman as had been his father and grandfather. Thus my acquaintance with this unique activity began very early in life.

As an undergraduate, I was struck by the limited attention that the fishing industry had received from economic historians in the years of my primary interest which cover the period from the later eighteenth century down to the Great War. Indeed, as Michell has since pointed out, it is possible to read many of the standard economic history texts covering the nineteenth century and never gain any intimation that the late Victorian British fishing industry was the largest and most successful in the world.

One major reason was that only limited research had been undertaken. In recent years steps have been taken to rectify this situation and diligent work has uncovered much that is new and given us a clearer insight into the development of the industry in certain parts of Britain. Perhaps the greatest advances have been made north of the border where quite comprehensive records have been available to work upon.

The aim of my research has been to carry on along the same lines by embarking upon a detailed study of one particular region, that of the Yorkshire coast. At the same time, however, attempts have been made to outline the broader development of the English fishing industry, together with the role of the State, whilst tracing its interaction and relationship with changes that were altering other aspects of the economy and society during the period under review.

The Yorkshire coast, as I have defined it, for the purposes of my research, basically covers the 110 miles of seaboard that stretch from the Humber to the Tees. There were several reasons for concentrating attention on this particular district and excluding detailed study of the neighbouring Yorkshire port of



Hull. In essence, the study of the activity at that port is more closely related to Grimsby than to coastal communities such as Staithes or Flamborough. Furthermore, both the Humber ports are comparatively modern bases for this ancient industry. This is not to say that there is little of interest to be gleaned from a study of Hull or Grimsby. Though the former's development has been charted by Clarke, more information is now available and I feel that much more detailed work on the period prior to 1914 remains to be undertaken. Such an investigation, though, merits a study in its own right.

In contrast, the Yorkshire Coast communities were long established fishing stations. Though each was unique, they were largely enveloped in a web of tradition and practice that produced a close relationship with their neighbours. The basis of this thesis, therefore, examines the way that the traditional activities of these communities altered, adapted and developed during this period of rapid and unprecedented change.

During the course of my research a wide variety of sources, both national and local, have been consulted. Much of use has been obtained from Parliamentary reports and papers, for the fisheries were the subject of considerable government interest during these decades. Amongst the most important sources during the earlier years, however, have been the records of the Board of British Herring Fisheries. This body eventually evolved into the Scottish Fishery Board but what is not widely realised is that prior to 1850 it was responsible for overseeing certain fishery operations across England and Wales as well and its records prove a most useful source. Custom House Shipping Registers and associated records have also provided much of use as have the former British Transport Commission archives now stored at the Public Record Office. In addition, the records of Bridlington Quay, Scarborough and Whitby harbour authorities have yielded much of importance. For the later years, the minutes of the North Eastern District Sea Fisheries Committee, a body created in 1890 to oversee the industry from the Humber to the Tyne, proved a major point of reference.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Numerous people have provided information, advice and encouragement without which this thesis could not have been written. I am deeply grateful for the help and support given by Mike Brown and Dr Tony Michell of the Department of Economic and Social History in the University of Hull. Many thanks are also due to the staff of the University of Hull's Brynmor Jones Library and their counterparts in the Local History Library of Hull Central Library. Much assistance in uncovering local records was given by the staffs of the North Yorkshire, Hull and Humberside County Record Offices whilst similar help was provided by the Public Record Office and Register House, Edinburgh. My gratitude should also be extended to the Board of Customs and Excise who allowed me access to their invaluable records.

Thanks are due also to Miss J Walton, who took on the task of typing out this work, and to the University of Hull who generously provided the scholarship which enabled me to carry out the initial research.

I have received much personal encouragement from family and old friends, many of whom have supplied valuable background information. I am particularly indebted to my late grandfather, Edmund McKee, whose reminiscences of the fish trade unwittingly planted the first seeds of this venture in my mind.

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GLOSSARY

alum	a double phosphate of aluminium and potassium
barking	a method of preserving nets by tanning with bark based preservatives
beam trawl	a form of trawl net in which the net's mouth is kept open by a beam of wood
bloater	a herring smoked without being gutted
bratt	a Yorkshire Coast name for a turbot
cauldron	a measure of coal
coble	a double keeled fishing boat with sloping stern
compound	a steam engine with a high pressure and low pressure cylinder
cran	a measure for herrings of 37½ Imperial Gallons; 28 stones of herring by weight
demersal fish	fishing living on or near the seabed
doubling	the adding of an extra skin of wood to the hull of the vessel
first class vessel	a Custom's term originally denoting a decked vessel of 15 tons burthen and above
gaff rig	a rig of ship utilising spar on head of sail
gansey	a fisherman's woollen jumper
greatline	a heavy duty fishing line with large hooks utilised for the capture of large cod, ling and the like
hundred	a measure of herring based on quantity which in practice usually consisted of one hundred and twenty herring
iron man	a steam capstan used for hauling up trawl or drift nets
kipper	a lightly smoked herring
klondyked herring	a herring which has been boxed, salted, mixed with ice, usually for the Continental trade
last	a measure of herring or mackerel consisting of one hundred hundred measures
longline	a form of fishing gear utilising line and hooks but of a lighter nature than the greatline
lug sail	a type of four sided sail slung from a yard at a third or quarter of its length from the forward end so that it hangs obliquely



lugger	a vessel fitted with lug rigged sails
mule	a Yorkshire coast open boat of large dimensions than a coble built originally for the herring fishery
offal fish	a term originally used to denote cheaper varieties of fish such as haddock or plaice
otter trawl	a trawl net whose mouth is kept open by large wood or steel boards known as otter boards
pelagic	a fish living in surface or middle water
ploser	another Yorkshire Coast open boat used for the herring fisheries
prime fish	a term originally used for more valuable varieties of fish such as large cod, ling, turbot, sole, skate, etc.
privateer	an armed vessel owned and officered by private persons holding a commission from a government (letters of marque) which authorise its use against hostile nations in the capture of their merchant shipping
quango	a quasi autonomous non (or sometimes national) government organisation. In plain English a government financed body without a head directly responsible to Cabinet. Such bodies are usually set up by Government departments to cover some aspect of administration or research
red herring	a herring that has been cured in a smokehouse for upwards of fifteen to twenty one days and destined during much of the nineteenth century principally for sale in South European countries
screw driven	a powered ship driven by propellor as opposed to paddles
smack	a general name for fishing boats but often referring to ketch rigged trawlers
snood	a small line which attaches the hook to the greater long line
stocker bait	the portion of the trawler's <u>catch</u> consisting of fish such as gurnards and rays sold for the crew's benefit.
trunk	a form of crab or lobster trap utilising an iron hoop and net with bait in the centre
white herring	a herring cured and packed in alternate layers of salt in barrels
warps	the ropes or later wires attaching the trawl or driftnet to the boat
yawl	a two-masted fishing boat generally with a lug or gaff rig.

CHAPTER ONE: THE LOCAL BACKGROUND

One of the most important factors which helped determine the economic direction of many Yorkshire coast communities in earlier times was the nature of existing communications. Before overland travel was improved by turnpike and then railway, the Yorkshire coast must have been regarded as a remote and somewhat obscure corner of England. Even in an age when it was taken for granted that to travel almost any distance involved a slow and arduous journey, landward communication with many of the remote coastal towns and villages was especially fraught with difficulty.<sup>1</sup>

Between the Humber and the Tees no river of any note flows into the North Sea with the exception of the Esk. Yet despite possessing a fine natural harbour this has never been a navigable waterway giving access to any sizeable or populated hinterland. Travellers to and from the neighbouring coast had to contend with the formidable natural barriers presented by the Yorkshire Moors and Cleveland Hills. Couzen tells us that Whitby, the principal community, could act only as an import and export centre for the Esk valley with its limited resources. Consequently the port's trade had marked limitations. Even the valley of the river and its tributaries were not valuable lines of communication, for its gorge-like structure tended to impede rather than promote inland passage.<sup>2</sup>

Until the middle of the eighteenth century, moorland trackways were the sole means of overland communication with the rest of Yorkshire and Waites has noted that the inaccessibility of the area was an important complaint of the Whitby Abbey monks on at least two occasions.<sup>3</sup> For more than two hundred

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1. In 1772 a report from Whitby Custom House to London headquarters stated that it took five days of hard riding and more if the rivers were up after rain to reach Hull and collect four months' salaries. J. Dykes, Smuggling on the Yorkshire Coast, (Dalesman 1978)39.
  2. R.G.Couzen, 'The Growth and Character of Whitby', A Survey of Whitby, ed. G.H.J.Dough (Windsor 1958) 51.
  3. B. Waites, 'The Medieval Ports and Trade of North East Yorkshire', Mariners Mirror, vol.63 (1977) 137.



years after the monastic dissolution there was to be little easing of the problems facing the overland traveller. Writing in 1779, Lionel Charlton recalled that:

'till the year 1750, all roads to Whitby lay in a state of nature, rough , rugged and uneven: it was dangerous for a man on horseback to come into the town in the winter season of the year, but more so for any laden carriage to approach the place.' 1

Inaccessibility was an affliction shared by the smaller communities of Staithes, Runswick and Robin Hoods Bay for the principal features of moorland relief often extend right up to the coast around them.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the Cholmleys, important local landowners, seem to have used ships in the administration of their estates along the coast.<sup>3</sup> The predominance of moorland in that area meant that fertile land was at a premium and this encouraged these small settlements to look seaward for their livelihood.

Overland travellers visiting the coast from Scarborough southwards could avoid the moorland but their journey was still far from easy. The low lying and badly drained Vale of Pickering had to be avoided at all costs but although the route from York clung to higher ground it can rarely have been in good repair prior to turnpiking.<sup>4</sup> In any case, York enjoyed the comparative luxury of being a river port with access to the sea by means of the Ouse and Humber. Most streams behind Scarborough flowed into ~~that~~ system which tended to channel much trade in the same direction. As river improvements were made, even towns such as Malton, a mere twenty miles from Scarborough, found it easier to ship goods in and out by the Derwent and Humber.

The route overland from Flamborough and Bridlington to York via Sledmere was also difficult and necessitated the crossing of the lowing lying lands around the Derwent in the Vale of York. When travelling in a more southerly direction towards Kingston upon Hull, it was essential to avoid the Plain of

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1. L.Charlton, A History of Whitby (York 1779) 338.

2. R.G.Couzen, loc.cit., 51.

3. B.Waites, loc.cit., 137-8.

4. K.A.MacMahon, Roads and Turnpike Trusts in Eastern Yorkshire (East Yorkshire Local History Society 1964) 28-9.

Holderness in winter for, as MacMahon tells us, the roads were impassable.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast to its position on the tortuous backlanes of inland commerce, the Yorkshire coast was also situated on one of the most dynamically expanding transport routes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This was the coasting trade between the Tyne and London. Therefore it is towards the sea that we must look when seeking an explanation for the growing prosperity of many coastal communities during those centuries, including Whitby.

That town's minor medieval importance had been mainly derived from its possession of an abbey, the herring fishery, and its ability to provide refuge in the estuary of the Esk for passing ships. As late as 1540 it consisted of no more than twenty or thirty houses<sup>2</sup> but during the next century and a half the town's fortunes were to improve. After the dissolution of its monastery, the Crown took possession of the manorial borough. Within the space of a few years it had passed into the hands of the Cholmley family who were to take a far greater interest in promoting the town's development than had any of the medieval abbots.<sup>3</sup>

The first real stimulus to growth came with the local discovery of alum - a chemical important in dying and tanning - about 1595. Previously, production had been a monopoly of the Pope who possessed extensive works in Italy. The almost immediate establishment of alum refining after its discovery locally was due largely to an early example of industrial espionage undertaken by Sir Thomas Chaloner who covertly obtained information on Italian methods of processing. Mining operations commenced at Belman Bank near Guisborough and spread quickly to many other sites including Boulby, Loftus, Eskdaleside, Sandsend and Kettleness.<sup>4</sup> Sir Hugh Cholmley gave Whitby a great boost after the Civil War by greatly increasing his family's interest in its production.<sup>5</sup>

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1. William Marshall, writing in the eighteenth century, found it impossible to survey the Holderness district for his book the 'Rural Economy of Yorkshire', because of the difficulties of entry into the district arising from floods. K.A.MacMahon, Roads and Turnpike Trusts in Eastern Yorkshire (E.Y.L.H.S. 1964) 14.

2. Baines, Yorkshire Directory vol.2, North and Eastin Ridings (Leeds 1822, David & Charles Reprint 1969) 571.

3. K.A.MacMahon, Roads and Turnpike Trusts in Eastern Yorkshire (E.Y.L.H.S. 1964) 34.

4. G.A.North, Teessides Economic Heritage (Cleveland 1975) 2-3.

5. Percy Shaw Jeffrey, Whitby Lore and Legend (u/d) 125-6.



The benefit the port received from the growth of this activity was further enhanced by the practice of processing the alum at the minehead. This required the import of large quantities of coal, mainly from Tyneside, thus encouraging the growth of its small shipping fleet.<sup>1</sup>

This early experience of shipping coal in bulk was to be of assistance to the port, for in the latter half of the seventeenth century it began to acquire a durable interest in the growing Newcastle-London 'sea cole' trade. For much of the century this trade had been dominated by vessels from East Anglia. Their hold weakened and ownership of the coal carrying trade became increasingly concentrated upon the north east ports of Whitby, Scarborough and Newcastle.<sup>2</sup>

As Whitby's fleet grew in importance, its activities diversified. By the mid-eighteenth century more than half the English ships entering London from Norway and more than one-fifth of those arriving from the Baltic were Whitby owned.<sup>3</sup> Whitby craft became increasingly involved in the East Indian, American and Mediterranean trades as well.<sup>4</sup> Though the initial impetus for growth may have been derived from alum processing, by the middle of the eighteenth century the port's own trade was never even remotely able to sustain the growth of its shipping fleet. Most Whitby owned vessels traded to and from other and more important commercial ports, especially Newcastle, Hull and London. They returned home only occasionally for refitting.<sup>5</sup>

Initially, many ownership ventures based upon the north east ports were promoted by mariners, active or retired, who recruited not only others of the same occupation but also landmen who had capital available. Some, such as shipbuilders, mast and sailmakers were already connected with the sea. In other cases, including farmers and cordwainers, the link was less obvious. Davis tells us that at first many of these other ownership groups found them-

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1. G.Young, A History of Whitby and the Vicinity, Vol.II, (Whitby 1817) 50-56.
  2. R.Davis, The Rise of the English Shipping Industry (1962) 92-3.
  3. R.Davis, op.cit., 64.
  4. G.Young, op.cit., 56.
  5. S.C. on Manufactures, Commerce and Shipping, 1833 VI, Minutes of Evidence qq 6012-9.



selves very much in the hands of the mariner faction which had direct expertise of the sea trade and handled the voyage.<sup>1</sup> As their involvement endured and continued to increase, there emerged a land based shipping interest whose commercial expertise in the field of maritime trade became considerable. Some of those with the largest stakes in the fleet had developed shipbuilding interests as well. Typical of these was Robert Barry. Together with his father, this Whitby shipbuilder of the late 1820s and early 1830s owned eleven ships. Though resident in the town he also owned a counting house in London and chartered most of his vessels out. The majority of his craft were employed in long distance international trade.<sup>2</sup>

Though this growing merchant fleet was actually registered at Whitby Custom House, a substantial portion of it was in fact owned by individuals resident in the smaller communities of Staithes, Runswick and Robin Hoods Bay. Prior to the sixteenth century these had been tiny places but had grown along with Whitby. As with Whitby, many local individuals who lived near these fishing stations had been drawn first into the alum then the coal trade. From this, a sustained interest in maritime commerce followed. These activities, together with fishing which will be dealt with below, contributed greatly to the growing prosperity of these remote communities. Robin Hoods Bay, for example, was probably almost completely rebuilt between 1650 and 1750.

It was not only the capital embodied in the shipping fleet but also the labour of the seamen that contributed to the growing wealth of the region. George Young tells us that Whitby and the surrounding communities were prolific nurseries for seamen.<sup>3</sup> Such a reputation attracted the unwelcome attention of the press gang in times of war.<sup>4</sup> Though Whitby seamen worked on many of the far flung shipping routes of the world, much of their income was spent by their

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1. R.Davis, op.cit., 64-5.

2. S.C. on Manufactures, Commerce and Shipping, 1833 VI, Minutes of Evidence qq 6012-9.

3. G.Young, op.cit., 547.

4. One group which roamed the area between the Tyne and the Humber. The activities of the press gang at Whitby sparked off a riot there in 1793. B.Farnill, Robin Hoods Bay, (Dalesman 1966) 46-7.

wives and families back home whom they saw only periodically.

In its turn, the growth of the shipping fleet stimulated the development of the shipbuilding industry. Vessels had been built on the banks of the Esk since time immemorial but had generally been of such limited dimensions that their constructors would best be described as boatbuilders. Davis seems convinced that Whitby's shipbuilding industry dates from around the 1690s.<sup>1</sup> Certainly, shipbuilding was to exhibit signs of rapid growth during the eighteenth century at all north east ports. The town's reputation can only have been enhanced by the use of Whitby built vessels on Captain Cook's voyages of discovery. By 1776 forty per cent of all English tonnage was launched from north eastern shipyards and Whitby stood second only to London in importance as a shipbuilding centre.<sup>2</sup>

This industry promoted the development of ancillary trades such as mast, block and ropemaking, as well as the manufacture of sailcloth. This latter activity commenced in 1756 and before that time all supplies had been brought in from outside. By the end of the Napoleonic Wars there were three major concerns producing sailcloth by a combination of factory and domestic labour in and around Whitby.<sup>3</sup>

The latter half of the eighteenth century also witnessed the birth of Whitby's famous whaling industry. The port sent its first vessel to the Northern Whale fishery in 1753 but after a few years it temporarily gave up. Together with Hull, Whitby's interest revived in 1766 and the fleet grew until the port could boast twenty whalers in 1788.<sup>4</sup> Thereafter, the number

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1. The actual date at which shipbuilding - as opposed to boatbuilding - commenced at Whitby is still a matter of some debate. George Young believed it began about 1730, some two years before the opening of the first dry dock. (G.Young op.cit., 548). Davis points out that Jarvis Coates had built the William and Jane, a vessel of some 237 tons, thirteen years earlier and believes there is no reason to suppose this was the first ship of such a size. Coates himself had been in business since 1697. (Davis, op.cit., 64). Couzens suggests that sizeable vessels were in fact built at Whitby early in the seventeenth century. (Couzens, loc.cit., 57-3).
  2. J.A.Goldberg, 'An Analysis of Shipbuilding Sites in Lloyds Register of 1776' Mariners Mirror, vol.59 (1973), 419.
  3. Between them the three concerns had about eightyeight looms in 1817. Much of the spinning production was carried out under the domestic system but a spinning manufactory was opened in 1807 at Bugdale near Whitby. G.Young, op.cit., 554-3.
  4. G.Jackson, The British Whaling Trade (1968), 59-64.



of vessels sent north was gradually reduced and during the first two decades of the nineteenth century no more than ten usually made the voyage each year. Despite the reduction, this was probably the most successful period in terms of whales caught, thanks to the growing expertise of captains and crew. Whitby whaling ships were constantly amongst the most successful in terms of annual catch per vessel and Captain Scoresby, who in ten successive voyages beginning in 1803 caught no less than 249 whales that yielded 2,034 tons of oil,<sup>1</sup> was virtually a legend in his own lifetime.

In many respects, the economic history of Scarborough during the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries resembled that of Whitby. Though the more important of the two ports in earlier centuries, it had suffered greatly as a result of the Civil War and two sieges of the Castle by Parliamentary forces. Although it lacked the benefit of the substantial alum trade enjoyed by its neighbour, the port was still able to develop a considerable collier fleet.<sup>2</sup> The growth of this was sustained by the ability of the maritime faction to attract land based individuals with capital to spare into shipping ventures. As at Whitby, this eventually led to the establishment of a shipping interest that was essentially land based but by no means inexperienced in the affairs of maritime commerce.<sup>3</sup>

Scarborough also possessed a boatbuilding industry of considerable antiquity and commenced the construction of larger craft perhaps slightly earlier than Whitby. In 1691 two ketches of one hundred tons apiece were built there for the Royal Navy and were the only naval ships built north of the Humber before the middle of the following century.<sup>4</sup> It seems unlikely that such work would have been entrusted to a shipbuilder lacking in experience and reputation. The most important shipbuilding firm at Scarborough was that of Tindalls. This

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1. Ibid., 77.

2. R.Davis, op.cit., 64.

3. By the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century several substantial shipowners can be identified. William Mosey, for example, owned at least seven vessels. William Tindall & Co., the family shipbuilding firm had built up a considerable fleet based on Scarborough and London. J. Buckley, The Outport of Scarborough 1602-1853 (u/d) 134-5.

4. R.Davis, op.cit., 64.

family business commenced operations in 1697 and over the following one hundred and fifty years acquired a considerable reputation for solidly built sailing ships.<sup>1</sup>

There was one considerable constraint upon the expansion of the shipbuilding industry at Scarborough that was already apparent by the middle of the eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Unlike the Whitby trade, which enjoyed the comparatively spacious accommodation offered by the estuary of the Esk, Scarborough's had to make do with the somewhat cramped shelter afforded by the artificial harbour. This prevented real expansion after about 1750. Thereafter, the demands shipbuilding placed upon the harbour sometimes brought it into conflict with other users.<sup>3</sup> Despite these problems, the shipbuilding industry remained of considerable importance to the town's economy well into the nineteenth century and, like that of Whitby, also nurtured the growth of ancillary trades such as block and ropemaking.

One developing activity, for which eighteenth century Scarborough was more advantageously placed than Whitby, was that of tourism. Not only was Scarborough marginally more accessible from inland centres of population but it possessed a considerable additional asset in its mineral spa well. This had been discovered about 1626 and during the eighteenth century the town, in company with places such as Harrogate, Epsom, Tunbridge Wells, and Bath, benefited from the cult of taking the waters.<sup>4</sup> A further advantage that it possessed in catering for this growing trade in hypocondria was its coastal situation. During the same period there was a gathering belief that considerable benefit was derived from sea bathing. Much extra income flowed into the town as it became the fashionable resort of the wealthy. The tourist industry continued to grow throughout the following two centuries.

Further south, the fishing and agricultural village of Filey was also to benefit from the increasing attentions of the visitor and eventually emerged as a resort in its own right. Flamborough too, with its dramatic contrasts of

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1. A.Rowntree, A History of Scarborough (1931),191-3.

2. R.Davis, op.cit., 64-5.

3. See Chapter Sixteen.

4. K.A.MacMahon, Roads and Turnpike Trusts in Eastern Yorkshire (E.Y.L.H.S.)28



high chalk cliffs and foaming sea also lured the more adventurous. Despite this, it remained primarily an agricultural and fishing community throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Its inhabitants could supplement their normal sources of income by large-scale collection of seabirds' eggs from the cliffs. In the late eighteenth century these were despatched to Hull where they were bought by a sugar factory.<sup>1</sup>

Bridlington was very much the smaller of the coastal harbour ports and its commercial and maritime activities were consequently more restricted. Although originally enjoying the status of a customs port in its own right, its trade was so limited that it was amalgamated with Hull in the 1840s. The port was of only minor significance as a shipbuilding centre and its ancillary trades were much less well developed. During the Napoleonic Wars it had acquired a ropery but this had closed with the termination of hostilities and Admiralty orders.<sup>2</sup> Its own fleet was quite small and consisted mainly of coasting vessels. The port's hinterland was essentially restricted to the very immediate agricultural areas.<sup>3</sup> Any further economic development was generally marred by the endemic affliction of a poor quality harbour.

Bridlington Quay was advantageously placed for one particular trade. This was the servicing of passing merchant vessels. During the often long enduring north easterly gales, fleets of passing colliers and other craft often sheltered under the lee of Flamborough Head and inside of the Smithwick Sands. Because of their reliance upon favourable weather and winds, sailing ships could often remain there for weeks.<sup>4</sup> The township's boatmen became principally employed in the ferrying of food and water to these sheltering ships.<sup>5</sup> Its ability to fulfil this role was further enhanced in 1811 by the discovery of a spring of exceptionally pure water close to the harbour. This encouraged more

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1. R.Schofield, The Scarborough Guide, (Hull 1796), 106.
  2. J.Thompson, Historical Sketches of Bridlington, (Bridlington 1821) 156.
  3. G.Jackson, Hull in the Eighteenth Century (Hull University 1972) 81.
  4. S.C. on Harbours of Refuge, 1836 XX, Minutes of Evidence, qq.167-8.
  5. S.C. on Harbours of Refuge, 1836 XX, Minutes of Evidence, qq.428 and 726.

passing ships to take the opportunity of replenishing their water supplies whilst off the port.<sup>1</sup>

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the township also began to benefit from the attentions of large numbers of visitors who resorted there during the season. Extensive and well planned development began to take place and there was a corresponding seasonal influx of migratory shopkeepers as Bridlington Quay gradually assumed greater importance in its own right.<sup>2</sup>

Further south, along the broad sweep of Bridlington Bay, the combination of exposed beaches and crumbling boulder clay cliffs dictated that the smaller coastal communities had only a limited economic interest in the sea. As we shall see below, some fishing did take place but in the main these towns and villages were essentially agricultural communities and suffered great losses of land and buildings thanks to the unrelenting encroachment of the sea on the Holderness cliffs.

One maritime based activity that was of considerable importance to both Holderness and the rest of the Yorkshire coast was that of smuggling. At one time or another in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, most towns along the coast were involved in this lucrative undercover trade. Because of its very nature it is difficult to determine the scale of smuggling but Dykes tells us that its heyday was roughly the period of fifty years covering the latter part of the eighteenth century into the nineteenth. At this time, profits were high, the pursuit socially acceptable and the resources of the Excise too stretched to prevent the wholesale evasion of Customs duties along the coast. Brandy, geneva, tobacco and tea were the principal cargoes run and it was believed that often the whole populations of Redcar, Saltburn, Marske, Staithes, Runswick and Robin Hoods Bay were involved in the trade.<sup>3</sup>

Along the Yorkshire coast it seems likely that much of the carrying trade was in the hands of fast sailing schooners and luggers. These generally hailed

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1. J.Thompson, op.cit., 100-110.

2. Ibid., 156.

3. J.Dykes, op.cit., 7 and 30.



from Kent and the rest of the south east coast. Their cargo would be collected from ports such as Flushing and conveyed swiftly to the Yorkshire coast.<sup>1</sup> The role of the local fishermen was to ferry cargoes ashore when the coast was clear and then the local communities would organise its overland distribution by such means as packhorse, carrier, donkey or foot. It does seem likely that in some villages this activity made a substantial contribution to their material prosperity. Capital thus accrued may well have found its way into legitimate pursuits such as fishing and shipowning.

From about the middle of the eighteenth century positive steps were taken to improve overland communications. Thanks to the exertions of a number of local individuals, the road between Whitby and Lockton Lane (five miles north of Pickering) was turnpiked and improved over the years 1759 to 1764.<sup>2</sup> In 1765 an Act of Parliament was obtained which enabled the road between Malton and Pickering to be turnpiked. As the former town was situated on the improved York-Scarborough road a tolerable route was established between the county city and the hitherto remote Whitby. In 1788 a diligent coach service was introduced along the route followed after 1795 by a thrice weekly mail coach service.<sup>3</sup>

By the time Whitby was planning its turnpike schemes, the road to Scarborough had been greatly improved. An Act had been secured in 1752 that enabled the whole route from Scarborough to York via Malton, Yedingham Bridge and Snainton to be turnpiked.<sup>4</sup> In a more southerly direction, various schemes from 1744 onwards improved access to many sections of the coast from Kingston upon Hull. In general, the road improvements benefitted only the lighter sorts of traffic and did little to increase the amounts of bulky inland goods being shipped through the Yorkshire coast ports. Indeed, the major reason why the

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1. Ibid., 12.

2. K.A.MacMahon, Roads and Turnpike Trusts in Eastern Yorkshire, (E.Y.L.H.S. 1964), 34-5.

3. Ibid., 28.

4. K.A.MacMahon, Roads and Turnpike Trusts in Eastern Yorkshire, (E.Y.L.H.S. 1964) 28.

York to Scarborough turnpike was promoted was to improve travel for seasonal visitors.<sup>1</sup> Attempts to attract more goods traffic to the ports lay behind other proposals. In 1777 an ambitious plan was floated for the construction of a canal between Whitby and Pickering. In view of the terrain such a venture would have to contend with it is perhaps not surprising that it came to nought. A similar proposal put forward in the same decade for a water link between Scarborough and the Derwent also proved abortive.<sup>2</sup> The hinterlands of both ports remained restricted and communications were not further improved until the railways were constructed during the following century.

### The Nineteenth Century

The outbreak of the Napoleonic Wars in 1793 had certain effects that were swiftly felt by the maritime based economy of the Yorkshire coast. Some of the normal trading patterns suffered disruption and the efforts of the French privateers, especially in the North Sea, meant that losses of merchant vessels to the enemy became relatively commonplace events. The zealous work of the press gang in the area meant inevitably that sea-going labour was soon at a premium. Yet taken as a whole, the local economy does not seem to have fared too adversely until after 1805. The shipyards, for example, were usually fully employed in turning out new vessels or repairing the old.<sup>3</sup>

It is apparent that the area slipped into a somewhat severe depression after this date. At Whitby an average of twenty-four vessels came off the stocks of the Esk shipyards each year between 1793 and 1806. From 1807 to 1816 output fell to an annual average of fourteen. In 1809, the worst year, only ten were constructed.<sup>4</sup> A similar situation was apparent at Scarborough and although the firm of Tindalls continued to turn out new vessels it found difficulty disposing of them and added many to its own fleet. The Berlin and Milan Decrees seem to

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1. Ibid., 24-7.

2. G.Young, op.cit., 580.

3. Ibid., 553.

4. Ibid., 553.



have been an important factor in this downturn in fortune, together with the activities of the privateers and French frigates. Whitby and Scarborough shipowners seem to have been particularly hit because of the disruption of the Baltic trade in which many of their vessels tended to specialise.<sup>1</sup>

Something of a recovery occurred towards the end of the new century's second decade but this was not sustained throughout the twenties, particularly after the repeal of the Navigation Laws. The depression was particularly severe again in 1830 and 1831 when the number of shipyards operational in Whitby fell from eight to four,<sup>2</sup> and at Scarborough Tindalls were left as the only builder of note.<sup>3</sup>

Thereafter, there was something of a revival in the fortunes of the industry at Whitby but at Scarborough it continued to stagnate. Shipbuilding died out there with the final closure of Tindall's yard in 1861,<sup>4</sup> though some smaller boatyards which turned out fishing vessels and the like were to last for another quarter of a century.

At Whitby, Thomas Turnbull took over the Whitehall Shipyards in 1851 and for the next fifty years was the port's biggest shipbuilder. In his first twenty years he constructed nineteen large sailing ships followed, between 1871 and 1902,<sup>5</sup> by one hundred and fourteen screw steamers. Unfortunately, the swing bridge across the Esk in the middle of the town restricted the width of vessels and the largest which could be built was of six thousand tons. Turnbull's yard failed in 1901 and Whitby turned out its last ship in 1908. Though the offending swing bridge was replaced by one allowing vessels of a greater width to pass through, the industry was not revived. The town's reservoir of skilled labour dispersed and only boatbuilding continued.<sup>6</sup> The shift over from sailing ship to screw steamer construction, followed later by the abandonment of shipbuilding altogether, brought about the demise of many of the traditional ancillary industries.

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1. A.Rowntree, op.cit., 184-8.

2. S.C.on Manufactures, Commerce and Shipping, 1833 VI, Minutes of Evidence, q 6022.

3. J.Buckley, op.cit., 96-7.

4. Ibid., 96-7.

5. G.A.North, op.cit., 35.

6. Ibid., 35.

In the 1820s both Whitby and Scarborough were still very important ship-owning centres. Whitby was the fourth largest port in terms of ships registered at its Custom House and between them the two towns possessed a tonnage that could almost match Kingston upon Hull. The registration statistics probably understate the number of craft which were owned by individuals with local connections. A number of craft which never visited the port were probably owned by locals but registered at London from where they operated. Both merchant fleets continued to expand until the 1860s. Thereafter Scarborough's began to decline and Whitby's followed suit a decade later.<sup>1</sup> In part this was due to the shrinkage of the coastal coal carrying trade with the onset of railway competition. More fundamentally, it was probably rooted in the gradual demise of the wooden built sailing ship in favour of iron and later steel steamers. Whitby's decline was much slower than Scarborough's and this may have been due partially to the fact that a sector of its shipbuilding industry had been able to adapt for a time to the new methods of construction. Yet by the early 1900s its shipping fleet was only a shadow of its former self.

Two other important Whitby industries declined over the same period. They were whaling and alum smelting. The removal of bounties in the 1820s and the lifting of the restrictions on importing rival foreign vegetable oils such as rapeseed, in addition to the gradual spread of coal gas lighting, made it difficult for the whaling industry to survive at a time when the search for whales in the northern hemisphere was reaching the limits of human physical endurance. The decline of Whitby as a whaling port between 1820 and 1830 was relentless. After 1831 there were only two vessels left, the Phoenix and the Camden. Whitby finally relinquished its interest in the trade in 1837 when the Phoenix was wrecked at the mouth of the harbour, whilst attempting to proceed on its twenty second whaling voyage, and the Camden's trip proved a failure.<sup>2</sup>

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1. G.Jackson, *op.cit.*, 118-126.

2. G.Young, A Picture of Whitby (2nd edition 1839) 198-9.

Alum production also declined after the Napoleonic Wars. This was hastened by the introduction of new methods of producing sulphuric acid and the discovery of aniline dyes superseded its usage in dyeing and tanning. Those refineries such as Loftus, Boulby, Kettleness and Ravenscar which were situated on the coast lasted the longest. The final one, at Sandsend, ceased production in 1871.<sup>1</sup>

The area was fortunate in that during the period when the above industries were declining, certain others were expanding and new ones emerging. Two areas of expansion were fishing, which will of course be dealt with in the remainder of this thesis, and tourism. The construction of railways to the coast between 1833 and 1884 made the area much more easily accessible to the visitor and the importance of tourism to the Yorkshire Coast's economy continued to increase throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century.

The building of the first railway in the area - from Whitby to Pickering between 1833 and 1836 - had also prompted the commercial exploitation of ironstone reserves. When the line was under construction through Grosmont, the Pecton and Avarian seams were exposed and the ore that was then mined was shipped through Whitby to Tyneside.<sup>2</sup> Ironstone was also worked at Kettleness and Staithes on the sea coast but the iron was only shipped out during the summer months when weather conditions enabled craft to be beached. Later in the century many other reserves throughout the area were exploited. An artificial harbour and underground tunnels were constructed at Port Mulgrave for the purpose of bringing ore to the coast for shipping out to smelters further north.<sup>3</sup> Ironworks were also constructed on the Yorkshire coast. The first of these at Wreckhill, north of Runswick Bay, had only produced a few tons of iron after its opening in 1858 when the whole site on which it had been built slid down the cliff, causing it to be abandoned. In 1874 an ironworks was

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1. G.A.North, op.cit., 40-1.

2. G.A.North, op.cit., 18-19.

3. J.Brown and I. Croden, Staithes (Staithes 1977) 22.



constructed at Skinningrove and after initial financial problems it established itself and was still in production in the 1970s.<sup>1</sup>

Ironically, the coming of the long awaited means of cheap bulk transport in the form of railways eroded rather than increased the levels of trade flowing through the three Yorkshire coast harbour ports. Items such as coal, that had always been brought by sea into the area came increasingly during the nineteenth century by rail. The emergence of the railways only made it more apparent that these minor tidal harbours could not compete effectively with their larger neighbours on the Tees and Humber as major commercial ports.

### The Early Fishing Industry

Throughout this history and long before, fishing and its associated activities had occupied an important place in the Yorkshire coast's economy. For example, archeological excavations of Roman and Viking sites in York have revealed that both communities were kept supplied with sea fish including cod. It is most likely that these will have been caught mainly on the North Sea grounds and conveyed to the city from the coast.

Later, monastic houses such as Fountains Abbey were provisioned with barrels of salt herrings and other fish obtained from the Yorkshire coast.<sup>2</sup> Fishing was certainly an important source of revenue for religious institutions with possessions along the coast. The Holderness Coast herring fishery was an asset valued by the monks of Meaux Abbey.<sup>3</sup> The lucrative tithe on herrings at Whitby more than paid for the construction and maintenance of an early swing bridge across the Esk in the town.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the importance of such tithes led to disputes between Bridlington Priory and Whitby Abbey over who had rights on herrings landed at Filey.<sup>5</sup>

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1. G.A.North, op.cit., 25.
  2. A.Rowntree, op.cit., 194.
  3. A.Godfrey, Yorkshire Fishing Fleets (Dalesman 1974), 10.
  4. D.Walker, op.cit., (no page numbers).
  5. A.Godfrey, op.cit., 9-10.

The summer herring fishery off the Yorkshire coast seems to have been of considerable importance in medieval times. In the fourteenth century, for example, continental merchants were attracted in considerable numbers during the peak months of August and September. They would buy up large quantities of herrings which were salted and stored in barrels.<sup>1</sup> Foreign fishing vessels seem also later to have been attracted and Richard III was to issue a proclamation against their participation which it was believed was to the detriment of the locals.<sup>2</sup> Whitby and to a lesser extent Scarborough were the centres of this trade.<sup>3</sup>

Yet despite its importance, the herring fishery was to be rivalled by that for white fish. Before the early fifteenth century, Scarborough and Whitby vessels were exploiting cod grounds off the Faroe Islands and Iceland. Such activities continued into the seventeenth century.<sup>4</sup>

Details about the type of craft operated by the fishermen become more vague the further back we look but Heath considers that there were probably three basic sizes of boats in use at medieval Scarborough. In the smallest class there appear to have been several designs in use including the coble - probably little different in basic design from those found today. The others were called batella, skate and lobster boats but we have no further clues about their construction other than that they were probably open or undecked craft. The medium sized class of boats - probably from five to forty tons - were described as farcostae. The Iceland and Faroe voyages were most probably undertaken by a larger class of vessel about which we know very little other than that they were generally described as doggers. In all likelihood they were decked vessels with two masts and from thirty to eighty tons burthen.<sup>5</sup> They would probably carry large crews on voyages of similar duration to those

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1. B.Waites, loc.cit., 144-6.

2. D.S.Walker, op.cit., (pages not numbered).

3. B.Waites, loc.cit., 144-6.

4. Hull Record Office (hereafter known as H.R.O.) BRW/5/12 31st October 1653.

5. P.Heath, 'North Sea Fishing In the Fifteenth Century', Northern History Vol. III (1968). 58-61.

of the eighteenth century whalers. It seems likely that a number of these various designs of boat lasted at least into the seventeenth century.

The mid-seventeenth century seems to have been something of a watershed for the Yorkshire coast fishing industry. The upheavals which were part of the Civil War and the losses of many of the larger craft to the Dutch seem to have brought an end to the Icelandic and Faroe voyages from Scarborough and Whitby.<sup>1</sup> Interest in the herring fishery seems also to have markedly declined so that by the early eighteenth century exploitation of the shoals was most limited and of purely local importance.

Yet from the same time there is evidence of growth in other areas of interest. Yorkshire craft were travelling in considerable numbers to Yarmouth each year to participate in the autumn herring fishery there.<sup>2</sup> There was a greater degree of attention being given to North Sea grounds, especially off the Dogger Bank where large cod and ling were being taken. This fishery probably displaced that for herrings partly because it was also then at its height during the months when they were shoaling. It certainly was sufficiently lucrative as to attract fishermen from as far afield as Brighton.<sup>3</sup>

The development of fishing vessels seems to have become concentrated on the age old coble and its variant. The largest versions of these were known as five man botes or cobles and were already being used at Whitby before the monastic dissolution for taking coal to the Abbey.<sup>4</sup> They are to be found in fishermen's wills at Scarborough from the later sixteenth century<sup>5</sup> but some time between 1650 and 1750 evolved into single keeled three masted decked luggers<sup>6</sup> which were to provide the mainstay of the Yorkshire coast's deepwater fleet well into the nineteenth century and were about forty in number at the time the period covered by this thesis opens.

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1. H.R.O. BRW/5/12, 31st October, 1653.

2. See Chapter Two.

3. S.&J.Farrant, Brighton 1600-1820: 'The Antecedents and Early Development of a Sea Side Resort', unpublished article written in March 1979.

4. D.M.Walker, op.cit., (pages not numbered).

5. J.Buckley, op.cit., 15-17.

6. G.Young, op.cit., 820-3. They retained many features of construction common to the smaller open cobles.



CHAPTER TWO : THE FISHING INDUSTRY 1780s TO 1810s

The intricate web of activities based upon the exploitation of the sea fisheries during the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were distinctively regional in character. Despite many of the principal methods of capture, processing and distribution being in common use, each stretch of coastline had evolved a structure and pattern of activity that were, in many ways, unique to itself. Yet beneath even this regional veneer of uniformity, every fishing community had an individuality of its own. Not only would each appear to outsiders as insular and close knit with inhabitants marrying amongst themselves, thus perpetuating the same family fishing names for generations, but they would also exhibit minor differences in custom or practice that would set them apart from their neighbours. These would be hidden from the eye of the casual observer in much the same way as the uniform navy blue of the ubiquitous fishermen's gansey masks the distinctive patterns knitted in each village.<sup>1</sup> Such complexities make one hesitant to overgeneralise about the English fishing industry.

Indeed, the picture we are left with of the years under review is certainly diverse, even taking account of the dislocation caused by the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. All around the coast, for example, the seasonal herring shoals were exploited by the age old method of drifting and yet there were marked regional differences of scale, intensity of effort and organisation. The premier English herring fishery had long been based on Yarmouth. The autumn season there usually stretched from the end of September to early December and supported a large though fluctuating fleet of local craft, including busses, as well as vessels from elsewhere. Much of the catch, if not destined for home consumption, was turned into either red or white herring.<sup>2</sup>

Reds were basically produced by a process involving exposure to smoke for up to fifteen days in a kiln known as a smokehouse. White herrings were cured by being packed in barrels in layers that alternated with salt. The

1. M.R.Pearson, Traditional Knitting of the British Isles: The Fisher Gansey Patterns of North East England, (Newcastle 1981), 34-57.
2. S.C. on British Fisheries, 1798, 1803 X, Report, 138-9.

end result in either case being that the fish remained edible indefinitely. This was an essential prerequisite in those times of slow and uncertain overseas travel. Both red and white herrings were shipped in considerable quantities to the West Indies for consumption by slaves on the sugar plantations. Ireland was an important outlet for whites whilst the demand of the German states for red herrings was subject to marked fluctuation, thanks to the course of the Continental War. All trade was affected by the conflagration in various ways. It had a particularly disruptive effect on that with Mediterranean countries which, nevertheless, remained an important outlet for reds.<sup>1</sup> In the later eighteenth century the ports of Genoa and Venice were often very good customers.<sup>2</sup> Despite the range of its overseas customers, Britain, as a whole, was unable to penetrate the higher quality white herring markets to any major extent. This was mainly because both English and Scottish processing lacked the high quality and uniform standards of the Dutch whose product, as a result, always commanded the better price.<sup>3</sup>

Another important centre for the herring trade was Liverpool but the way in which it was organised there differed somewhat from that of East Anglia. Fast sailing smacks, cutters or sloops would proceed from the port to fishing grounds off the coasts of the Isle of Man, Cornwall, Wales or the west coast of Scotland, according to season. It was not the normal practice for these craft to take fish for themselves but rather to buy the fresh catches of local boats each morning. These would be immediately roused or sprinkled with salt and then stored in barrels. In this way, a cargo could be collected in as little as three or four days, though more normally between fifteen and twenty. These craft would then head back to Liverpool and their herrings were either smoked for red or packed for white according to demand.<sup>4</sup>

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1. See Figure 1.

2. S.C. on British Fisheries, 1785 VII, Third Report, 7.

3. M.Gray, The Fishing Industries of Scotland 1790-1914 (Aberdeen 1979), 52-3.

4. S.C. on British Fisheries 1798, 1803 X, Report, 130-5.



FIGURE 1: Herring Exports from England 1798-1799

<u>White Herrings</u>	1798	1799
	barrels	
Germany	100	660
Prussia	-	33
Portugal and Madeira	312	1,327
Gibraltar	80	2
Italy	30	120
Ireland	3,612	3,299
Channel Isles	10	244
U.S.A.	4	100
British Continental Colonies	72	25
West Indies	37,334	34,432
Asia	20	3
Africa	-	64
Total	41,574	40,309

Red Herrings

Germany	11,290	170
Portugal and Madeira	657	765
Gibraltar	75	800
Italy	2,638	4,114
Turkey	-	52
Ireland	327	143
Channel Isles	71	569
West Indies	6,146	2,055
Asia	10	-
Africa	50	16
Total	21,264	8,684

Source: Report on British Herring Fisheries 1800

Appendices A. 10 and B. 1.

Liverpool was in many ways ideally situated for this trade. Not only was it centrally placed between the various herring seasons but it also had comparatively easy access to ample supplies of salt from Cheshire for processing. Moreover, being a major port, it serviced a wide and populated area that made up its hinterland, as well as enjoying seaborne connections with markets in Catholic Ireland, the Mediterranean and the West Indies.

The concentration of curing on Liverpool was further encouraged by the economics of red herring production. Unlike white herring processing, which required little in the way of fixed capital equipment, the curing of reds necessitated the construction of relatively expensive smokehouses. At a time when the exploitation of the various fisheries was, by modern standards, low it made sound commercial sense to concentrate the west coast production - and thus capital outlay on smokehouses - at a centre that could draw fish from all sources and thus keep up production for much of the year.

Nevertheless, despite the pre-eminence of Liverpool, not all the activities of the west coast fishermen were directed towards satisfying its trade by any means. Apart from meeting local demand, which varied from place to place, they had often developed trading connections of their own - albeit usually on a smaller and less sophisticated scale. For example, the fishermen from St Ives and district sent herrings coastwise in bulk stored in casks and puncheons of every description.<sup>1</sup> In Scotland, the British Fisheries Society, founded in 1786, was organising a series of fishing villages at Ullapool, Tobermory and Lochbay in Skye.<sup>2</sup> Other herring seasons worked at this time included the Eastern Channel fishery, exploited by craft hailing from ports such as Portsmouth, Dover and Hastings.<sup>3</sup> Then there was the Northumberland

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1. Register House Edinburgh, British Herring Fishery Commissioners Records (hereafter, R.H.E.AF1/5 1st January 1825).
  2. The British Fisheries Society was founded in 1786 with the support of Parliament and through the energies of a band of public spirited leaders. Its aim was to develop economic activity, particularly focused on fishing, in the West and North of Scotland. For full details see J.Dunlop, The British Fisheries Society, 1786-1893, (Edinburgh 1981).
  3. R.H.E.AF1/5, 5th October, 1819; 27th November, 1821; 5th February, 1823; and 1st March, 1825.

season which lasted from June to August but was of largely local significance. The main efforts on the Scottish east coast around the turn of the century seem largely to have been concentrated on the Firth of Forth<sup>1</sup> but, especially after 1808 and the formation of the Edinburgh based Board of British Herring Fisheries, there was to be a steady expansion of activity up and down that seaboard.

England, of course, possessed an important white fishing trade. The principal mode of capture then employed utilised hooks, attached to great, long or hand lines. The former were the normal gear for distant water grounds whilst the latter two, though sometimes found on deep sea boats, were commonly used by the inshore fishermen.<sup>2</sup> Despite their popularity, some other methods were to be found. Along the Yorkshire coast, turbot were taken by means of stationary nets<sup>3</sup> whilst variants of trawling were practiced inshore at numerous places. Furthermore, a deeper water version of the latter technique was spreading eastwards along the Channel from Devon as well as outwards from the Thames port of Barking.<sup>4</sup>

London was the principal national market for white fish and was supplied by Barking, Greenwich and Harwich men in particular. Large vessels, often with wells that allowed them to keep much of their catch alive, would work out on the North Sea grounds and bring their fish into Billingsgate.<sup>5</sup> The Harwich men worked on the following pattern which differed slightly to that of the other two ports. From about June or July they would commence handlining for haddock and small cod about fifteen leagues from the Norfolk and Lincolnshire coasts. This activity was followed until November when they would work off the

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1. M.Grey, op.cit., 23 and the Second Report on the High Price of Provisions, 1800, 3-5.
  2. Scarborough Gazette, 7th September, 1852.
  3. R.H.E.,AF1/16, 29th April, 1823.
  4. See Chapter Five.
  5. R.H.E.AF4/2, 15th November, 1833.



Dogger Bank with long or great lines until April. For the following month or so the greatest part of the fleet would return to the Lincolnshire and Norfolk coasts, as low as the Humber, whilst the remainder would fish for lobsters. At the end of May all would refit again for another yearly round.<sup>1</sup>

Some craft from these ports and Yarmouth still occasionally ventured to Iceland but such voyages were far less common than they had been some one hundred and fifty years earlier.<sup>2</sup> It seems that losses of craft to the Dutch plus the competition of Newfoundland fish supplies had stifled the exploitation of these northern fisheries.<sup>3</sup> Though they had been revived in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries they had declined again greatly by the end of the latter. Following the Napoleonic Wars, however, English exploitation of the Icelandic grounds was to exhibit considerable signs of revival.<sup>4</sup>

Other fisheries were worked with varying degrees of intensity. Almost every coastal community had crab and lobster seasons and, of course, oysters and other shellfish found ready markets amongst the poor. The mackerel fisheries in the Channel were also important sources of food. In 1785, for example, a fleet of some thirty two craft followed the shoals from Hastings.<sup>5</sup> Yet another, and more important source of sustenance was the pilchard fishery of the south west. This was carried on along the north coast of Cornwall from St Ives and on the southern in Mounts Bay thence eastwards to St Mawes and Mevagissey. In the mid 1780s about 5,700 tons of small vessels, each somewhere between eight and sixteen tons, would be out seining for this fish to say nothing of those caught by nets from the beach.<sup>6</sup> On shore some four or five thousand people found employment packing and processing the fish or else pressing them to obtain oil. Pilchards were an extremely important part of

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1. S.C. on British Fisheries, 1785 VII, Third Report, 14-15.
  2. S.C. on British Fisheries, 1785 VII, Third Report, 4 and The Times, 22nd August 1787.
  3. A.R.Michell, 'The European Fisheries in Early Modern History' in The Cambridge Economic History of Europe, eds. E.E.Rich and C.H.Wilson, Vol.V (1977) 161-4.
  4. E.March, Sailing Trawlers (1953) 14-15.
  5. S.C. on British Fisheries, 1785 VII, First Report, 14-15.
  6. S.C. on British Fisheries, 1785 VII, Report into Pilchard Fishery, 4-5.



the local poor's diet. During the winter months these fish, in a cured state, together with potatoes provided the principal means of support. Failure of the season would spell widespread distress. In addition to this strong home demand, a great deal were exported. The main markets being Madeira, the West Indies, Ostend and the Mediterranean.<sup>1</sup>

The Yorkshire coast fishing industry during the years in question had already assumed a form that was both complex and distinctive. Along the one hundred and ten miles of seaboard that stretched from the Humber to the Tees there were some nineteen communities that contained at least a few individuals who derived a livelihood from fishing. In general, such persons and their families specialised solely in the pursuit. There is little evidence here of the traditional dual economy—farmers who were part-time fishermen — that can be found in some parts of the country.

The fishing communities varied considerably in size, though their relative importance to each other did not necessarily match with that of the total population of the town or village in which they were situated. There were, for example, three harbour ports. These were Scarborough, Whitby and Bridlington Quay, the latter of which was the maritime offshoot of Bridlington itself. Then, as now, they boasted the largest populations along the coast. The former pair and to a lesser extent the third possessed a thriving maritime trade, as we have noted, based upon the ownership, construction and servicing of merchant vessels.<sup>2</sup> Despite this, only Scarborough could rank as of any importance as a fishing station. In 1817 Whitby contained only nine fishermen and three fishmongers, even though it had been 'a great fisher town' in the time of Leland.<sup>3</sup> In 1813 Bridlington Quay owned only eleven cobbles that were licensed for fishing and these spent much of their time on piloting or

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1. S.C. British Fisheries, 1785 VII, Report into the Pilchard Fisheries, 4-5.

2. See Chapter One.

3. G. Young, A History of Whitby and the Vicinity, Vol. 2 (Whitby, 1817), 820-3.

supplying merchant vessels.<sup>1</sup> The town of Bridlington itself relied for much of its fish supply on Filey and Flamborough.<sup>2</sup> Even Scarborough's fishing community was at that time overshadowed by places such as Staithes, Robin Hoods Bay and Flamborough, which specialised to a far greater degree in this activity. In fact, as Hinderwell complains, fishing continued to decline at that port into the 1820s.<sup>3</sup>

If we are to judge from the reports of contemporary observers then it is clear that fishing activity had declined at all three harbour ports.<sup>4</sup> The reasons for this probably lie in the vigour with which other branches of maritime commerce had expanded during the eighteenth century. As we have noted, the inhabitants of Scarborough and Whitby had built up important shipbuilding and shipowning interests based primarily on the east coast collier routes as well as the Baltic trade. Furthermore, Whitby like Hull had developed a sizeable whaling industry which was at that time reaching its zenith. The demands of such activities, in terms of capital, time and a labour force possessing the requisite maritime skills undoubtedly led both ports to specialise in areas other than fishing.<sup>5</sup>

In the case of Bridlington Quay, the reasons are somewhat different. Though there was a local interest in shipbuilding, repairing and owning, as we noted in Chapter One, this was on a smaller scale than that of its northerly neighbours. However, large fleets of colliers and other vessels sheltered in Bridlington Bay under the lee of Flamborough Head during north-easterly gales. Such craft required constant servicing with provisions, tackle and water which provided the local boatmen with a lucrative source of employment. The activities of the Quay therefore seem to have been concentrated in that direction.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Hull Custom House, Bridlington Register of Boat Licenses, 1815-16.
  2. M.Thompson, Historical Sketches of Bridlington (Bridlington 1821) 124-5.
  3. T.Hinderwell, The History and Antiquities of Scarborough (Scarborough 1832), 206-7.
  4. T.Hinderwell, The History and Antiquities of Scarborough, 3rd Edition, (Scarborough, 1832), 206-7; G.Young, op.cit., 820-3, and M.Thompson, op.cit., 124-5.
  5. See Chapter One.
  6. S.C.Harbours of Refuge, 1836 XX, Minutes of Evidence, qq 167,721,1667 and 1674.



FIGURE II: Yorkshire Coast Fishing Stations Early Nineteenth Century

1) Redcar

2) Marske

3) Saltburn

4) Skinningrove

5) Staithes

6) Runswick Bay

7) Sandsend

8) Whitby

9) Robin Hoods Bay

10) Scarborough

11) Filey

12) Flamborough (North and South Landings)

13) Bridlington Quay

14) Barmston

15) Hornsea

16) Aldborough

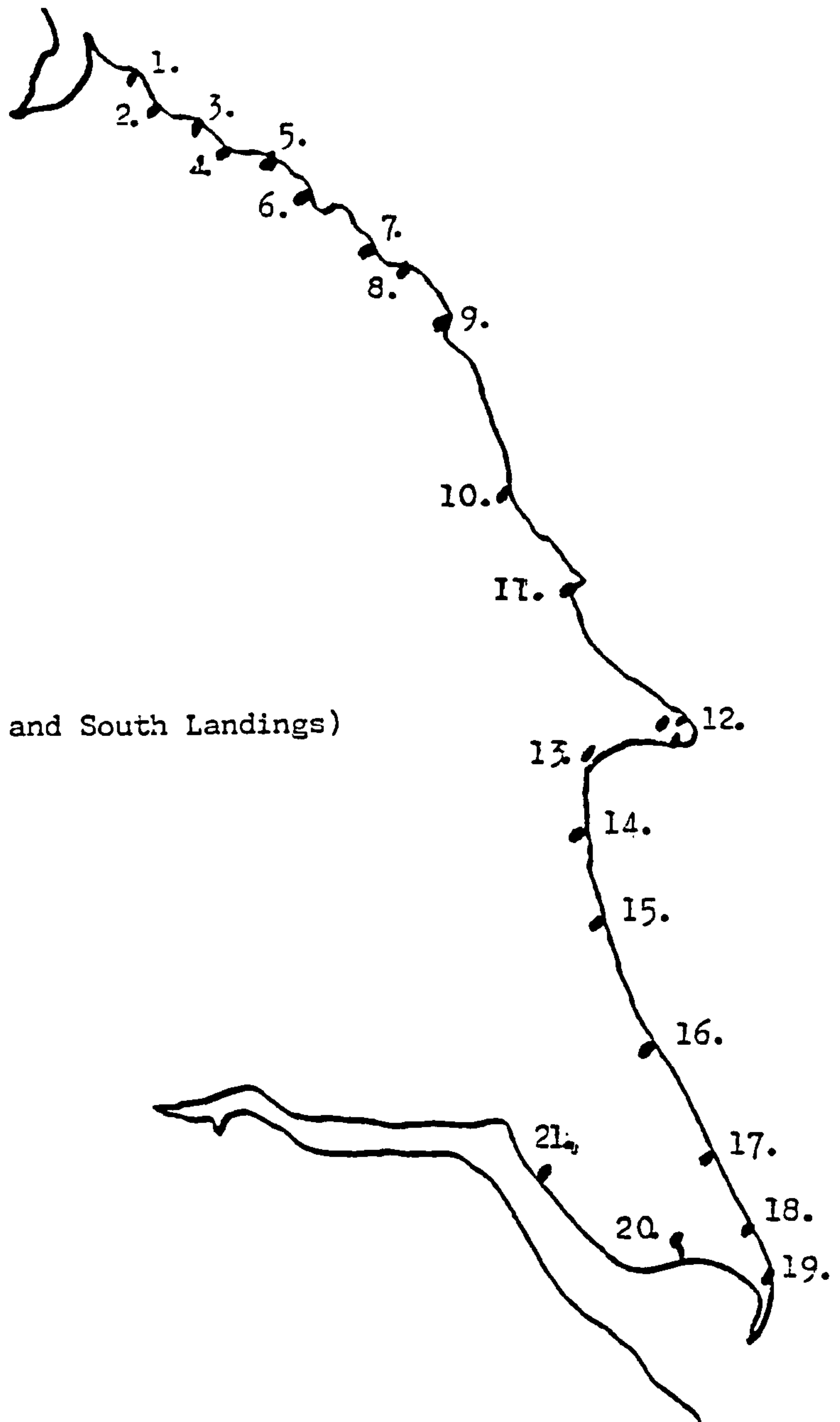
17) Withernsea

18) Easington

19) Kilnsea

20) Patrington

21) Paull



Source: Whitby, Scarborough and Bridlington Registers of Boat Licenses;  
George Young, op.cit., 820-823.



Communities such as Staithes, Runswick, Robin Hoods Bay, Filey and Flamborough also had extensive shipowning interests.<sup>1</sup> Yet here, fishing assumed a far greater degree of importance. Indeed, these places had probably more than compensated for the decline of the harbour ports in this direction, if we are to judge by the surviving architectural evidence of rebuilding during the eighteenth century. The largest fishing station on the entire English eastern seaboard from the Wash northwards at this time was undoubtedly Staithes. In 1817, for example, it possessed almost seventy cibles, usually crewed by three men and, throughout the years 1780 to 1820, around fourteen first class<sup>2</sup> fishing luggers of about fifty three feet in length. Altogether, between Redcar in the north and Bridlington Quay in the south there were probably about 250 small craft and forty first class luggers after the return of peace.<sup>3</sup>

Along Bridlington Bay southwards to Spurn Point the intensity with which local communities exploited the fisheries was much lower. Indeed, the few boats to be found at Owthorne, Hornsea, Barmston and the like were probably hardly sufficient to serve the needs of even the very immediate community. As late as 1848 Hornsea relied for much of its supply on a fish cart from Flamborough which came two or three times a week during summer.<sup>4</sup> The cliffs were of crumbly boulder clay and subject to an unremitting erosion by a sea that had pushed back the coastline by about three and a half miles since Roman times.<sup>5</sup> In doing so it had left previously landlocked villages on its very edge after sweeping away their more easterly neighbours. Being surrounded by rich agricultural land on three sides and open beaches devoid of any

1. Scarborough, Whitby and Bridlington Shipping Registers, 1787-1824.
2. A first class vessel was defined thus by the Customs Commissioners. According to the Act of 1786 which introduced compulsory registration of all merchant craft, it was a decked boat or ship of more than 15 tons burthen. In the case of the Yorkshire Coast such a definition is most useful for it divides the inshore or open boats from the larger decked vessels that fished the deep water grounds.
3. See Figures III and IV.
4. E.W.Bedell, An Account of Hornsea (Hull 1848), 97.
5. T.Sheppard, The Lost Towns of the Yorkshire Coast (1912), 2-10.

FIGURE III: Inshore Fishing Fleet 1813/14 and 1817

	Stations North of Staithes	Staites	Runswick	Sandsend	Whitby	Robin Hoods Bay	Scarborough	Filey	Flamborough
1813/14	N/A	42	24	3	4	27	N.R.	N.R.	35
1817		67	31	5	13	36	N.R.	N.R.	47
	Bridlington Barmston Hornsea Aldborough Owthorne Easington Kilnsea Quay								
1813/14	11 *	1	N.R.	N.R.		4	N.R.	N.R.	
1817	16 *	2	N.R.	N.R.			N.R.	N.R.	

\* Used mainly for piloting work with fishing

N.R. Not Recorded

Source: Register of Boat Licenses Scarborough, Whitby and Bridlington



vestige of natural protection on the other it is hardly surprising that their inhabitants looked more to the land than the sea, though smuggling and the occasional looting of wrecks remained important exceptions to the rule.<sup>1</sup>

Within the mouth of the River Humber two other important local fishing stations were to be found. These were based on the havens belonging to Patrington and Paull. Craft from these places were mainly involved in the capture and processing of shrimps and prawns which were boiled on board and then later sold in towns and villages along the Humber and its tributaries.<sup>2</sup> Their efforts were supplemented by the occasional craft working out of other small creeks along the estuary. The principal mode of capture employed in the taking of these crustaceans was a form of two netted trawl. Out of season some line fishing took place but, as on the Holderness coastline, landings were relatively insignificant and of little more than local importance.

North of Bridlington the most common activity was the taking of white fish by hook and line, often within a few miles of the coast. The craft utilised for such purposes were almost always cobbles. Apart from within the immediate neighbourhood of the Humber any other small fishing craft were very much the exception rather than the rule. Cobles had a long history, claimed by some to date back to the Viking era, and were admirably suited to prevailing conditions, being relatively cheap to construct, robust and extremely seaworthy. With their double flat bottomed keel and sharply rising stern they were capable of being brought ashore swiftly on relatively unsheltered landing places, especially stations where natural or artificial harbour facilities were either poor or non-existent, including Hornsea and Redcar. Cobles were also very adaptable and could be utilised for a wide number of fishery and other operations, including smuggling and pilot work.<sup>3</sup>

The cost of a coble was comparatively low. Vessels licensed at Bridlington Customs House between 1813 and 1820 were generally valued from £20 to

1. Hull Advertiser, 9th November 1827.

2. House of Commons Journal Vol.72, 4th July 1817.

3. Public Record Office Custom House Letter Books (hereafter P.R.O.Cust) 90/11 12th November, 1807.



FIGURE IV: First Class Fishing Fleet 1789

Staites	Runswick	Robin Hoods Bay	Scarborough	Filey	Flamborough	Total
9	6	6	4	7	4	36

Source: Whitby, Scarborough and Bridlington Custom House  
Vessel Registers.

£60,<sup>1</sup> the latter being the cost of a new craft. If not lost or damaged by adverse weather conditions they could be expected to last about fourteen years,<sup>2</sup> which is far less than they would today. Usually they were owned by their crew of three who were often related to each other. It was rare for the owner and crew to be separate, though sometimes a craft might belong to the widow of a fisherman and operated by others on her behalf. Each crew member would provide a share of the fishing gear. In the case of long lining two sets of gear would be required, for whilst one set was taken to sea, the other would be left on shore for baiting in preparation for use the next day. When herring fishing, each crew member would provide part of the full drift of nets. Income was divided amongst the crew on a share basis.<sup>3</sup>

In fact, the maximising of fishing effort in order to make the most of a particular season required the existence of a well organised land based back up. Whilst the crews were at sea, labour had to be found to prepare the spare longlines for the morrow. In addition, the bait had to be collected and prepared. This again was an arduous and time consuming task, especially when the bait, usually shellfish, was in short supply on the local rocks and beaches and the collectors were forced to roam ever greater distances in order to gather the necessary amount.<sup>4</sup>

Such tasks were normally carried out by the families of the crew. In other words their wives and children. At this time also herring drift nets were usually a product of village domestic industry, being made by the older members, aided by those too young for other work. Such was its importance in some parts of the country that an early attempt to mechanise the process in 1819 was frowned upon by the Herring Fishery Commissioners because of the likelihood that it would deprive these groups of employment.<sup>5</sup>

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1. H.C.H., Bridlington Register of Boat Licenses, 1913-20.
  2. R.C. Sea Fisheries, 1863-6 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, q 1285.
  3. Report of Board of Trade Committee on Relations between Owners, Masters and Crews of Fishing Vessels, 1882 XVII, Minutes of Evidence, qq.2556-7.
  4. Humberside County Record Office, North Eastern District Sea Fisheries Committee (hereafter H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C.), Minutes 13 April 1892 and 13 July, 1892.
  5. R.H.E. AF4/2 19th January, 1818.

The operations involved in the processing, storage and transportation of fish also demanded a great deal of labour and not a little skill. There was, as a result, a powerful economic incentive that encouraged the fisherman to marry young and have a large family to assist with these shore based tasks. A wife from a fishing family was obviously a valuable asset because she would already possess the requisite skills as well as being thoroughly acquainted with demands of this rigorous way of life. This was an important reason why fishing communities tended to marry amongst themselves.

In many districts, the fisherman's wife might have further tasks in that she would be expected to carry the fish to some distant market or else vend it in the surrounding villages and countryside. This, for example, was the case in Northumberland<sup>1</sup> and along certain stretches of the Scottish east coast.<sup>2</sup> On the Yorkshire Coast this custom, whilst not entirely absent, was certainly restricted. Most of the fish was disposed of at markets on the beach. These were to be found at Scarborough, Staithes and Filey, for example. Fish was then vended by middlemen or women or else carried inland by the trains of panniermen.<sup>3</sup>

The other principal mode of fishing activity to be found on the Yorkshire coast at this time utilised first class fishing vessels that have already been briefly referred to. These had three masts, were lugger rigged and by this time usually completely decked. They were known in various circles as either fivemen boats or farmer boats, the latter apparently being a corruption of the first.<sup>4</sup> Their range of operations made them the most impressive first class fishing fleet north of the Wash. Various fishing communities between Bridlington Quay and Staithes were the home bases of these clinker built craft that were usually upwards of fifty three feet in length and fifty tons burthen. Their cost by contemporary standards was considerable, being in the region of

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1. Shields Daily News, September 6th, 1864.

2. M.Gray, op.cit., 13.

3. L.Charlton, A History of Whitby (York 1779) 362-3.

4. R.C. on Trawling, 1884-5, XVI, Minutes of Evidence, qq.7304-7311 and Captain Washington's Report, 1849 LI, Appendix 22.



£600. In addition, a further outlay of £100<sup>1</sup> was required for gear and fitting out.<sup>2</sup> The crew strength was determined by the type of activity being carried out, with more men being taken for herring drifting than lining. Usually seven were shipped for the latter activity and eight for the former.<sup>3</sup>

In these larger craft, the income accruing to an individual was determined on a share basis. The share out of earnings varied slightly from community to community. At Staithes or Runswick, a lugger that had gone greatlining would split the proceeds of its catch amongst six of its seven crew. The other, usually a boy, would merely be given a small sum by the crew. The gross earnings of the vessel would be divided into six and a half parts. One of these shares went to the owner and one each to five principal members of the crew who also supplied the fishing gear - hence the name fiveman boats. The sixth member, who contributed no gear, received a half share.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, if the owner was a member of the crew he would receive two shares. If there was more than one owner - which was usually the case - this share would be split between them. The custom at Filey differed slightly in that the shares were divided into seven and one was given to each of the six men on board, who presumably all supplied the gear, whilst the other went to the owner of the lugger.<sup>5</sup> The boy once more being reliant on the crew for his reward.

Although the structure of capital ownership embodied in the large boat fishery was more complex than in the coble operations, the divisions between capital and labour, employer and employed, remained blurred. Most of the crew had capital ventured in the enterprise and their earnings were accordingly determined by the lugger's success.<sup>6</sup>

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1. G.Young, op.cit., 820-3.

2. Ibid., 820-3.

3. Captain Washington's report on the Damage Caused to Fishing Boats by the Gale of 19th August, 1849, 1849 LI, Appendix 22.

4. G.Young, op.cit., 820-3.

5. J.Cole, The History and Antiquities of Filey in the County of York, (Scarborough, 1823), 93-5.

6. T.Hinderwell, The History and Antiquities of Scarborough, 3rd Ed. (Scarborough, 1832), 205-6.

The range of operations carried on by this fleet of first class luggers was also on a much more extensive scale than that of the coble fishery. Fitting out in March they then went greatlining for white fish, especially large cod and to a lesser extent ling, on grounds just off the Dogger Bank. Their normal practice, weather permitting, was to sail on a Monday morning and return with their catch the following Friday. The great lines they used were known as haavres which may have been derived, according to George Young, from the Swedish word haaf meaning open sea.<sup>1</sup> Being heavier and stronger than the less substantial long line, they were designed for the capture of 'great fish' as they also possessed larger hooks. These lines were about six hundred feet in length and carried between ninety and one hundred hooks held on shorter lines known as snoods. Each of the five main crew members would take three such great lines to sea and it was less common for these to be baited with shell fish. More often pieces of haddock, herring or other small fish were utilised and these were obtained from either the coble longliners or else by using a small 'trawl' net.<sup>2</sup> In view of the extended nature of these operations the lines were baited at sea and this was often a principal task of the ship's lad.<sup>3</sup>

Fishing was not carried on from the fiveman boat which really acted as a kind of floating base, but from cobbles, two of which were taken to sea. It was important, in the interests of efficiency, that the amount of time lost through adverse weather conditions was kept to an absolute minimum. It was therefore a great asset that the luggers were able to lie in extremely heavy seas without running for shelter. Indeed, a Government report of 1849 on fishing vessels was greatly impressed by the seaworthiness of these craft and rated them amongst the finest in use, even though their design by then dated back until at least the middle of the eighteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

Most of the fish taken during the cod and ling season were destined to be landed at the Yorkshire coast fishing stations from where the boats sailed.

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1. G.Young, op.cit., 820-3.

2. R.H.E. AF1/6, 8th July, 1323 and AF1/9, 10th June, 1334.

3. G.Young, op.cit., 320-3.

4. Captain Washington's Report on the Damage Caused to Fishing Boats by the Gale of 19th August, 1848, 1849 LI, 277.



A substantial proportion was taken for curing but more was shipped off inland. The fishermen, however, also took advantage of markets at such ports as Sunderland and Newcastle which enjoyed a close proximity with the developing north east coalfield.<sup>1</sup>

As the summer drew to its close, these large luggers were prepared for a six week voyage to the East Anglian coast in order to participate in the autumn herring fishery there. They were usually contracted to Great Yarmouth merchants who not only agreed to take their catch at a fixed rate but also paid them what was known as Steerage Money for the journey south.<sup>2</sup> An extra man was recruited to the crew and the vessels would make the journey in the middle of September.

They participated in this fishery until the beginning of November after which they returned home. Such a pattern of activity was by no means new for, as we noted in Chapter One, 'five man cobles' were venturing down from the same fishing stations in the middle of the seventeenth century.<sup>3</sup> Upon their return to the Yorkshire coast, these vessels were laid up, mainly in the harbours of Scarborough and Whitby, though a few were moored at Bridlington Quay, until the following March when their crews would refit them and start all over again. Whilst they were without their large craft the fishermen would join the inshore coble fishery during the winter months. This was considered the most hazardous of the year's occupations.<sup>4</sup>

There were variations on this theme. For example, the Filey fishermen fitted out their vessels in some years as early as the middle or end of January, after which they would proceed southwards and supply the markets of Hull, Boston and Lynn with fish.<sup>5</sup> During such operations they would rarely return to Filey, except for the barking of their lines in order to ensure

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1. P.R.O. Cust. 91/116.

2. J.Cole, op.cit., 93-6.

3. I am indebted to Dr. Tony Michell for first bringing this evidence to my attention.

4. G.Young, op.cit., 320-3.

5. J.Cole, op.cit., 93-6.



their preservation. From about May onwards, however, their pattern of activity was almost identical with that of the craft from the other fishing stations.

As a necessary recompense for the levels of capital and labour deployed, the return from the fivemen boat fishery was appreciably higher than that of the coble fishery. Though reliable yearly or monthly price statistics for these years are non-existent, it is still possible to make a crude appraisal of the earning potential over their operational year. In 1317 George Young estimated that from each of the luggers about six tons of cod and ling went annually for drying.<sup>1</sup> The average price obtained by the curers from the London agents fluctuated between £13 and £30 per ton, with about £18 to £20 being the average.<sup>2</sup> It seems probable that the prices the fishermen obtained from the curers varied between £7 and £9 per ton. Taking the lower price as the more usual, we arrive at an annual income per vessel from this source of around £42. This would be accrued during the peak drying months of July to September. Only a small proportion of the total yearly catch, however, went for dry curing; according to George Young about one sixth.<sup>3</sup> He further estimated that the usual price fishermen obtained over the year for cod and ling sold fresh was about eighteen shillings per score. Given that two hundred such fish made a ton then such a weight would have been worth at most about £9 to a lugger's crew. If we accept his estimates on the proportion of fish that was disposed of for consumption fresh - thirty tons per craft on average - then a revenue in the region of £270 from this source might be expected in a typical season, or a total of £312 from all white fishing.

Furthermore, these fiveman boats also followed the East Anglian herring fishery and here again George Young supplies us with estimates. According to these, in an average year a boat might take in the region of thirty lasts, each of which would fetch on average from £7 to £8.<sup>4</sup> The possible return

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1. G.Young, op.cit., 820-3.

2. G.Young, op.cit., 820-3.

3. Ibid., 820-3.

4. Ibid., 820-3.

from this source - ignoring the highly volatile nature of herring fisheries - must have been in the region of £210. Thus it seems likely that a three masted lugger possessed the potential of grossing from all sources, well over £500.

These, of course, are crude figures based on the so-called average year and take no account of weekly or even annual fluctuations in price and catch levels. Nevertheless, they do seem to be broadly accurate for a further assessment of income from white fishing in three masted luggers before the arrival of rail transport, claimed earnings of from £12 to £15 in a fair week's white fishing. This would indicate a total income from that source in the region - from about six months activity - of, at lowest, about £283.<sup>1</sup> It seems fair therefore to expect that conservatively these craft and their crews might be expected to gross at least £500 in an 'ordinary' season.

As we have seen, the strength of the fiveman boat fleet fluctuated between the lower thirties and higher forties<sup>2</sup> and over the eighteenth century there seems little evidence to suggest any long term tendency for the numbers to grow or contract. Short term fluctuations were likely to be the result of the fortunes of war or, inevitably, through craft being wrecked or foundering on the storm prone North Sea. Such craft might not be immediately replaced unless prospects were good, even if the crew were fortunate enough to survive.<sup>3</sup> Even back in the seventeenth century about forty fiveman cobbles had made the journey from the Yorkshire to East Anglian Coasts.<sup>4</sup> At the end of the eighteenth<sup>5</sup> and in the second decade of the nineteenth,<sup>6</sup> the same sort of numbers were completing that voyage. There is, however, some evidence of increased catching power per craft as these were considerably larger than their seventeenth century predecessors and undoubtedly carried a larger crew and

1. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII Minutes of Evidence, qq.5050-5052.

2. See Figure V.

3. G.Young, op.cit., 820-3.

4. Once more, I am indebted to Dr.Tony Michell for this evidence.

5. S.C. on British Fisheries 1798, 1803X, Report 138-9.

6. G.Young, op.cit., 820-3.

FIGURE V: First Class Fishing Fleets 1788-1816

	Customs Port Areas			Total
	Whitby*	Scarborough**	Bridlington <sup>+</sup>	
1788	21	11	4	36
1789	21	13	5	39
1790	21	12	5	38
1791	22	12	4	38
1792	21	12	3	36
1793	22	14	3	39
1794	22	13	3	38
1795	23	13	4	40
1796	20	13	4	37
1797	19	12	4	35
1798	18	13	4	35
1799	19	13	5	37
1800	18	12	5	35
1801	17	11	5	33
1802	23	11	5	39
1803	28	14	7	49
1804	27	14	6	47
1805	27	13	7	47
1806	26	12	7	45
1807	25	15	7	47
1808	23	13	7	43
1809	21	11	6	38
1810	20	11	6	37
1811	21	11	5	36
1812	21	12	5	37
1813	21	11	5	37
1814	24	11	5	37
1815	25	15	4	44
1816	24	13	4	41

\* Communities of Staithes, Runswick, Robin Hoods Bay.

\*\* Communities of Scarborough and Filey.

+ Community of Flamborough

Source: Whitby, Scarborough and Bridlington Custom House Vessel Registers



more gear.<sup>1</sup> It does seem that such developments were complete by about the 1760s.

The practice of laying up these craft for about three and a half months during the winter season seems in part to have been determined by the lack of proper harbours at many of the communities that owned them, together with the very real perils that confronted any sailing craft trying to enter the three harbour ports in bad weather. Indeed, it seems at first sight remarkable that places such as Flamborough, Staithes or Runswick could safely operate such large craft. How this apparent anchorage problem was overcome is outlined in Chapter Fifteen. Figure IV gives a breakdown of fleet ownership community by community.

Though lining for white fish was the principal activity pursued along the Yorkshire coast at this time, other kinds of fish were also sought and different methods of capture utilised. Almost every community possessed a few craft that specialised in taking crabs and lobsters during their seasons. Such pursuits though were limited in scope and generally the preserve of those too elderly for the line fishery and boys afloat for the first time.<sup>2</sup> Crabs caught at Flamborough were certainly held in high regard, being hawked around the streets of Scarborough<sup>3</sup> as well as transported to York and such places by stage coach.<sup>4</sup> One other local activity, already briefly alluded to, was the turbot or - as it was known locally - bratt fishery. These fish were not taken in large numbers by hook and line so a special bratt net was employed which was a form of stationary net laid on the seabed.

Another, relatively minor, branch of the Yorkshire coast fishing industry was the taking of salmon. The Esk was, and indeed still is, an important salmon river and fishermen from communities in the area took this fish by means

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1. Ibid., 820-3.

2. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq.

3. R.Ainsworth, Scarborough Guide (1820), 18.

4. R.C.Crab and Lobster Fisheries of England and Wales, 1877 XXIV, Minutes of Evidence, 17th November, 1877.

of nets during the months of June, July and August<sup>1</sup> in the surrounding seas. Salmon, of course, was highly prized and its captor usually guaranteed a good market.

Yet, despite the fact that the inland market was normally restricted to the wealthier classes, the nature and range of inland trading connections was still considerable by this time. As early as the 1770s the inland traffic was the single most important outlet for the industry.<sup>2</sup> North Sea fish landed at the various Yorkshire coast communities was supplied fresh to numerous inland towns and cities often many miles distant. York, Leeds, Bradford, Halifax, Thirsk and Malton<sup>3</sup> were just five Yorkshire centres that received their supplies of fresh fish by pannier train during the years under review. Specific days were set aside for deliveries and markets were then held. In the case of Thirsk the freshly arrived fare would be sold in a Monday market held in Low Street.<sup>4</sup> At York in 1785 Fossgate was the principal market for this commodity which was retailed by the panniermen every Wednesday and Friday.<sup>5</sup> In Leeds fish was sold in the vicinity of Duncan Street, Bond Street and the Cross in markets held on Mondays and Thursdays.<sup>6</sup>

The range of this overland transport system stretched beyond the borders of Yorkshire by the later eighteenth century. In the 1780s we hear that Manchester had a regular supply of fish delivered by the pannier men from the Yorkshire coast and that any fish not sold actually found its way to Liverpool.<sup>7</sup> One of the main communities involved in this far flung traffic was Staithes. The demand must have been sufficient to make the preparation and cost of such journeys worthwhile. Here once more the market was limited

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1. D.M.Walker, op.cit., no page numbers.

2. L.Charlton, op.cit., 362-3.

3. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq.5537-8.

4. E.Baines, History, Directory and Gazeteer of the County of York (Leeds 1822), 537.

5. Ibid., 13.

6. Ibid., 23-29.

7. W.H.Challoner, 'Trends in Fish Consumption', Our Changing Fare, eds. T.C.Barker, J.C.Mckenzie and J.Yüdkin (1966) 108; also R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence q.5568



to the more affluent for as late as 1842 we hear that fresh fish was not normally within the range of the Manchester working class diet.<sup>1</sup>

Panniers were slung on the sides of ponies and the trains of these creatures were led by men who had to journey continuously day and night so that their cargoes could be delivered in an attractive condition within forty eight hours.<sup>2</sup> In some cases there were obviously changeover points for men and horses. At Sledmere, for example, very fast trains of fish for the West Riding from Filey and Flamborough swapped over in a field near the village<sup>3</sup> in the eighteenth century. For shorter journeys it seems that carts were being increasingly used by the end of the Napoleonic Wars and this may be an indication of the improving quality of the roads.

The pannier traffic was just one arm of this extensive Yorkshire coast trade. Another, which was of increasing importance during the eighteenth century, was a waterborne one based on the tributaries of the River Humber. The distributive centre for this trade was Kingston upon Hull. The city itself had been an important market for supplies of fish, either by sea or over-land from Filey, Flamborough, Scarborough and Robin Hoods Bay since at least the first half of the seventeenth century.<sup>4</sup> Consignments of fish were delivered to the market place near the statue of King William III or to the waterfront close to the site of the present Minerva Tavern.<sup>5</sup> If destined for transshipment then they were reloaded at this latter spot on to the craft that took them upriver. In this fashion, cargoes of fish found their way along the Don to Sheffield or up the Trent to Gainsborough.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Hull and Eastern Counties Herald, 3rd March 1842.

2. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq.5312-4.

3. J. Fairfax-Blakeborough, The Sykes of Sledmere (1924) 22-3.

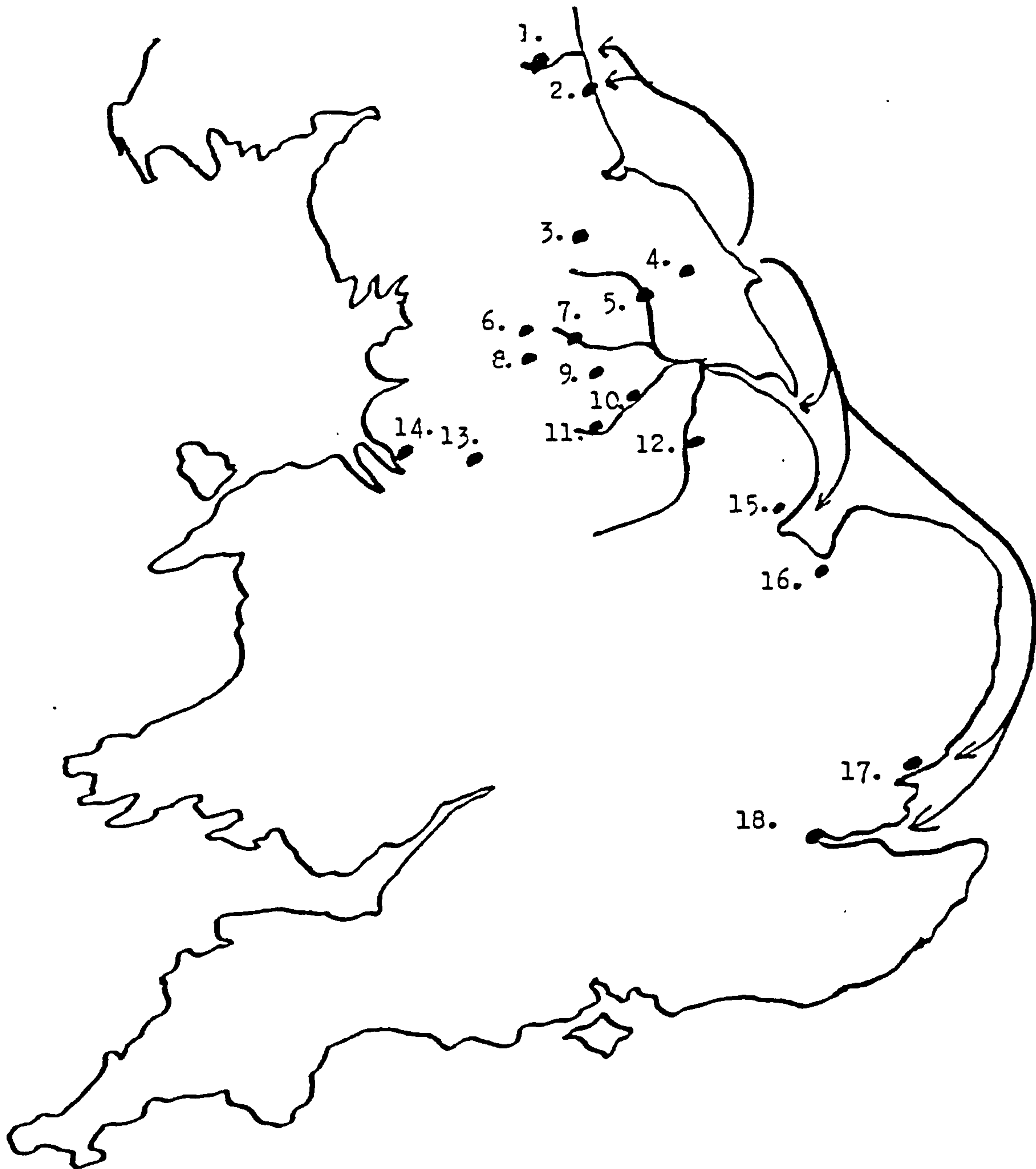
4. H.R.O. BRW/5/12, 31st October, 1653 and BRW5/15, 17th January, 1680.

5. Hull Advertiser, 24th February 1793 and 15th December 1842.

6. G.Jackson, Hull in the 18th Century (Hull 1972) 16, and Hull Advertiser, 2nd April, 1796.



FIGURE VI: Cities and Towns Supplied With Yorkshire Coast Fish in the Early Nineteenth Century



1) Newcastle upon Tyne

2) Sunderland

3) Thirsk

4) Malton

5) York

6) Bradford

7) York

8) Halifax

9) Wakefield

10) Doncaster

11) Sheffield

12) Gainsborough

13) Manchester

14) Liverpool

15) Boston

16) Kings Lynn

17) Colchester

18) London

Sources:

P.R.O.Cust 91/116

Hull Advertiser,

1794-1820

A third and equally important branch of this national trade from the Yorkshire coast was coastwise up and down the North Sea. From Staithes down to Flamborough, fish were despatched in cured form to Newcastle, Sunderland, Lynn, Yarmouth and London.<sup>1</sup> Often fish formed part of a general cargo. From Staithes it would be sent coastwise with consignments of alum from the local works.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the Yorkshire coast fishing industry had by this time evolved a considerable and intricate web of trading connections with various parts of the country that utilised both the boat and the horse. There is some evidence that this traffic had marginally expanded during the second half of the eighteenth century. Charlton, writing in 1779, noted that fish prices in the Whitby area had increased considerably over the previous twenty years<sup>3</sup> and this could be indicative of growing demand from inland markets. Certainly, improvements to both roads and waterways made such transportation somewhat easier. However, as has been stressed earlier, this increase must have been both gradual and marginal judging by the lack of evidence suggesting any considerable expansion of the fishing fleet.

Another extremely important outlet was the export trade. This was principally in dried cod and ling, a method of curing that was carried out in the area, by British standards at least, with a considerable level of expertise.<sup>4</sup> Ireland was an important though lower value outlet and other areas, such as the West Indies, were also supplied. The most important markets outside the United Kingdom in terms of both quality and value were Northern Spain and, to a lesser extent, the Mediterranean states. In 1820, for example, the towns of Bilbao, Santander, Corunna and San Sebastian took 2,526 cwts. of the 5,561 cwts exported.<sup>5</sup> Though this was a few years after the period

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1. See Figure VI.

2. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 5610-20.

3. L.Charlton, op.cit., 362-3.

4. Papers Relating to Salt Duties, 1817 XIV, 383.

5. See Figure



FIGURE VII: Fish Cured at Staithes and Runswick Bay by Christopher MooreStaithes

	Dry Cured Cwts	Barrel Pickle Cured barrels	
1820		1820	
August 25th	165½	December 7th	29
September 2nd	6	" 15th	26
October 4th	60	" 18th	5
" 25th	<u>111¾</u>	1821	
Total	343¼	January 13th	41½
		" 15th	7
		February 1st	<u>32</u>
		Total	140½

Runswick

September 9th	<u>189</u>	December 14th	24½
Total	189	" 20th	10
		1821	
		January 13th	36½
		February 1	<u>1</u>
		Total	72

## Grand Totals

Dry Cured	532¼	Pickle Cured	212
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Source: R.H.E., AF1/5 22 May 1821

under review it seems that such outlets, in peacetime at least, had been of importance for communities such as Staithes since at least the first half of the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> This trade was dominated by the Yorkshire coast curers. Though some fish was exported direct, the majority of it was sent coastwise to London from whence it was exported by established merchants whose reputation was a guarantee of quality.<sup>2</sup> These trading connections were very strong and many of the Yorkshire coast curers contracted to sell their fish to London merchants before the drying season had begun.<sup>3</sup>

The reason why the Yorkshire coast curers were able to dominate the prime export markets was due to a combination of factors, natural and human. In England a number of areas, including the south west, East Anglia and Northumberland cured fish in the same fashion but none could match its output. North of the border the story was somewhat different. The output of Shetland, for example, in later times at least, was to greatly exceed that of the Yorkshire coast in volume but could not match it in quality.<sup>4</sup>

Virtually every coastal community from Flamborough northwards dry cured fish. This was a complex procedure with many stages. After being caught, split and salted, the fish were spread out on rocks and hills by the shore until they appeared to be thoroughly dry. They were then collected into one large pile and left to stand for ten to twelve days. This process was known as sweating. The stack was then opened out, sorted and the fish once more exposed to the sun and air for further drying. After this last stage they were disposed of in parcels of five lbs.<sup>5</sup> Cod and ling were the principal varieties cured but coal fish and skate were also processed in this manner for the home market.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, skate dried to the consistency of horn was a speciality unique to Filey curers.<sup>7</sup>

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1. L.Charlton, op.cit., 362-3.

2. R.H.E., AF1/6 8th June 1824.

3. G. Young, op.cit., 820-3.

4. R.C.Irish Fisheries, 1836 XXXII, Appendix, 149

5. R.C.Irish Fisheries, 1836 XXXII, Appendix, 149.

6. G.Young, op.cit., 820-3.

7. J.Cole, op.cit., 94-6.

Because great use was made of the sun and air, this form of curing could only be carried on during the summer months. Between July and September activity along the Yorkshire coast was at its peak. In each village almost every spare pair of hands might find employment turning and gathering the fish or else guarding it from the gulls. At Staithes the rocks and hillsides were all covered with this drying harvest of the sea.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, a visitor's guide book describing Robin Hoods Bay in the 1790s remarks upon how many house fronts were covered with hanging fish that were also spread over the neighbouring paddocks.<sup>2</sup>

The very thought of masses of fish lying out in the sun can scarcely have been conducive to the attraction of the fashionable visitor yet this practice was part and parcel of life even at the growing resorts of Filey and Scarborough. At the latter, space was at a premium, so the outer pier was rented out for this purpose in later years.<sup>3</sup> During the winter months the same curers would turn to salt pickle curing in a manner not too dissimilar to that used for the curing of whiteherrings.<sup>4</sup>

Each community generally possessed more than one curer though their numbers fluctuated through time. Staithes, the most important centre, was sometimes the base for some four or five.<sup>5</sup> The curers were occasionally former fishermen<sup>6</sup> and generally drawn from the community they worked in. Though usually men, there were instances of curing operations being conducted by women, most notably Mary Potter who carried on this trade at Scarborough in the early decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Some indication of the operational scale of each concern can be gauged from Figure VII which shows the output of Christopher Moore, a curer who worked at both Staithes and Runswick.

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1. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence qq.5312-6.
  2. R.Schofield, The Scarborough Guide, (Hull 1796) 110-1.
  3. Scarborough Public Library, Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Minutes, (hereafter S.P.L., S.H.C.) Account of all Monies Collected, 1835-43.
  4. L. Charlton, op.cit., 362-3.
  5. L.Charlton, op.cit., 362-3.
  6. R.C.Fisheries, 1863-6, XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq.6033-6036.
  7. R.H.E., AF1/6, 10th June 1823.



Though the figures are for 1820 it seems likely that such enterprises had been carried out on a similar scale during the previous forty or so years. In addition to this, the curers also supplemented their income by producing substantial quantities of cod liver oil which was exported coastwise to such places as London and Hull.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the most surprising feature of these years was the circumscribed nature of the Yorkshire coast herring fishery. Despite the appearance of huge shoals between August and October there was generally only a low level of exploitation. The main craft to work them were the Dutch who were centuries old visitors to the ports of Whitby and Scarborough.<sup>2</sup> As we have noted in Chapter One, the medieval herring fishery had occupied a far more prominent position in the local economy but had shrivelled by the middle of the seventeenth century when the local summer fishing activity that was attracting the most outside attention from fishermen as far afield as Brighton was that for cod and ling.<sup>3</sup>

Local exploitation of the herring fishery was normally a low key affair at this time. Usually just a few cobbles and their crews turned their hands to it in order to satisfy local demand, except during periods of extreme wartime shortage.<sup>4</sup> It certainly was not the case that the local fishermen no longer possessed the requisite skills for they followed the East Anglian herring fishery each autumn.<sup>5</sup> It seems that lining for white fish was the more attractive summertime proposition.

In short then, it appears that though the fishing stocks off the Yorkshire coast were worked on a far greater scale than has sometimes hitherto been suggested<sup>6</sup> by a local industry of considerable sophistication, there was still

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1. P.R.O., Cust. 91/116.

2. A. Rowntree, op.cit., 185-6.

3. S. and J. Farrant, 'Brighton, 1600-1820: The Antecedents and Early Development of a Seaside Resort', (unpublished paper 1979), 3-4.

4. Hull Advertiser, 5th August, 1796 and 15th October, 1802.

5. Hull Advertiser, 28th October, 1808.

6. For example, J. Bellamy, 'Pioneers of the Hull Trawl Fishing Industry', Mariner's Mirror, Vol.51 (May 1965), 185.

much room left for expansion, as the post 1850 period in particular was to show. The evidence available would suggest that the latter decades of the eighteenth century was not a time of dynamic growth for the local industry. Nor were they notable for the adoption of new techniques or practices. Over the whole latter half of the eighteenth century there may have been a longer term tendency for growth but this was perhaps so gradual as to be barely perceptible. Certainly, the growth of the nation's population does not seem to have stimulated changes on the scale that were being wrought in the agrarian branch of the economy. To discover the reasons for this we must look first at the marketing and distributive sectors of the industry.

The basic affliction during the whole of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century was that these sectors were hidebound by bottlenecks. Distribution of fish was fraught with difficulties that emanated from the relatively high cost and slow pace of most existing forms of transport. Though all economic activities were throttled to varying degrees by the same barriers, the position was particularly acute for the fishing industry. This was because its product, in a fresh state at least, was highly perishable. The value and edibility of fish soon deteriorated so it could only be kept for any length of time by being heavily cured. Such considerations limited the range of products that could be placed before the consumer.

Though there has been much argument about the acceptability of fish to the poor, which will be referred to below, there was undoubtedly a great deal of demand that went unsatisfied. Periodic dearths of provisions created a national hunger of the type that fish was an ideal product to satiate, were it not for the problems involved in transporting it from quayside to inland consuming centre. A typical example of this bottleneck occurred during the winter of 1766-7. During this season, immense shoals of haddocks were located by the fishermen of Scarborough which continued in roe until the middle of February. Great numbers of cobbles were employed and the quantities landed each day were so considerable that the market was quite glutted. The local poor were reported to have bought the smaller sort at a penny and sometimes a halfpenny per score. Even then the quantities landed were sometimes too



great to be vended and the fishermen were obliged to lay their cobles up for a while. The irony was that whilst the markets in the local towns and villages were subject to this overwhelming surfeit, for much of the rest of the country these were times of great dearth and the poor were in such distress 'that dangerous insurrections were excited and many families were perishing through want of food.'<sup>1</sup>

The crux of the problem was that though it was possible to get fish to many inland towns whilst still in a relatively fresh state by means of the pannier trains and carts, the cost rendered this a trade only for the higher end of the market.<sup>2</sup> It has often been suggested that the reason the inland fish trade was so circumscribed was that the poor considered fish to be an inferior food. Certainly, there is a great deal of contemporary evidence to show that some sections of the poor did not like the type of fish they were offered. Indeed, Hobsbaum, in his jousts with Hartwell<sup>3</sup> over the standard of living controversy during the first half of the nineteenth century, states that his opponent's belief that the poor's consumption of fish was increasing after 1815 actually implies a fall off in living standards because of their subjective belief in the inferiority of such provisions.<sup>4</sup>

The real situation, however, was far more complex than this. Certainly, the higher or better off classes did not entertain such notions. There was a brisk demand during the eighteenth century for such fresh fish as large cod, ling, turbot and halibut. Indeed, Defoe on his travels around the country seemed almost to lick his lips when describing the range of fresh fish available at places such as Scarborough.<sup>5</sup> Such fare was always prominently mentioned in all visitors guide books of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. London's Billingsgate market was usually amply supplied with fish

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1. T.Hinderwell, op.cit., 207-8.

2. Hansard, vol. LXXVIII, 20th March, 1845, 1214.

3. R.M.Hartwell, 'The Rising Standard of Living in England, 1800-1850', Economic History Review, Ser.2, vol.13, (1960-1) 410-1.

4. E.J.Hobsbawm, 'The Standard of Living', Economic History Review, Ser.2, vol.16 (1963-4) 133-4.

5. D.Defoe, A.Tour Through The Whole Island of Great Britain (1724-6, Penguin Edition 1971) 532.



kept alive in the wells of Barking, Greenwich and Harwich smacks that found great favour on the tables of the rich. London also received supplies of higher quality fish from the Channel grounds, either overland or by coastal transport. Elsewhere, important towns with sizeable wealthy markets obtained their supplies by pannier train or cart, as we have seen. Nor was this trade limited to the areas we have described. Bath, for example, was well supplied with Devon fish by the end of the eighteenth century, as was Bristol.<sup>1</sup>

The poor of such places could not normally obtain quality fresh fish because it was out of their price range. Where it was in ample supply, in places such as Cornwall and the Yorkshire Coast, it was a regular and accepted part of their diet. We have already noted that pilchards, both fresh and cured, were a mainstay of the poor in the former area, whilst codling and haddock with potatoes proved a most acceptable meal in the latter. Away from fishing stations, however, thanks to the high cost of transport the situation was different. For much of the year the only fish that the poor might expect to find within their price range was that originally intended for the richer markets but that had begun to turn and was thus no longer able to command a sale there. Such a situation had long existed. Michell has shown how fish condemned at seventeenth century Billingsgate had found poorer outlets elsewhere<sup>2</sup> and this was still a picture that could be described by an 1817 observer:

'When the poor of London obtain fish, it is generally half rotten, and consequently most unwholesome and disgusting food.'<sup>3</sup>

It is perhaps hardly surprising that such a product was regarded as inferior by rich and poor alike.

There was, of course, one type of fish caught off the coast when in season that was destined for mass consumption by the poor in many areas: this was the herring. They might be eaten cured but large quantities in varying states of freshness were retailed at many large urban centres that could be reached with

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1. R.M.Northway, 'The Devon Fishing Industry 1760-1860' (Exeter M.Phil., 1970) 210-212.

2. A.R.Michell 'The European Fisheries in Early Modern Europe' in The Cambridge History of Europe, eds. E.E.Rich and C.H.Wilson, Vol.V (1977) 141-2.

3. Papers Relating to Salt Duties, 1817, XIV, 383.

relative ease.<sup>1</sup> Herrings had the advantage that they were caught in such numbers that they could be moved in bulk by boat or cart and thus sold comparatively cheaply. They had the disadvantage that once on land they deteriorated if not processed far more swiftly than most other varieties of fish.<sup>2</sup> Unless they underwent some form of curing then decay would set in within 24 to 48 hours. Much of the fish moved from say the East Anglian Coast to London by boats much have begun to turn on arrival. It is then not surprising that herrings though eaten in great quantities because of their cheapness were hardly regarded by the eighteenth century London poor in anything but an inferior light.<sup>3</sup>

The obvious alternative was to cure the fish but, once more, the problem seems to have been the quality of the product that reached the poorer consumer rather than that of the fresh fish landed. Because of the lapse in time between catching and consumption, heavy modes of curing were needed through the absence of other forms of preservation or storage. The three principal methods of curing in England were salt pickling in barrels, smoking in kilns for up to three weeks, or drying by air or wind. The basic affliction which all cured fish suffered at this time was that the standards of curing in this country were extremely variable. Indeed, as we have seen, it was a notorious fact that one reason we were unable to compete with the Dutch was that our mode of curing pickled herrings was far inferior to theirs.<sup>4</sup> Yorkshire coast cured cod and ling was generally preferable to that of other areas but even here standards were variable. Individual curers, for example, had both labour and capital tied up in such curing which usually took from two to three weeks. Inevitably, there was always the temptation, as outlined in Chapter Three, to cut corners and try to sell their product before it was thoroughly cured, thus saving time and money at the expense of quality. Moreover, consignments of

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1. Hull Advertiser, 10th January, 1800.

2. C.Cutting, Fish Saving, (1955) 53-4.

3. R.Perren, The Meat Trade in Britain 1840-1914, (1978) 217.

4. G.Morey, The North Sea, (1968) 124-8.



cured fish from the Yorkshire coast were sent by sea to London.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes these were damaged by water which seeped into the holds during storms and heavy seas.

Such deficiencies were, of course, obvious to contemporaries and had prompted attempts to standardise methods of curing, though it must be admitted often with more of an eye to the export market than the home. It was not really until the Herring Fishery Commissioners were created in 1808 that methods of curing were gradually to be standardised and improved. Before this, of course, well cured fish could only be identified by the merchant who was selling it and who staked his reputation on its quality. Reputable merchants from London, for example, only bought the best that they could find on the Yorkshire coast and other places and could thus be ensured of a vigorous demand from both home and abroad. Other cured fish was often treated with much more reserve by all classes.

Poor law guardians often looked seaward when trying to cope with distress occasioned by a dearth of provisions. As we have noted, though, such occasional shortages of staple foodstuffs could not easily be overcome by increasing supplies of really fresh fish to centres away from the coasts because of the prohibitive cost of fast transport. If fish was acquired by poor law guardians - who kept an ever watchful eye on the level of the poor rate - then it was certain that the cheaper and slower forms of transport would be utilised.

Without speed in distribution, fish really should have been cured but, of course, British cured fish was notoriously variable in quality. In addition, the curers themselves must have found it most difficult to respond effectively to sudden surges in demand occasioned by such dearth.<sup>2</sup> Smokehouse production of red herrings and the like could not have been swiftly stepped up unless shortcuts were taken in the processes involved leading to a less thoroughly cured and second rate product. More importantly perhaps, supplies of salt for

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1. P.R.O.Cust. 91/116, 26th June, 1816.

2. S.C.on British Herring Fisheries 1800, 1803 X, Report, 11.

curing could not be obtained swiftly. Though saltworks were to be found at several locations around Britain, the only native supply suitable for curing fish came from Cheshire.<sup>1</sup> This was usually forwarded to Liverpool by canal and then sent coastwise. Clearly considerable time could elapse between ordering and delivery. Moreover, curers were unlikely to be in the habit of hoarding large supplies of salt in readiness for any possible surge in demand of this nature because of the Salt Laws. Prior to 1786 they would have usually to pay tax<sup>2</sup> as they bought this commodity which would tie up capital. Though they were exempted from that year onwards they had to follow strict regulations in order to prevent fraudulent use and these were both costly and cumbersome according to witnesses before Government committees looking at the subject in 1805 and 1817.<sup>3</sup> They did not, therefore, hold extra supplies.

Despite such problems, additional fish supplies for the poor were obtained in some years. One occasion was when large catches of herring were made in the Firth of Forth in 1801 and boatloads found their way to a number of inland towns that January, including Leeds and Doncaster.<sup>4</sup> Demand from all over for these Forth herrings was far higher than normal and, given the sort of problems facing the curers in dealing with such a volume, many must have been forwarded either uncured or with minimal processing. As they faced a coastal journey of at least two hundred and fifty miles followed by a further fifty or so up river and canal, they can hardly have reached the consumer in a condition which would bring them great esteem.

Not all fish used for poor relief was regarded in such a manner. A number of voluntary societies persevered with the basic aim of supplying good quality fish to the poor. One such body which existed in London around 1813 was known as the Thatched House Tavern Fish Association and its chairman was the Duke of Kent.<sup>5</sup> Another, which was active towards the latter end of the

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1. S.C. on British Fisheries 1797/8XX, Report, 130-1.

2. With certain exceptions (see Chapter Nine).

3. See Chapter Nine.

4. Hull Advertiser, 10th January, 1801.

5. G.Dodd, The Food of London (1856) 338-9.



same decade, was the Association for the Relief of the Manufacturing Poor. It tried to coordinate the capture, curing and distribution of good quality fish. This organisation was particularly active in the London districts of Spitalsfield and Tothillfield where its fish was considered 'a most acceptable form of relief'.<sup>1</sup>

Thus far in our discussion, we have noted that any sustained long term increase in activity by the Yorkshire coast fishing industry during the second half of the eighteenth century must have been, at best, merely marginal and gradual. Nevertheless, it appears that there was growing discussion and active moves taken that were aimed at increasing supplies of sea fish to the expanding urban centres. Though obviously such interest was at its most acute during times of dearth or, particularly after the French Revolution of 1789 and the outbreak of the War with France in 1793, stimulated by a desire to minimise the dangers to public order, it is, nevertheless, indicative of the provisioning problems that were facing large inland towns at a time when their populations were continuing to swell.

Hull, for example, anxious to increase the supply of fish it received, instituted a system of incentives for fishermen who bought or sent their catches to the port. In 1772 the Bench of Hull Corporation offered a premium for fish brought to and sold in the city by any fishing boat or cod smack for the year commencing on May 1st. The craft which brought the three largest quantities during the twelve month received ten, six and four guineas respectively. The bounty was continued and in June 1784 extended to include persons landing the largest quantities of herring and mackerel. It seems the amount of fish reaching its market was still not sufficient for the bounties were subsequently revised to include all fish brought overland to the port in 1793. In 1800 three fishermen were offered two guineas per week providing they would exclusively supply the Hull market with fish. Such bounties continued in one form or another until at least 1807.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Papers Relating to Salt Duties 1817 XIV, 383-5.

2. G.S. Clarke, 'The Location and Development of the Hull Fishing Industry' (unpublished Hull, M.Sc. thesis 1957) 21-22.

Hull was by no means alone in attempting to increase its fish supplies. During the Napoleonic Wars the Government, facing unrest emanating to a substantial degree from the dearth and consequent high cost of provisions, paid a great deal of attention to this subject. Fish was certainly often expensive about this time for, although no runs of data appear to have survived, the newspapers regularly reported on the unprecedented rise in its cost between 1799 and 1802.<sup>1</sup> An official report on the matter in 1800 concluded that obtaining as much fish as possible from the seas was by no means the only object and that proper organisation was necessary to allow its effective distribution.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, as we have noted, much had been wasted in the past through shortcomings in this respect. It was felt that the best means of overcoming such problems would be to form voluntary organisations who could organise a supply of fish best suited to the requirements of their respective districts and, if necessary, promote its consumption. It was recommended that such societies be formed not only in London but also at ports at the mouths of inland river navigations, including Liverpool, Bristol, Hull and Lynn.<sup>3</sup>

The Government accepted these findings and made available a loan of up to £7,000 interest free to any society thus formed, provided it could match the sum borrowed with loans from interested subscribers.<sup>4</sup> Once such schemes were underway it was believed that both Government and local subscribers would recover their loans with little problem. In December 1800 officers of the Customs were sent to Hull and other ports to promote the creation of such societies.<sup>5</sup> As Hull was already in receipt of regular supplies of fish for the top end of the market the aim of this society would undoubtedly have

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1. For example, *The Times*, 21st February, 1800 and 16th June, 1802; also the *Hull Advertiser*, 9th January, 1801.
  2. *Second Report of the Committee Appointed to Consider the Present High Price of Provisions*, 1800 XXVIII, 7-8.
  3. *Ibid.*, 7-8.
  4. H.R.O., Schedule 56/1732, 13th December, 1800.
  5. *Ibid.*, 13th December, 1800 and *Hull Advertiser*, 10th January, 1801.



been to provide fish for the poorer consumers. Despite the hopes which accompanied this initiative, no long term success seems to have been secured for no more is heard of it.

The lack of success which greeted the Government's initiative of late 1800 encouraged them to try a variation of the bounty method quite similar to that which had been operated by Hull Corporation. From September 1st 1801 the Treasury were empowered by Act of Parliament to grant bounties for the bringing of fish to the cities of London and Westminster, and other places in the United Kingdom.<sup>1</sup> The bounties were not paid on all fish brought to the fish markets. They were paid only at the end of a period of twelve or, in some cases, six months to those individuals or partnerships that brought the largest quantities overall. Usually, the largest quantity commanded the highest bounty, the second highest a slightly smaller amount and so on down to a maximum of six.<sup>2</sup> The somewhat complex system, which included differing subsidies for seasonal fish such as herring, operated for at least two years in London,<sup>3</sup> Edinburgh and Exeter. It was also in operation at Bristol for part of the time.<sup>4</sup>

If we are to judge from the surviving statistics for London<sup>5</sup> then fish supplies were already creeping upwards in the long term before the introduction of this bounty system, thanks no doubt to the high prices then prevalent. The bounty system undoubtedly encouraged this trend, for the surviving statistics point to a continual upward movement in supply to these major towns,<sup>6</sup> though it seems to have taken some time for prices to begin to fall.<sup>7</sup> To what extent this increase in supply to these towns was the result of a commensurate national increase in catching capacity is as yet uncertain, certainly buoyant demand seems to have been the cause of a marked jump in the size of the

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1. 41st Geo III cap.99.
  2. The Times, 24th September 1801.
  3. Hull Advertiser, 2nd September 1803.
  4. The Times, 16th February, 1804.
  5. See figures VII, VIII and IX.
  6. See Figure X.
  7. Hull Advertiser, 15th October 1802 and The Times, 16th June 1802.

FIGURE VIII: Bounty Statistics

## Edinburgh Market

Quantities of all types of fish brought in:

	1802		1803	
	tons	cwt	tons	cwt
Cod	214	13	128	13
Haddock	302	5	526	13
Skate	25	17	45	8
Turbot and Soles	5	5	11	13
Total	543	0	712	12

Bounty paid to the three persons bringing the largest quantities of fish into market from 1st October, 1802 to 1st October 1803.

	tons	cwt	£.	s.	d.
Cod	104	14	90.	0	0
Haddock	422	9	100.	0	0
Skate	27	11	25.	0	0
Turbot and Soles	9	1	30.	0	0

Source: Return of Fish Brought to London under Various Bounty Acts, 1806 XII.



FIGURE VIII: Bounty Statistics

## Exeter Market

Total amount of fish brought into this market from 1st December 1800 to 1st December 1801 estimated to be 58 tons.

The bounty paid for the greatest quantities of fish brought between 1st December 1801 and 1st September 1802.

	Tons	cwts	£.	s.	d.
Skate, Hake, etc.	131	4	165	0	6
Herrings	8	6	30	5	0
Mackerel	3	2	31	10	0
Cod and Haddock	3	5	21	0	0

The bounty paid for the greatest quantities of fish brought between 1st December 1802 and 1st August 1803.

	Tons	cwts	£.	s.	d.
Skate, Hake, etc.	13	2	20.	0	0
Herrings	204	13	180	10	0
Pilchards	15	7	25	0	0
Cod and Haddock	3	10	15	0	0

Source: Return of Fish Brought to London under Various Bounty Acts 1806 XII.

Yorkshire coast first class fishing fleet in 1802 and 1803.<sup>1</sup> It does seem possible, however, that available supplies normally disposed of in the locality of fishing stations were diverted instead to the bounty centres thanks to this extra financial inducement.

Pamphleteers, of course, made their traditional contribution to the provisions controversy. About 1300 there appeared one thesis with the somewhat longwinded title of 'A Plan for the Better Supply of this Metropolis with Plenty of Fish from Distant Seaports and Rivers with Land Carriage'. Its author envisaged trains of 'machines' capable of carrying eight or ten cwt of fish secured from jolting and ventilated by fresh air. Each would be drawn by two horses and would ply along the coach roads from all southern and eastern ports. A constant string of such carriages travelling at six miles an hour<sup>2</sup> and changing their horses every twelve miles was projected. Whilst one such caravan was making its way towards London the other would be heading back towards its respective seaport.<sup>3</sup> Such a grandiose plan could not have failed but to have been expensive and would have relied once more on fish fetching a price which would have kept it out of the poor's reach. Needless to say it came to naught.

Like later conflagrations, the Napoleonic Wars had an effect on the fishing industry that was both disruptive and yet stimulating. The shifting quicksand of military alliances as well as the effects of privateers and blockades played havoc with normal channels of trade. No sector was more affected in this respect than the Yorkshire coast dry curing exports to southern European markets. The regular trade with Spain dried up in 1796.<sup>4</sup> Some exports found their way instead to north European ports such as Hamburg<sup>5</sup> but these outlets were to be lost as the War took other twists. On the credit side, however,

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1. See Figure V.

2. G.Dodd, The Food of London (1856) 336-8.

3. Ibid., 336-8.

4. P.R.O.Cust. 90/7.

5. P.R.O.Cust. 90/7.



FIGURE IX: Bounty Statistics

## Billingsgate Market

Quantities of all types of fish brought in

	1802		1803	
	tons	cwt	tons	cwt
Fresh Cod, Haddock	1416	10	2,173	10
Slightly salted Cod and Haddock	171	9	312	10
Skate thornback etc.	649	8	1,090	3

Fresh herrings

Fresh sprats

Fresh mackerel

The distribution of the bounty in the port of London was as follows:

	£.	s.	d.
To 13 vessels bringing largest quantities of cod, being upward of 20 tons - each £50	= 650	0	0
To 12 single vessels bringing large quan- tities of skate etc., being upwards of 20 tons each £40	= 480	0	0
To 2 persons bringing largest quantities of herrings, No.886,000	100	0	0
To 4 persons bringing largest quantities of sprats, 6,222 bushels	140	0	0
For the largest quantity*, No.384,500	150	0	0

\* Presumably any type of fish.

Source: Return of Fish Brought to London under Various Bounty Acts,  
1806 XII.

such problems did not in themselves prove catastrophic for there was an almost endemic shortage of provisions at home caused both by the disruption of overseas grain supplies, poor harvests and the demands of the military. Bouyant English demand more than compensated for the losses overseas.

The most obvious problem for fishermen was that, as always, they were in the front line of the maritime conflict. The massive expansion of the Royal Navy's strength from a peace time base of about 50,000 up to 129,000<sup>1</sup> when on full war footing meant that the tradition of press gang recruitment was increasingly resorted to. Though many landsmen were sucked in in just such a fashion, the primary aim was to recruit skilled sailors who were a prime asset for any efficient fighting ship.

In such a conflict the position of the fishermen was somewhat ambiguous. Being expert sailors they were obviously attractive to the Royal Navy. Indeed, the pool of maritime skills contained amongst their ranks had long been used as an argument by those who had aimed to stimulate the development of the fisheries by means of Government financial encouragement; even Adam Smith had conceded that there might be some validity in this point.<sup>2</sup> However, in theory at least, many groups of fishermen were protected from the Press by special dispensations. Such practices were by no means new and there are numerous examples of fishermen being exempted from such recruitment by the Admiralty or local authorities in earlier conflicts.<sup>3</sup> The reason why such immunity was granted was to ensure that fish supplies should remain adequate and that any general shortage of provisions would not be aggravated by short-falls in this commodity. Such a conflict of interest, between food and military necessity, was to be a feature also of the First World War.

In reality, the press often paid scant regard to the fineries of the regulations. During the 1790s in particular, one gang was especially vigorous

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1. B.Farnill, Robin Hoods Bay (Clapham 1966), 46-7.

2. See Chapter Nine.

3. For example: P.R.O., ADM7/381, 1754 and ADM7/385, Protection from Impressments; also H.R.O., Schedule 56, 1386/132.



FIGURE X: Fishing Vessels Entering the Port of London

Year	Number	
	*	+
1730	1,053	
1781	1,067	
1782	1,639	
1783	1,665	
1784	1,831	
1785	2,111	
1786	2,030	
1787	1,664	
1788	2,220	
1789	1,711	
1790	2,118	
1791	1,904	
1792	2,174	
1793	1,883	
1794	1,769	
1795	1,536	
1796	1,665	
1797	1,885	
1798	1,483	1,407
1799	1,510	1,623
1800		2,167
1801		2,638
1802		3,255

Sources: \* Report on British Herring Fisheries 1800, Appendix B. 1.

+ Return of Fish Brought to London Under Various Bounty Acts 1806 XII.

in its attentions to the Yorkshire coast. Indeed, it roamed the entire seaboard from the Tyne to the Humber.<sup>1</sup> The hostility its activities attracted provoked a riot at Whitby in 1793 and the customary practice of women in fishing communities such as Robin Hoods Bay when they spied its approach was to beat and rattle a drum in such a loud fashion that their men were warned to keep clear.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, by one means or another, many of these men were recruited into the Royal Navy. Nowhere is this more evident than at Staithes. In 1813 when the War was still in full rage the number of operational fishing cobles was down to forty two. Yet by 1816, when the decommissioning of ships was well underway, the figure had jumped to sixty seven.<sup>3</sup>

The numerous fishermen who managed to avoid the attentions of the Press were still likely to face the enemy in the course of their normal day to day operations. During the 1790s and for much of the following decade, privateers were an ever present threat, indeed the North Sea was reported to be infested with them in early 1801.<sup>4</sup> These were generally three masted heavily armed luggers that cruised around in search of lone ships such as colliers or stragglers from the Baltic convoys that they could take as prizes. Fishing boats, even larger ones, with no cargo other than their catch were less obvious targets during this war but the relationship they enjoyed with the enemy was never better than uneasy and often veered much for the worse.

In previous conflicts, there was a long history of fishing boats being taken by the enemy. Both Scarborough and Whitby, for example, had lost craft to the Dutch in 1649.<sup>5</sup> During the latter part of the eighteenth century they had become less regular targets but many craft had still fallen victim. During the American War of Independence, which brought Britain up against France once more, a privateer of the latter nation had fallen in with a number of Harwich craft fishing for cod. It took some thirteen sail and later ransomed them back

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1. B.Farnill, op.cit., 46-7.

2. Ibid., 46-7.

3. See Figure III.

4. Hull Advertiser, 13th March, 1801.

5. H.R.O. BRW/5/12, 31st October, 1653.



for about one hundred and fifty guineas each. Part of the terms of this deal apparently were that the privateers, from Dieppe, would take no more such craft and so fishery operations recontinued. This 'truce' was, however, ended when some English privateers took five French fishing boats and word was sent that retaliatory action would be taken. The Harwich and Greenwich fishermen, presumably fearing the possible loss of craft once more, raised three hundred and fifty and one hundred and fifty guineas respectively and purchased the craft which were presumably returned to the French. During the remainder of the conflict the fishery was carried on without molestation until war broke out with the Dutch and a privateer coming upon the coast of Norfolk took fifteen sail and others were lost elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

During the Napoleonic Wars, fishing vessels were certainly subject to markedly different treatment than merchant ships which were always considered legitimate targets for both sides. Their position, however, could never be considered secure for the manner in which they were regarded was subject not only to shifts in the military policy of both sides but also to the whim of the individual privateer.

Relations between fishermen and privateers were particularly variable. For much of the time they ignored each other though on some occasions encounters of an apparently friendlier nature took place. There were a number of incidents, similar to one which took place off the Humber in March 1801 in which the master of a French privateer regaled the crew of a fishing boat with spirits in return for a little fish, presumably in an attempt to gain information on shipping movements.<sup>2</sup> On other occasions, contacts were more hostile. In the summer of 1794, for example, fishing operations on the Dogger Bank had to be suspended for a time because craft were harassed by French privateers and there were a number of incidents around that time of fishing boats being

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1. Third Report of the Committee Appointed to Enquire into the State of the British Fisheries, 1785, VII, 15-18.

2. Hull Advertiser, 13th March, 1801.

chased and on occasions taken.<sup>1</sup>

Not all violent encounters were to the detriment of the fishermen. In late 1794, fishermen from Filey were able to retake a British brig laden with grain from Embden that had been captured by a French privateer and was proceeding to the southward with a prize crew of four when it was driven into Filey Bay through stress of the weather.<sup>2</sup> In August 1797, a small privateer, apparently mounting four guns and carrying a crew of from twenty to twenty five chased one of the Scarborough fivemen boats right up to the harbour. After failing in this pursuit it turned towards Filey Bay. However, it had not seen the last of its prey for the fiveman boat swiftly took on board arms and a large crew and set off in search. When the privateer was encountered a fight ensued during which its crew were overpowered and it was brought into Scarborough harbour.<sup>3</sup>

Official policy changes added further levels of uncertainty. The Dutch had become allies of the French after being conquered in 1795. At first, this had little effect on fishery operations and craft from Britain and Holland still worked alongside each other on the fishing grounds. Early in 1798, however, a decision was taken to destroy or take all Dutch fishing vessels encountered by British cruisers, instead of ignoring them as previously. The basic reason for this new policy tack was threat of invasion. The masters of these craft were often well acquainted with the British coasts and the Government feared that they might be compelled to pilot ships of the enemy should such an action take place.<sup>4</sup>

This step was viewed with a degree of consternation in places such as Hull which were relying on fish supplies to make up for shortfalls in other provisions, for once such steps were taken it was obvious that they would be countered by the other side.<sup>5</sup> Retaliation was the inevitable result and during the next four years there were numerous reports of craft being chased, seized

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1. The Times, 30th August, 1794.

2. Hull Advertiser, 3rd January 1795.

3. Leeds Intelligencer, 14th August, 1797.

4. Hull Advertiser, 24th February, 1798.

5. Hull Advertiser, 24th February, 1798.



and destroyed by both sides in the North Sea and Channel.<sup>1</sup> Such action can scarcely have failed to disrupt the normal pattern of fishery operations and yet this was not sufficient to prevent increased supplies of fish reaching ports such as London down to the Peace of Amiens in March 1802.<sup>2</sup>

After the resumption of hostilities in May 1803, privateers soon made their presence felt again but fishing boats seem to have slipped once more from the forefront of the conflict. Moreover, positive official steps were taken to give fishing boats a degree of immunity. On the 22nd May, 1806 Orders in Council were issued which stated that fishing vessels under Prussian colours should not be molested in their normal round of activities<sup>3</sup> and this remained effective even after the routing of Prussian opposition to the French at Jena on October 14th, 1806. Under this umbrella, the Dutch also carried on operations off their own coasts. One aim was to reduce the destruction of fishing craft but these instructions soon encouraged an unexpectedly flourishing though illicit trade with official enemies. Over the next five or six years fast sailing cutters plied between London and the coast of Holland where they bought up the catches of Dutch fishermen and conveyed them home. The trade was by no means inconsiderable, for it was estimated in 1811 that a full cargo for a cutter would cost some £150 to £230 and that no less than £1,000 was expended in that direction each week.<sup>4</sup> The Government seems tacitly to have ignored this unorthodox branch of commerce as it certainly contributed to an easing of the provisioning situation, even though consternation was raised in some quarters about the drain of specie to an enemy country.

During these years the Yorkshire coast fleet seems to have been remarkably lucky. Indeed, a study of the fiveman boats registered at Whitby, Scarborough and Bridlington Custom Houses reveals that not one such craft was lost to the

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1. Hull Advertiser, 4th April 1798, 28th April 1798, 4th May 1798 and 20th April 1799.
  2. See Figure X.
  3. The Times, 26th April, 1811.
  4. Ibid., 26th April, 1811.

privateers during the entire war, even though there are numerous reports of chases. An important reason was probably their speed, for being three masted luggers themselves they were probably amongst the few craft which could outrun the privateers. Such a course of action was not without cost if the craft had its gear out for the warps would have to be cut and the expensive nets or lines abandoned.<sup>1</sup>

The fluctuations in the first class fleet's strength, which we have noted, were still due to the situation created by the War. The decline of the total labour force available tended at times to be reflected in the numbers of craft operating. However, as we have noted, the prosperity induced by the high price of provisions during the early 1800s that was caused in part by the great dearth of 1800-1 seems to have encouraged a spate of fiveman boat construction in the years immediately following.<sup>2</sup> As the total labour force was shrinking, this expansion seems to have been at the expense of the inshore coble fishery.

During the latter years of the Wars the Yorkshire coast fishing fleets appear to have been worried less and less by contacts with privateers, especially as the Royal Navy was strengthening its position in the North Sea. Demand, however, far outstripped what the remaining fishermen could provide. During the years 1811 to 1813 the continued high cost of fish again provoked much comment both nationally and locally.<sup>3</sup> By 1813 Scarborough of all places was suffering from a shortage of fish. This was due to the fact that much of the catch was being despatched immediately inland without being offered for sale in the town because of the high prices prevalent in the larger towns and cities. The towns burghers appealed for ideas that might divert this flow into their own market.<sup>4</sup>

One group of local individuals proposed that a company be established under the patronage of the Corporation with a capital of some £2,000 for the

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1. Hull Advertiser, 13th March 1801.
  2. See Figure V.
  3. The Times, 6th June, 1812.
  4. North Riding County Record Office (hereafter N.R.C.R.O) Scarborough Letters 23rd March 1813.



sale and cure of fish. It was envisaged that its day to day affairs would be managed by a committee of five who would be answerable to an annual meeting of subscribers. The basic aim seems to have been that the company would somehow gain control of the fish supplies being landed, presumably by operating its own boats and all would be offered for sale in its markets for at least two hours in a morning before any could be despatched inland. Another less ambitious plan was that a person be appointed to watch the coming in of the boats and that when the fish was landed all purchasers should be obliged to hold a public market on the sands so that the town could ensure it received an adequate supply.<sup>1</sup>

In both cases, of course, the idea was to prevent the forestalling of fish catches.<sup>2</sup> Like previous wartime schemes it was borne out of a basic shortfall of supply compared with demand. Earlier in the war, the only schemes that had borne any success in improving the fish supply were those which included the payment of a financial incentive to the supplier and so it is perhaps not surprising that nothing else is heard of these later suggestions.

The permanent return of peace that followed the exile of Napoleon to St Helena saw a return quite swiftly to the old patterns of activity. The former export links with Spain and the Mediterranean, for example, were fully restored. As the Royal Navy demobilised the strength of the Yorkshire coast industry's labour force returned to something like its old levels. Indeed, despite the massive upheaval that the War had caused, it is remarkable how traditional patterns of activity continued to hold sway. Exploitation of the local herring fishery fell to its previous low level. White fishing continued to be the dominant local activity. The size of the first class fishing fleet was soon very similar to what it had been in the later 1780s<sup>3</sup> and the Yarmouth autumn herring fishery was still resorted to.<sup>4</sup> The very long term trends, therefore, emphasise stability and continuity. No permanent changes were effected on the

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1. Ibid., 6th April, 1813.

2. Ibid., 4th April, 1813.

3. See Figure V.

4. G. Young, op.cit., 820-3.

Yorkshire coast that could be compared, for example, with the great upsurge of enclosures that had been such a feature of the agrarian sector of the economy. It seems likely that the crucial catalyst for change still really lay entrapped within the bottlenecks on the distributive side.



CHAPTER THREE: THE FISHING INDUSTRY 1810s TO 1840s

For the English fishing industry as a whole, much of the evidence so far unearthed suggests that there was a long term tendency towards expansion during the years covered by this chapter. The London market in particular seems to have absorbed more fish than ever before, though John Goldman Clerk of Billingsgate market was surely exaggerating when he estimated in 1839 that the amount of fish then entering its precincts was twenty times what it had been in 1802.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, an apparently more sober estimate made by one of the fish salesmen about the same time suggested an increase of about fifty per cent since 1829.<sup>2</sup> Though runs of data to back up such assertions are absent, other evidence can be marshalled. The market area, for example, had been rapidly extended - a sure indication of increased turnover - by filling in portions of Billingsgate Dock from 1816 onwards.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, fish prices there remained low over much of this time, which could also suggest an increase in supplies.<sup>4</sup>

Despite its importance, concentration on London may distort the national picture somewhat. Though much more regional research remains to be undertaken before the story becomes clearer, it appears that a certain degree of expansion of the whole was occurring. In Devon, for example, Northway points out that white fishing had become the dominant local activity by the 1830s after a considerable period of expansion and this was largely due to increased production and marketing opportunities.<sup>5</sup> Beam trawling, a mode of capture that brought in substantially larger catches of white fish than lining, was also increasingly used in both the Channel and the Southern Bight of the North Sea. Furthermore, the use of financial incentives as a means of bringing supplies

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1. W.M.Stern, 'The Fish Supply to Billingsgate from 19th Century to the Second World War', in Fish in Britain, eds. T.C.Barker and J.Yudkin (1971), 62.
  2. Ibid., 62.
  3. Ibid., 32-5.
  4. W.H.Chaloner, 'Trends in Fish Consumption', in Our Changing Fare, eds. T.C.Barker, J.C.McKenzie and J.Yudkin (1966), 103.
  5. A.M.Northway, 'The Devon Fishing Industry, 1760-1860' (Exeter, M.Phil., 1969), 210-212.

of fish to coastal towns seems to have died out. The last occasion the policy had been resorted to at Hull had been in 1820,<sup>1</sup> and this again is suggestive of increasing supplies. Fishing vessels from ports such as Harwich and Barking began to work the Icelandic grounds once more in growing numbers.<sup>2</sup> More notably, the officers of the Fishery Commissioners stationed at the towns of Bristol, Liverpool, as well as London, all continually reported increases in the home consumption of cured herring - by then a vastly superior product to that formerly on offer- during the thirties.<sup>3</sup> In Scotland also there seems to have been a similar expansive trend based particularly on the exploitation of the east coast herring fishery.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, the data collected by the Herring Fishery Commissioners between 1825 and 1840 from the returns of their district officers stationed around the coasts also provide evidence of modest expansion in the processing and catching sectors. The Commissioners, of course, did not have officers on every stretch of the coastline but the major fishing centres were monitored even when their establishment was cut back in the thirties to effect economies. Overall their statistical returns would suggest an expansion of the direct catching labour force in the region of twelve per cent and a growth in the processing sector of about ten per cent.<sup>5</sup>

As we have noted in Chapter Two, the Yorkshire Coast fishing industry of the immediate post-Napoleonic period differed little, in many respects, from that of the 1780s. Nevertheless, during the years under review there were to emerge a number of perceptible changes that could be related to this national expansion.

The years 1815 to 1819 appear to have been prosperous ones on the Yorkshire coast for they witnessed a vigorous spate of renewal and replacement amongst

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1. H.R.O., BRL 2375/6.
  2. E.March, Sailing Trawlers (1953), 14.
  3. Register House Edinburgh (hereafter R.H.E.) AF1/9, 28th March 1837; AF1/11, 3rd April 1838; 12th April 1838 and 28th April 1840.
  4. M.Gray, The Fishing Industries of Scotland, 50-1 and 58-9.
  5. See Figure XI.



FIGURE XI: British Fishing Industry Statistics

	Catching Effort		Processing			Processing Total	Grand Total
	Fishermen	Coopers	Gutters	Labourers	Curers		
1826	47,371	2,150	21,503	8,770	1,756	34,179	81,550
1827	47,733	2,100	23,044	8,144	2,000	35,288	83,021
1828	47,953	1,982	21,719	7,173	1,995	32,874	80,827
1829	43,699	2,011	22,301	7,289	1,995	33,596	82,295
1830	48,373	2,027	23,067	7,552	1,876	34,522	82,895
1831							
1832							
1833	49,212	1,925	23,972	7,157	1,831	34,885	83,097
1834	49,462	1,905	23,385	7,071	1,787	34,648	84,110
1835	49,720	1,939	26,038	7,235	1,916	37,178	86,898
1836	50,253	1,981	25,935	6,550	1,894	36,350	86,613
1837	50,310	1,940	25,413	6,543	1,896	35,792	86,102
1838	50,238	1,994	25,516	5,904	1,921	35,335	85,573
1839	52,037	2,145	26,619	6,030	1,837	36,681	88,718
1840	53,959	2,231	27,379	6,093	1,908	37,611	91,570

Source: Reports of the Board of British Herring Fisheries.

the fiveman boat fleet.<sup>1</sup> The great dearth of 1816 undoubtedly raised the price of fish together with other foods and there seems to have been a continuation of local provisioning problems - albeit perhaps intermittently - until at least the end of 1820 for, as we have noted, Hull Corporation felt obliged to reintroduce a range of inducements for certain fishing vessels that year.<sup>2</sup>

Over the five years ending 1820 some twenty one first class craft were constructed for the communities of Filey, Scarborough, Robin Hoods Bay, Runswick and Staithes.<sup>3</sup> Most were constructed in Scarborough harbour by the builder John Skelton in particular. The pattern in which these craft were acquired was by no means geographically even. At first Scarborough took the lead, with some five craft being built for that port in 1815 alone. By the end of the decade most construction was for Staithes.<sup>4</sup> As had been previously the case, there was little inclination on the part of either Whitby or Bridlington Quay fishermen to acquire first class fishing boats.

In the open boat or coble fishery, the surviving data would also suggest that there was a marked expansion following the final cessation of hostilities. As we have noted there were a large number of cobbles licensed in the Whitby Customs Port Area during the years 1816 to 1818,<sup>5</sup> and this was not only due to the relative prosperity of these years but also to the large number of men returning home after demobilisation by the Royal Navy.

At the end of 1820 there was a notable alteration in the nature and degree of Government intervention in the cod, ling and hake fishery aimed specifically at stimulating further growth. As a result of an Act passed that year, the British White Herring Fishery Commissioners took over the responsibility for issuing bounties in this branch of the trade. The previous bounty had been paid upon fish exports but in future such payment was to be determined solely by the

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1. See Figure XII

2. See Chapter Five.

3. Scarborough and Whitby Custom House Vessel Registers 1815-1819.

4. Ibid., 1815-1819.

5. See Figure XIII.



FIGURE. XII: Yorkshire Coast First Class Fishing Fleet

Craft registered at:				
	Whitby	Scarborough	Bridlington	Total
1815	25	13	4	42
1816	24	13	4	41
1817	24	14	4	42
1818	28	19	4	51
1819	29	20	4	53
1820	29	20	4	53
1821	30	20	4	54
1822	23	19	4	51
1823	28	17	4	49
1824	26	14	4	44
1825	24	12	4	39
1826	23	12	2	37
1827	23	12	2	37
1828	24	12	2	38
1829	25	12	2	39
1830	25	11	2	38
1831	25	11	2	38
1832	25	11	2	38
1833	25	11	2	38
1834	26	20	4	50
1835	27	24	5	56
1836	27	29	5	61
1837	24	30	5	59
1838	26	38	8	72
1839	26	40	8	74
1840	23	46	9	78

Source; Custom House Vessel Registers.

quality of the finished cured product. The aim was to make these cured fish more attractive, especially abroad, and thus increase the volume of sales. Fish cured to an acceptable standard would be eligible for a payment of four shillings per cwt if dried. In the case of those salt pickled then each barrel that reached the requisite standard would bring the curer some two shillings and sixpence. The other prong of the Government's strategy was to encourage the expansion of catching capacity by payment of a bounty of up to 50 shillings per ton on first class vessels fitting out for these fisheries in an agreed fashion and following them for a minimum period of three months. All dried fish that received the bounty were marked with a specially designed punch hole in the tail. The pickle cured fish had their barrels branded in a similar fashion to that already applied in the herring fishery.<sup>1</sup> For a time all fish not thus approved were barred from exportation.<sup>2</sup>

A cursory glance at this attempt to expand the fisheries would suggest that it met with little success on the Yorkshire coast. In 1820, the last full year prior to the introduction of these bounties, the offtake of cod and ling for curing purposes totalled 5,474 cwts. of dried and 448 barrels salt pickled.<sup>3</sup> During the following nine years that the bounty was in operation the former figure was surpassed only once and the latter never even remotely approached. In fact, the overall trend was downwards for the annual average offtake of dried cod and ling for the years 1821-5 was 4,640 cwts and this fell to an annual average of 3,842 cwts during the following five years.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the production of salt pickled cod and ling shrivelled to almost negligible proportions.

This downturn in activity was apparently general. Despite the financial cushion afforded by the bounty, the first class fleet declined steeply during the first half of the decade. Nowhere was this more apparent than at the southerly stations. Indeed, the first class fleet registered at Scarborough

1. See Chapter Nine
2. Whitby Custom House, Index to General Orders, 1711-1825, 7th January 1821.
3. R.H.E., AF 4/2 8th December, 1820.
4. See Figure XV.



FIGURE XIII: Cobles and Other Open Boats Newly Licensed at Whitby Custom\*  
House for Fishing 1816-1838

	Under 30 feet	Over 30 feet	Total
1816	12	nil	12
1817	28	nil	28
1818	8	nil	8
1819	1	nil	1
1820	5	nil	5
1821	1	nil	1
1822	1	nil	1
1823	nil	nil	nil
1824	nil	1	1
1825	nil	nil	nil
1826	2	nil	2
1827	nil	nil	nil
1828	2	nil	2
1829	nil	nil	nil
1830	1	nil	1
1831	1	nil	1
1832	1	nil	1
1833	17	nil	17
1834	3	3	6
1835	8	6	14
1836	10	1	11
1837	25	3	28
1838	4	5	9

\*Stationed at Whitby, Staithes, Robin Hoods Bay, Runswick Bay.

Source: Whitby Custom House Register of Boat Licenses.

FIGURE XIV: First Class Fishing Fleet 1825

Staites	Runswick	Robin Hoods Bay	Scarborough	Filey	Flamborough	Total
17	3	4	5	7	3	39

Source: Whitby, Scarborough and Bridlington Shipping Register



Custom House fell from twenty to twelve in just five years.<sup>1</sup> The decline was halted during the second half of the decade but signs of recovery are few. Figures regarding the size of the labour force are available from the middle of the decade and, although they indicate an improvement in 1827, the overall trend between 1826 and 1830 was downwards. Since the first class fishing fleet held its size during these later years it seems likely that the inshore coble fishery suffered a great drain of its strength during the latter half of the decade and the dearth of new open boat licenses issued in the Whitby Customs Port area would tend to back this up.<sup>2</sup>

This story of decline for the Yorkshire coast fishing industry during the 1820s would seem to be at variance with the apparent national picture of growth. Its problems do not appear to be due to any difficulty in locating stocks of fish for there are no reports of catching problems in the surviving records of the Herring Fishery Commissioners. This is one further manifestation of the individual nature of each regional fishery at this time though, as we shall see below, this relative decline may have resulted from expansion elsewhere and the subsequent increase in competition in at least some markets.

This is not to say that the work of the Herring Fishery Commissioners in this area was a total failure for they managed to effect some improvements in the Yorkshire methods of dry curing, even though the curers there already owned a considerable reputation. Despite their existing renown, it was felt by the Commissioners, and trading interests in London, that Yorkshire coast curers still lost a lot of possible sales in the lucrative Spanish market because there was still some variation in the quality of the finished product.<sup>3</sup>

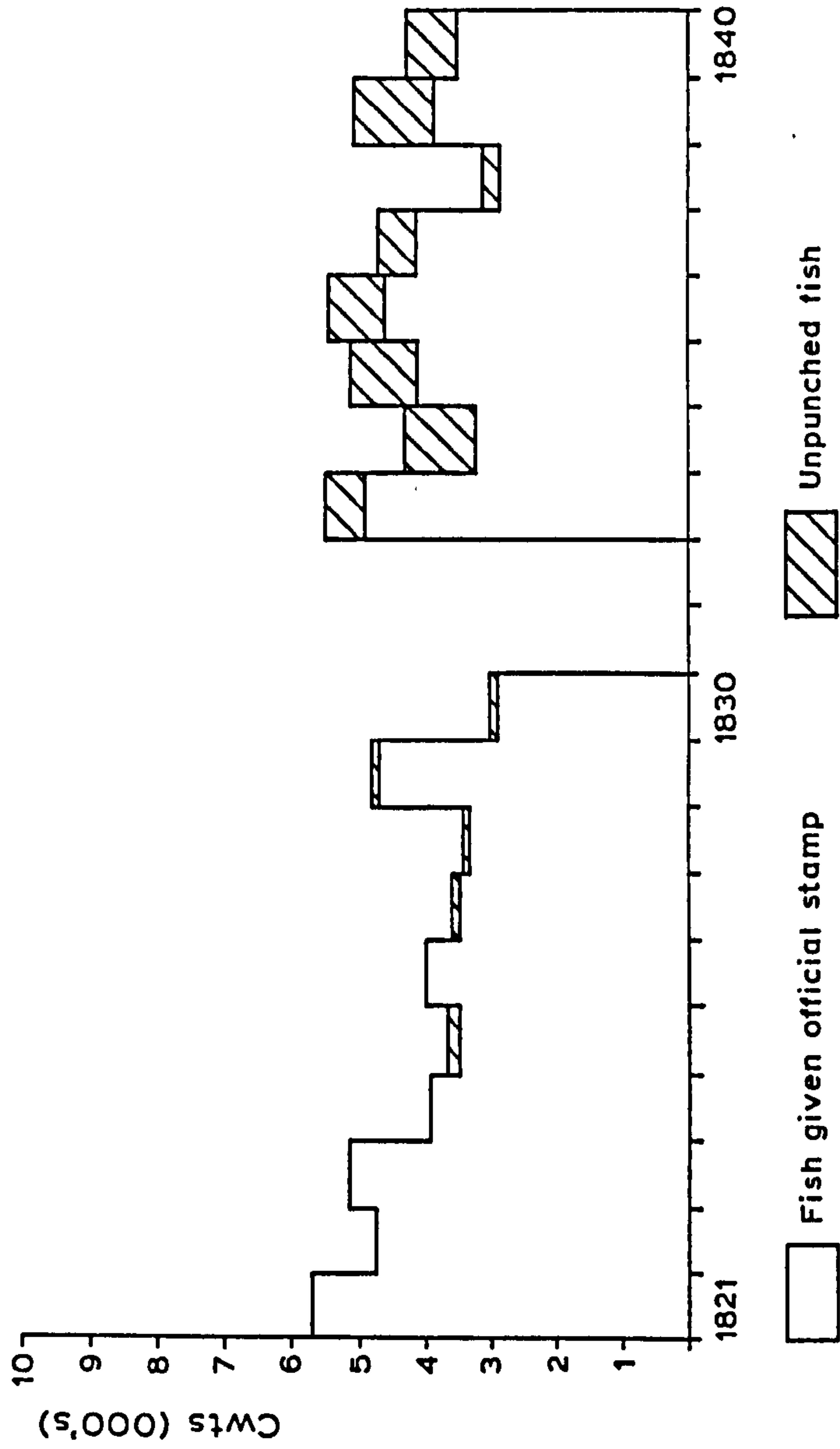
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1. See Figure XII.

2. See Figure XIII.

3. R.H.E., AF1/6, 3rd September, 1822 and 10th September, 1822.

Figure XV. Total Cod, Ling, or Hake cured in Yorkshire District of British Herring Fishery Commissioners.



Source: Fishery Board Reports

Amongst the more common faults affecting Yorkshire coast quality cured fish at this time were variations in the thoroughness of drying. In part this might be unavoidable due to the changeability of the climate but it could also be the result of poor curing techniques or the haste of the processor to increase turnover at a time when market demand was high. Occasionally, the possibility of greater gain might tempt the curer to be even more devious, as was the case with one individual at Flamborough who was caught mixing poor quality fish in with parcels of good in an attempt to secure the highest price for all.<sup>1</sup> Other fish might be spoilt not by too little sun but by excessive drying, for the quality of the fish was particularly affected by over-much exposure to strong sun which resulted in it becoming blistered. Yet another fault sometimes found was due to the application of too much salt when the fish were split and this caused a condition known as being salt burnt.<sup>2</sup> Poor storage was an endemic problem everywhere and even well cured fish could turn mouldy through being kept in damp conditions, as happened with the stock of a reputable Scarborough curer in 1822.<sup>3</sup> Of course, as we have already noted, voyages by sea could also affect the quality through poor handling or exposure to salt water.

In order to eradicate, or at least minimise the effect of, these shortcomings a complex series of regulations were implemented and these had to be closely adhered to by both fishermen and curers if they wished to be granted a bounty. All curing processes were overseen by a newly appointed district officer and only those fish he had inspected and found to be up to the requisite standard received the punch mark in the tail from his special iron which allowed them to claim the bounty.

The first district officer appointed was a Scotsman, George Smith, and initially his strict implementation of these regulations caused a whole spate of complaints from local curers to his superiors in Edinburgh,<sup>4</sup> through his

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1. R.H.E., AF1/9, 9th October, 1832.

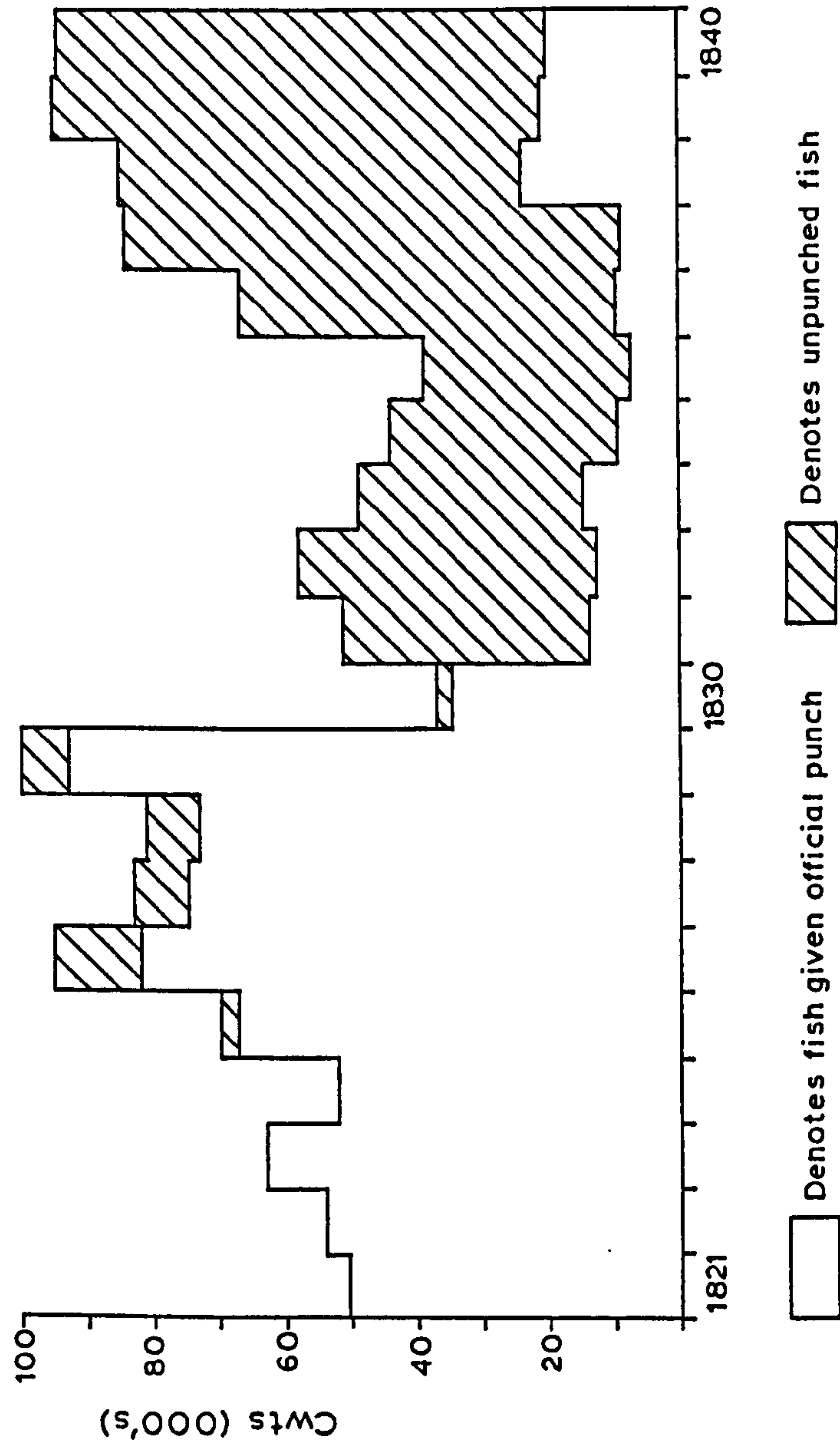
2. R.H.E., AF1/27, 6th November 1820 and AF1/9, 9th October 1832.

3. R.H.E., AF1/6, 9th February, 1822.

4. R.H.E., AF1/6, 12th November, 1822.



Figure XVI Total amount of Cod, Ling, or Hake cured in England and Scotland as recorded by the Board of British Herring Fisheries. (Majority cured in Scotland).



Source : Fishery Board Reports.

refusal to grant bounties to fish not up to the standard. Such a stand, however, was firmly backed by the Commissioners and even Smith himself was severely reprimanded by them when he allowed the bounty on some fish cured in a manner not totally in accordance with regulations.<sup>1</sup>

The Fishery Commissioners' principal officer in London, Archibald Smith, normally oversaw all exportation from the capital and was thus fully conversant with the standards that satisfied the best overseas markets. In 1822 he toured the Yorkshire district in an attempt to induce curers to raise their standards.<sup>2</sup> One further barrier to greater uniformity of quality lay in the practice of the first class luggers to stay at sea for a week. Cod or ling destined for the curers and caught on the first few days of the fishing had to wait until the end of the week for any processing other than heading or bleeding. In order to improve their condition, a new regulation was introduced in 1825 requiring fish to be split and salted within forty eight hours of capture.<sup>3</sup> Henceforward, most of these craft had to take with them to sea a splitter, usually in the employment of the curer, to carry out this task.

Such efforts were rewarded with a substantial degree of success. As early as 1823 Archibald Cameron, on a return visit to the district, had noted a considerable overall improvement in the quality of the cure. A visit by the Fishery Commissioners' Secretary reported similarly in 1825.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the total amount cured in the latter year amounted to 5,621 cwts of which 5,357 cwts were found eligible for the bounty. In practical terms this meant that the curers could dispose of more of their catch in the lucrative Spanish markets and less had to be disposed of at lower value in the Irish or West Indian markets. By now this was appreciated by the curers who conveyed to the Secretary:

'the most unqualified testimony of the utility of the regulations issued by the Commissioners, and of the great improvement thereby effected in the quality of the fish.' 5

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1. R.H.E. AF1/6, 4th June, 1822.
  2. R.H.E. AF1/6, 3rd September 1822 and 10th September 1822.
  3. R.H.E. AF1/6, 1st February 1825 and 1st May 1825
  4. R.H.E. AF1/6, 12th August 1823.
  5. R.H.E. AF1/7, 6th September 1825.



In another respect, however, the work of the Fishery Commissioners may well have been to the disadvantage of the Yorkshire coast, for although they improved the quality of curing in the district they also raised standards elsewhere, particularly during the second half of the decade. Between 1825 and 1829 the quantity of fish cured in England and Scotland that was entitled to the bounty rose from 52,135 cwt to 92,314 cwt.<sup>1</sup> There were certainly still regional variations in curing standards which left the Yorkshire coast to the forefront but the general adoption of the regulations had the effect of narrowing the gap whilst the bounty stimulated production in districts such as Shetland. This marked increase in the supply of relatively improved quality cured fish elsewhere seems to have had a disadvantageous effect on the Yorkshire coast curing activities for, as we have seen, production was down overall during these years, though there are no reports of poor fishing conditions or catches. It seems likely that the local curers had difficulty coping with this increased competition which may even have affected the Spanish trade to a limited extent. Certainly the northern areas appear to have had lower costs and there are numerous instances of English craft finding it cheaper to buy fish from northern fishermen than catch it themselves.<sup>2</sup> In part this was probably due, in the case of Shetland at least, to a lack of other outlets.

Nevertheless, throughout the twenties the Yorkshire coast was easily able to maintain its position as the largest producer of dried cod and ling in England. Its output though was dwarfed by that of Shetland. As early as 1821 Shetland had produced some 29,301 cwts of punched fish against the Yorkshire coast's total of 5,623 cwt.<sup>3</sup> The impressive Shetland figures, however, do not mean that the fishing effort of those islands was greater than that of the Yorkshire coast. Rather this is a reflection of the lack of

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1. See Figure XVI.

2. For example, R.H.E., AF1/5, 24th August 1819.

3. Herring Fishery Commissioners' Annual Report, year ended 5th April 1821, 1823 VII, 156.



FIGURE XVII: Total Offtakes of Cod, Ling or Hake for All Purposes

1843	Dry Curing cwts	Pickle Curing barrels	Other cwts
Whitby	1,441½	nil	27,966
Shetland	20,356	nil	3,563
Grand Total (All British Stations)	92,313½	5,123	41,850½

Source: Herring Fishery Commissioners Report.

other outlets. George Young had estimated that only one sixth of the Yorkshire coast's catch went for dry curing whilst the rest found sales inland.<sup>1</sup>

Data to back up these assertions does not become available until 1843 by which time the Yorkshire coast's dry curing activities were on the decline. Even so, they illustrate the difference in the relative size of other outlets. That year the non-cured oftakes for the Yorkshire and Shetland districts were respectively 27,996 cwts and 3,563 cwts.<sup>2</sup>

The largest single market for dried fish at this time remained Ireland. Like the home market, consumers there generally preferred a somewhat moister product than their counterparts in warmer climes.<sup>3</sup> Yet Ireland was a low value outlet. So where the West Indies which also took dried cod and ling, in addition to cured herring, and the trade there was conducted in the teeth of competition from the Newfoundland fisheries.

From the mid-twenties Government policy on the fisheries began to shift once more. The Salt Laws, long regarded as being to the detriment of the industry, were repealed. From 1825 all fishing bounties were gradually phased out. Though the activities of the Fishery Commissioners with respect to maintaining and improving the standard of curing continued, the cash inducements ceased at the end of the decade. At first the decision appeared to be doubly unfortunate for the Yorkshire coast industry for it coincided with the downturn in activity that has already been noted. The move was viewed with alarm and induced fishermen and curers from Staithes to Flamborough to petition Parliament on five occasions praying for the continuance of the bounty system.<sup>4</sup> Other areas adopted the same tactic but all efforts proved to be in vain and the subsidies were ended on schedule.

The complete removal of financial aid did not turn out to be the disaster that the Yorkshire coast curers had feared. Not only did their termination

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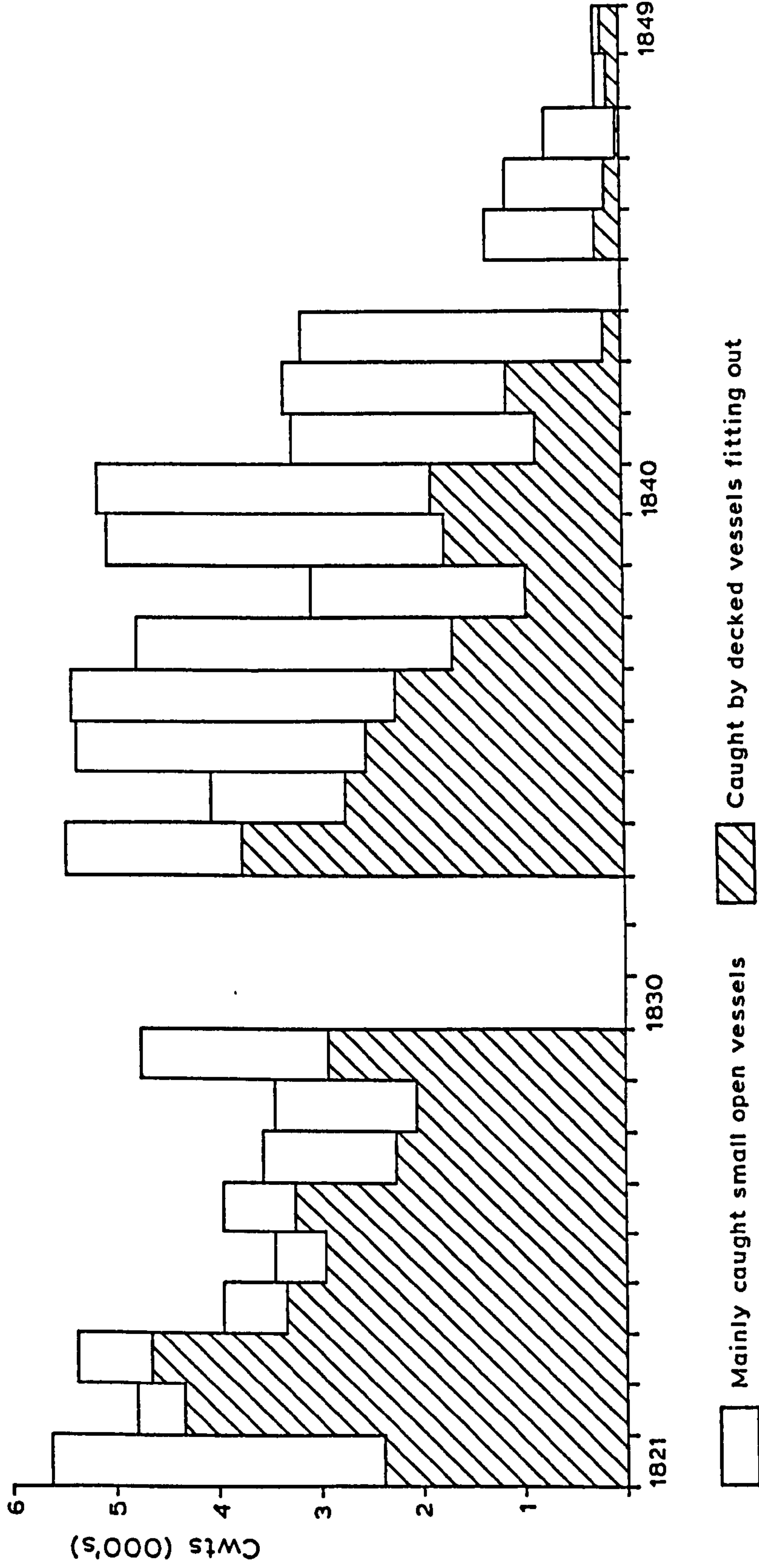
1. G.Young, op.cit., 820-3.

2. See Figure XVII.

3. R.H.E., AF1/6, 8th June 1824.

4. House of Commons Journals: vol.81 20th February 1826 and 24th February 1826; vol.83 17th March 1828; vol 85 5th April 1830 and 25th May 1830.

Figure XVIII. Total Cod and Ling cured in Yorkshire District, 1821-1849.



Source: Fishery Board Reports



almost coincide with an upturn in demand from home markets in the early 1830s but the abandonment of bounties seems to have benefitted the area at the expense of other districts.<sup>1</sup> In Shetland the move seems to have been little short of disastrous and caused a major fall off in this type of activity. Craft were laid up and left to rot on the shore<sup>2</sup> and for a while there was an almost complete lack of interest in the Fishery Commissioners' cod and ling regulations.<sup>3</sup>

On the Yorkshire coast, however, the average annual amount cured between 1833 and 1839 was 4,736 cwt compared with 4,330 cwts for 1821-9.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the area was able to strengthen its grip on exports to the most lucrative overseas markets as the challenge from Shetland receded. Indeed, the quality gap between the Yorkshire coast and its rivals was, if anything, wider than ever before. Most other areas abandoned the practice of curing to the approved standard once the financial incentive was removed<sup>5</sup> but the majority of Yorkshire curers continued to adhere strictly to the Commissioners' code.<sup>6</sup> The punching of cod and ling under the existing scheme had only been in operation for some nine years before the bounty was withdrawn and clearly this had been insufficient time to establish it as invaluable in the eyes of the curers from many districts. In contrast, the herring brand had been operating since 1808 and was to be increasingly adopted even after the abandonment of the bounty. The Yorkshire coast curers, after overcoming their initial hostility, had been amongst the few to recognise the value of the system. Furthermore, their trade with southern European markets also ensured their continued use of the brand. This branch of trade was largely controlled by a number of reputable London merchants who refused to buy dried cod or ling unless it had been branded.<sup>7</sup>

1. R.H.E., AF1/8, 27th September 1831 and 8th May 1831.

2. C.A. Goodlad, *Shetland Fishing Saga* (Shetland 1971) 132-5.

3. R.H.E., AF1/8 14th September 1830.

4. See Figure XIV.

5. R.H.E., AF1/8, 8th May 1832.

6. R.H.E., AF1/9, 9th October 1832 and AF1/10, 26th April 1836.

7. R.H.E., AF1/9, 24th September 1833.

FIGURE XIX: Dutch and French Fishing Vessels Calling at ScarboroughDuring the Months of July to December

	Dutch	French
1836	nil	50
1837	9	72
1838	12	111
1839	14	67
1840	17	99
1841	10	68
1842	6	89
1843	3	34

Source: Scarborough Harbour Commissioners' Account of all Monies

Collected 1836-43.

Thus the benefits of following the official regulations remained substantial for the Yorkshire coast curers throughout the 1830s. By the year 1835 it was the only district left that continued having its dried cod and ling punched in any appreciable quantities. This was despite the fact that the officials of the Fishery Commissioners continually reported that unpunched fish fetched a lower price than that which had been punched.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, because other regions largely abandoned it, the punch mark became a guarantee in its own right. This had been the original intention but on a national rather than a local scale. To some extent, this began to create a situation which the eminent London merchants had not really intended, for they were later to complain woefully that groups without established reputations were able to trade, in the markets they had hitherto dominated, on the strength of it.<sup>2</sup>

The primary stimulant for the Yorkshire coast fishing industry during the 1830s lay in the continued expansion of the home market. The growth of the northern industrial regions and coalfields provided markets for fish that were apparently limited only by the constraints of existing modes of transport. One indication of this is that, though there was to be an increase in the size of the first class fishing fleet during this decade,<sup>3</sup> less and less such craft bothered to fit out for a full season's dry cod and ling fishery.<sup>4</sup> Instead, they expanded the practice of landing catches at seaports further north and south, including Hartlepool, Sunderland, Newcastle and Hull.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, coastwise trade was speeded up by the arrival of the steam packets which had established a number of services along the eastern seaboard by the early thirties and were able to speed up journey times for cargoes of fish from ports such as Scarborough and Whitby.<sup>6</sup>

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1. R.H.E. AF1/8, 8th May 1832, 11th March 1834 and 30th September 1836.
  2. R.H.E. AD1/10, 12th April, 1836.
  3. See Figure XII.
  4. See Figure XVIII.
  5. R.H.E. AF1/13, 8th May, 1844.
  6. J.M.Bellamy, The Trade and Shipping of Nineteenth Century Hull, (1971: reprinted 1979) 24-5.



Steam packets were also making an impact on that other important artery of local trade, the Humber waterway system.<sup>1</sup> Hull, as we have seen, had long been not only an important market but also a major redistributive centre for fish being despatched inland by boat. During the thirties fish seems to have been regularly shipped inland by steam packet, as well as being sent in increasing quantities by the traditional sailing keel. The quayside by the Minerva Tavern in Hull, from where this trade was principally conducted, was a scene of evermore vigorous activity and there were growing complaints during the decade about the nuisance that the associated activities caused the city's residents.<sup>2</sup> The improvement in communications afforded by the steam packet was especially crucial in the case of a commodity such as fish, for it enabled it to reach inland towns on the Humber in better condition than was usually the case. In particular, it acted as an important spur to the development of the Yorkshire coast herring fishery.

Before the 1830s, the level of exploitation of the Yorkshire coast herring fishery had been low except during periods of acute wartime shortage. Pursuit of the abundant summer shoals had remained - with the exception of a few boats that supplied the very local markets<sup>3</sup> - the preserve of the Dutch. The first major change began in about 1824 when the French began to come up the coast in ever increasing numbers. They had been operating off Yarmouth as early as 1819 and were to spread eventually along the entire British North Sea coast.<sup>4</sup> Despite being a source on occasions of intense irritation because their heavy gear sometimes damaged the nets and lines of native fishermen,<sup>5</sup> they were also to encourage greater local participation in the herring fishery. This was because their large boats - often with crews of about thirty - came not only to catch fish in their own right but also to buy and cure them.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Ibid., 22-3.
  2. Eastern Counties Herald, 15th December, 1842 and Hull City Record Office (hereafter H.C.R.O.), Schedule 56, 162/1-2.
  3. See Chapter Two.
  4. R.H.E. AF1/5, 26th November 1819 and AF1/5 6th September 1825.
  5. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, q.5336.
  6. R.H.E., AF1/9 30th September 1834.

Many, indeed, specialised in acting as factory ships and bought their herrings from the local fishermen.

By the early 1830s their presence was considerable - more than one hundred such craft were noted in the vicinity of Saltburn Bay on one day alone during the summer of 1834.<sup>1</sup> To a certain extent they had taken the position of the Dutch who now were only found in small numbers off the Yorkshire coast.<sup>2</sup> Many local men turned to supplying the French with herring and soon found that they were merely one possible outlet. It is evident that by this time English merchants were beginning to recognise the potential of this fishery for by the middle of the thirties most of the complaints about French activities were coming from their ranks. Their interest was perhaps less for the welfare of the fishermen but probably stemmed from the fact that the French were rival purchasers of the catches.

The development of the herring fishery must have been assisted by the appointment of a new district fishery officer in 1830. He was Donald MacLaren and, having been formerly stationed at Yarmouth,<sup>3</sup> was undoubtedly conversant with all aspects of the herring trade there. His advice and experience must have proved useful to local individuals embarking in this line of business for the first time. The development of the shore based side of the Yorkshire herring fishery really took off with the formation in autumn 1833 of the Whitby Herring Company.<sup>4</sup> The venture was started by fourteen local trades-people<sup>5</sup> whose traditional areas of interest, connected with whaling and ship-building, were in marked decline.<sup>6</sup> They thus had every spur to find a new outlet for their enterprise.

Within the space of a few months the company had erected smoke houses and curing yards in the Tait Hill area of the town.<sup>7</sup> Many of the herrings cured

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1. Memorials Complaining of Agressions of French Fishermen on the British Coast 1837-8, LII, 201.
  2. See Figure XIX.
  3. R.H.E., AF1/3, 23rd November 1830.
  4. Yorkshire Gazette, 12th October 1833.
  5. Whitby Repository, 1833.
  6. S.C. on Manufacturers, Commerce & Shipping, 1833 VI, Minutes of Evidence, qq.6012-20.
  7. Geo.Young, A Picture of Whitby, 2nd Edition (1839) 198-200.



were sold to vessels hailing from France and Belgium. Considerable quantities were despatched inland in both smoked and fresh form.<sup>1</sup> The company's prosperity grew throughout the rest of the decade. For example, it took one hundred and twenty lasts for curing alone whilst purchasing a further fifty tons, mainly for sending in fresh state to inland markets, during just one week in the September of 1839.<sup>2</sup> More individuals, both local and from other districts, were attracted to the trade by such success. As early as August 1834 Whitby harbour was reported to be busier than ever before with numerous boats, yawls and cobbles landing their catches on the quays.<sup>3</sup> These craft were not only from local communities but were attracted from as far afield as Hastings, Yarmouth and Cromer. During the 1836 season some four hundred craft were reported to be taking herring off the Yorkshire coast.<sup>4</sup>

Whitby harbour was not alone in playing host to the herring fishers. Considerable activity was soon to be found at Scarborough, and Staithes was also to benefit.<sup>5</sup> At the former place much of the trade was for overseas with the herrings being salted and put in casks.<sup>6</sup> As the trade developed, however, home demand there became increasingly important and by the next decade was to assume a dominance.<sup>7</sup> Some of the fish destined for the home market were cured in a smokehouse that was specially erected at the foot of Olivers Mount.<sup>8</sup>

Some indication of the early effect that the development of the herring fishery had on the local fishing communities can be gauged from a statistical survey of craft constructed at that time. Prior to 1833, only two types of fishing boats were to be found: the coble and the fiveman boat. The former were recorded in the Register of Boat Licenses and the latter in the Vessel

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1. R.H.E., AF1/9, 10th March 1835.
  2. Geo. Young, A Picture of Whitby, (1839) 198-200.
  3. Hull Rockingham, 23rd August 1834.
  4. R.H.E., AF1/10, 27th September 1836.
  5. R.Ainsworth, Scarborough Guide (Scarborough 1844) 54.
  6. *Ibid.*, 54-55.
  7. See Chapter Six.
  8. R.Ainsworth, *op.cit.*, 54.



Registers. Both were kept by the Custom Houses. In the July of 1833, however, a new type of craft appears in the latter register.<sup>1</sup>

This departure from traditional design was named Integrity and was built by Robert Skelton, the Scarborough boat builder. Skelton built the craft as a speculation; in other words, he had no order for her. He derived the concept from similar craft that had already begun to visit the area from Cromer, Cley and surrounding places in order to supply herrings to the French.<sup>2</sup> Presumably he believed that there could be a local demand for such craft, once they had proved their worth to the local fishermen. For the first year Skelton retained the bulk of the shares in the craft with only one quarter of them being held by a fisherman, Thomas Race of Scarborough, who presumably operated the vessel.<sup>3</sup> Integrity was somewhat smaller than the fiveman boats measuring only a shade over thirty-four feet from stem to stern. She also carried just two masts and was only partly decked as well as being narrow rather than square sterned like the larger craft.

Integrity's success is apparent from the flood of orders that came for similar craft over the next few years. In 1834 Skelton was able to sell his interest in her and concentrate on building new and improved versions. In that year alone ten were constructed for fishermen at Filey and Scarborough, followed by five in the following.<sup>4</sup> Later in the decade a couple of craft were also built for fishermen at Staithes and Robin Hoods Bay<sup>5</sup> respectively but until the 1850s these craft were mainly concentrated along the southern part of the Yorkshire coast.

Skelton, together with other local boat builders, continued to refine and improve on this class of craft which became known as Yorkshire yawls. By the end of the thirties the latest yawls to be registered were fully decked

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1. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register 1833, No.6.
  2. Captain Washington's Report on the Damage Caused to Fishing Boats by the Gale of 19th August 1849, 1849 LI, Appendix, 22.
  3. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register 1833, No.6.
  4. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Registers for 1834 and 1835.
  5. Captain Washington's Report on the Damage Caused to Fishing Boats by the Gale of 19th August 1849, 1849 LI, Appendix 22.

and of considerably larger dimensions than the Integrity. Eventually also the narrow stern was to be replaced by one somewhat similar to that used by the fiveman boats. As was the case with the cibles, each boatbuilder's design differed somewhat from that of his colleagues which was only to be expected in craft built by the eye rather than to some diagram.<sup>1</sup> This indeed remained a feature of yawl construction for some considerable time. The principal advantages of the yawls over the fiveman boats were that of being cheaper to construct and needing less men to work.<sup>2</sup> Quite quickly they were following the same round of activity as the larger craft. It is not surprising therefore that over the rest of the thirties they came to greatly exceed the number of fiveman boats in the first class fleet.

Such developments found an echo in the open boat fishery. In 1834 new types of undecked vessels appear in the Whitby Register of Boat Licenses.<sup>3</sup> These were somewhat longer than the coble and had the advantage of being able to carry more nets to sea.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, they were built specifically for the herring fishery and were forerunners of the craft known as mules and ploshers. When the season finished they were laid up ashore for the rest of the year.

One further result of the herring fishery's development was that Whitby re-emerged as a notable fishing station. Yet not only did the port play host to visiting herring craft during the season but it appears to have attracted some fishermen who migrated permanently from the surrounding communities of Runswick and Robin Hoods Bay.<sup>5</sup> The year round operations that they introduced at Whitby were predominantly based on the open boat fishery. A further stimulant was undoubtedly the opening of the Whitby to Pickering Railway in 1836 which was carrying appreciable loads of fish by the beginning of the next decade.<sup>6</sup>

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1. See for example D.M.Walker, Whitby Fishing (Whitby 1973) 4-8.
  2. Captain Washington's Report on the Damage Caused to Fishing Boats by the Gale of 19th August 1849, 1849 LI, Appendix 22.
  3. See Figure XIII.
  4. E.March, Inshore Craft of Great Britain (1970) 132-3.
  5. Geo.Young, A Picture of Whitby, 2nd Edition (Whitby 1839) 198-200.
  6. See Chapter Four.



FIGURE XX: Yorkshire Coast Fishing Industry Statistics

	Catching Effort		Processing			Processing Total	Grand Total
	Fishermen	Coopers	Gutters	Labourers	Curers		
1826	603	1	253	1,153*	16	1,423	2,026
1827	734	3	286	1,133*	20	1,442	2,176
1828	515	3	175	335	25	533	1,103
1829	539	6	234	665	26	931	1,470
1830	522	6	235	634	26	901	1,423
1831							
1832							
1833	557	n/a	300	641	25	966	1,523
1834	599	n/a	309	659	26	994	1,593
1835	635	6	315	684	23	1,033	1,668
1836	643	9	315	684	31	1,039	1,632
1837	779	15	319	686	33	1,053	1,832
1838	873	15	319	686	31	1,051	1,924
1839	862	15	319	686	31	1,051	1,913
1840	862	18	303	686	31	1,033	1,900

\* It seems likely that these figures were revised downwards in later years because of less individuals being considered to be involved in the fishing industry directly.

Source: Commissioners for British Herring Fisheries Annual Reports.



Further evidence of growing marketing opportunities during this decade can be found in the visits by trawling smacks from the south west during the summer seasons. They concentrated on supplying visitors to the resort of Scarborough and appear to have been filling a niche in the market left vacant by the concentration of local men on the herring, or inland and export demands for cod and ling etc.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, such a relative wealth of opportunities presented themselves to the Yorkshire coast industry during this decade that the expansion of even dry curing activities seems to have been neglected when all other factors should have encouraged its growth. As early as 1831, the Principal London Officer of the Fishery Commissioners bemoaned the shortfall in quality dry cured cod and ling of the type the Yorkshire coast was noted for. Had extra been available he confidently asserted then even more could have been exported to Spain.<sup>2</sup> The following year considerable quantities were sent direct from Yorkshire coast to Spain and such was the demand that Spanish merchants came and purchased fish directly from local curers.<sup>3</sup>

The failure of the Yorkshire coast curers to expand their production by a considerable amount encouraged London merchants involved in this trade to look again at other sources of supply. In 1837 the firm of Hay and Ogilvie once more decided to try and sell the Shetland product on the Spanish market. In an attempt to improve the standard of the cure Archibald Cameron,<sup>4</sup> the principal London officer of the Fishery Commissioners, proceeded north. His brief was to try and induce the Shetland curers to introduce the 'Yorkshire Method' of curing.<sup>5</sup> A combination of effort by all concerned over the next two seasons, together with the possible discovery of new cod fishing grounds,<sup>6</sup> that yielded larger fish, was sufficient to make some of the dried cod and

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1. See Chapter Five.
  2. R.H.E., AF1/8 8th May 1832.
  3. R.H.E., AF1/9 9th October 1832.
  4. R.H.E., AF1/10, 29th August 1837.
  5. R.H.E., AF1/10, 29th August 1837 and 17th May 1838.
  6. R.V. Goodlad, op.cit., 135-6.

ling produced in Shetland acceptable in the Spanish market.<sup>1</sup>

The success of this new initiative was reflected both in the amount of fish punched in the islands and the destination of the exports. In 1833 three years after the ending of the bounty, only 404¼ cwts of fish had received this mark of official approval out of a total of 17,650½ cwts that were dry cured there. By 1839 these figures were 9,500 cwts and 24,191¼cwts respectively.<sup>2</sup> In earlier times the bulk of Shetland exports had gone to Ireland whereas by the end of the decade the Spanish and Mediterranean markets had become important customers.

The influx inevitably had a downward trend in prices in the quality markets. By 1839 this was becoming evident, for the highest price offered to Yorkshire curers for their fish was only £16 per ton, compared with £18 or £19 the year before.<sup>3</sup> Unlike Shetland, where there were no other outlets, it was difficult for the curers to cut costs. If they reduced the price at which they bought the fish, then the fishermen could turn to other outlets which were, of course, becoming available. Thus, by the end of the decade, the Yorkshire coast dry curing sector found itself caught between conflicting economic forces that bore ill for its continued vitality.

In contrast to the 1820s then, the thirties were a decade of increased opportunity and growth for the Yorkshire coast fishing industry. This is reflected particularly by a marked expansion in the strength of the labour force and the size of the first class fleet. This, of course, adds weight to the contention that the whole period from the Napoleonic Wars to the 1840s was one of steady expansion for the English fishing industry. Nevertheless, the experience of the area during the 1820s shows that such growth was by no means even and not free from some degree of reverse. How much the stagnation and decline of that decade were purely local features will only be borne out by the more regional research.

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1. R.H.E., AF1/11, 28th April 1840.

2. R.H.E., Herring Fishery Commissioners Reports, years ending 5th April 1834 and 5th January 1840.

3. R.H.E., AF1/11, 28th April, 1840.



CHAPTER FOUR: THE IMPACT OF THE RAILWAYS

One obvious advantage of the railways over traditional modes of transportation was their speed. By utilising them, foodstuffs could be conveyed far more rapidly to their ultimate destination than had ever hitherto been possible and this could not fail but to be of benefit in the marketing and distribution of fish. Further, as the national network of lines began to take shape after the two railway manias of the 1840s, the potential market for such foodstuffs was greatly widened and extended. Moreover, there certainly do appear to be links between the arrival of the railways and an upsurge of activity in this ancient industry. The decades following 1840 were those when much of the North Sea was opened up to trawling and the expansion appears to be almost nationwide, if we are to believe the report of the 1866 Sea Fisheries Commission. Certainly both Clark<sup>1</sup> and Gillett,<sup>2</sup> amongst others, have emphasised the development of first Hull and then Grimsby after their respective rail links were opened. Inland, Blackman, with regard to Sheffield,<sup>3</sup> and Stern,<sup>4</sup> in his article on Billingsgate Market, have noted that there was a great increase in marketing activity following the growth of the railways. It is important, therefore, in this primarily regional study, to ascertain the extent to which the course and nature of fish traffic developments on the Yorkshire coast conform with this apparent national picture.

In addition, much work remains to be carried out upon a number of aspects of the early relationship between fish and railways before we can increase our understanding of the importance of this transport innovation in the evolution of the fishing industry. One further aim of this chapter then will be to illuminate a number of these. Firstly, there is the question of just how the shift-

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1. G.S.Clarke, 'The Location and Development of the Hull Fishing Industry' (Hull M.Sc. 1957) 86-87.
  2. E.F.Gillett, A History of Grimsby (1969) 228.
  3. J.Blackman, 'Food Supply', Business History 5 (1963) 455.
  4. W.M.Stern, 'The Fish Supply to Billingsgate from the Nineteenth Century to the Second World War', in Fish in Britain, eds. T.C.Barker and J. Yudkin (1972) 35-62.



over from conventional to railway transport took place. It is too simplistic a standpoint merely to accept that this happened and less than accurate to assume that it was an overnight occurrence. Indeed, Dyos and Aldcroft emphasise the fact that they found it surprising that the railways failed to take over more rapidly the transport of perishable goods,<sup>1</sup> given their obvious advantages in this field. To accept that the railways played a major part in the development of the industry we must link the growth of fish traffic to alterations in its structure. It is necessary, therefore, to isolate and identify some of the problems that were associated with the carriage of fish by rail and try to ascertain just how and when they were overcome. Further, it is also important to understand the effect that the arrival of railway carriage had upon the product range available and relate it to possible changes in consumer tastes. Finally, it is necessary to avoid falling into the trap of assuming that all upturns in activity at this time were a direct result of the railways, unless there is proof to back such an assertion up. In the previous chapter, for example, we noted many signs of growth in the thirties before the railways were in a position to make much of a mark on the Yorkshire coast.

It is true that the Stockton to Darlington line was extended to the then hamlet of Middlesborough in 1830.<sup>2</sup> However, this undertaking was primarily for the export of coal and its early links were with the south west Durham collieries. Moreover, the Tees was not noted as a major fishery nor as a means of transporting this product inland. Not surprisingly, the railway was of limited use for the fishing industry in its early days.

Although it was not until 1840 that many of the Yorkshire coast fishing stations were to be affected by the developments of the early railway companies, there was, of course, one other exception. Construction of the region's

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1. H.J.Dyos and D.H.Aldcroft, British Transport (1969), 228-9.

2. G.A.North, Teeside's Economic Heritage, 11-12.

pioneer coastal venture, the Whitby to Pickering Line, commenced in 1832 and the undertaking was fully operational by early July 1836.<sup>1</sup>

A cursory glance at the features of this railway could also encourage the assumption that it would prove of little real benefit to the fish trade. Whitby was the only town on the coast directly served by it and so even the established local fishing communities of Staithes, Runswick and Robin Hoods Bay remained reliant on conventional transportation. Secondly, until the line was absorbed by George Hudson's York and North Midland Railway in 1845, its motive power was provided by a combination of stationary engine and horses, whilst steam locomotives were entirely absent. As a result, most goods trains travelled along the line at an average of 3 mph. Although fish wagons managed 5 mph,<sup>2</sup> their advantage over the pannier or pack-pony in terms of speed was less dramatic than if steam traction had been widely employed. Finally, any fish destined for markets further afield than Pickering - as much as - would have had to be transferred back to conventional transport on arrival by rail at that town. This was because, prior to 1846, the line was isolated from developments taking place in the rest of the country. In fact, the nearest rail connection was at York, a full thirty miles away.

It is also obvious from reading the views of contemporaries upon the subject, that the line was not constructed with the idea that fish traffic would form a principal part of its income. Indeed, no less a figure than George Stephenson makes this clear. Whilst he mentions fish along with other commodities, such as whinstone, timber, and agricultural produce, as potential sources of income in a letter to the promoters dated 5th July, 1832, he lay much greater store on coal and lime traffic.<sup>3</sup> From these two sources alone he expected an annual income of £13,200. Another, though less optimistic proponent, William Thompson, also predicted a year later that the line would derive much of its income from

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1. K.Hoole, A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain, Vol.IV, The North East (1965) 66-7.
  2. G.Reussner, 'The Whitby and Pickering Railway, Income and Traffic', Moors Line, 55 (Spring 1981) 15-17.
  3. Reussner, loc.cit., 15-17.



these sources, with timber and stone also making important contributions.<sup>1</sup> In general, fish traffic when mentioned in discussion was usually viewed, if at all, as of secondary importance.

The Whitby to Pickering Railway did not, with the possible exception of passengers, attain the traffic levels that many of its promoters had envisaged. It seems in fact probable that there were few if any years in which it actually covered direct working expenses. Reussner tells us that it is unlikely the shareholders ever received a dividend. However, although statistical information on the early years of this undertaking is scant, it is evident that fish traffic actually played a much more important role than might have been expected. When the railway had first been envisaged, Whitby had not been an important fishing station. Yet, as we have seen, during the thirties it rapidly established itself as a base for the seasonal exploitation of the herring fishery. This development cannot be attributed to the railway, for expansion was already well underway by the time it was completely opened in 1836. Yet it is evident that fish merchants found this new mode of transportation useful. In August 1839, for instance, when the herring fishery was in full swing, the Eastern Counties Herald noted that an immense quantity of these fish were sent up the line.<sup>2</sup> The surviving merchandise traffic receipts for the half year July-December 1843 show that fish was the second most valuable source of goods income, exceeded only by stone. During the six months in question, 714 tons were conveyed realising an income of £302-6-3d, or over one quarter of the goods traffic revenue.<sup>3</sup>

Over the full year, of course, the relative importance of fish traffic was diminished somewhat, for the herring season was essentially confined to its latter half. Further, the biggest revenue earner, passenger traffic, had also to be taken into account. Nevertheless, it appears that the fish traffic proved

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1. Reussner, loc.cit., 15-17.

2. Eastern Counties Herald, 9th September 1839.

3. Reussner, loc.cit., 15-17.

a valuable source of revenue for a railway company whose financial performance had failed to live up to expectations. Despite the fact that the infant Whitby herring trade apparently made much use of the line, however, it cannot be argued that the railway was the stimulus to its growth. Apart from the fact that, as we have noted, the trade had begun to grow before the line was finished, it cannot explain developments elsewhere. In the previous chapter, we noted that the herring fishery had expanded from all fishing stations along the coast and not just at Whitby with its primitive and isolated railway.

The first potentially direct rail link in Yorkshire between the North Sea and the growing inland industrial markets grouped around the Pennines was forged in 1840, thanks to the line opened by the Hull and Selby Railway Company.<sup>1</sup> Merchandise could now be conveyed via the metals of the York and North Midland Railway or the Manchester and Leeds Railway to a whole range of towns including Manchester, Leeds and York. Within another decade, the port of Hull was to possess railway connections with most major centres in England. Even so, this new enterprise was not of direct benefit to the fishing industry, since the line terminated at Hull, which at that time had no established tradition of exploiting the North Sea fishing stocks. Indeed, the promoters of this venture could perhaps be forgiven for failing to recognise or emphasise the potential for such traffic when they appealed for backers.<sup>2</sup>

However, even before the railway was opened, fishing vessels from both the Yorkshire and southern coasts had been in the habit of making landings at the port. This was in order to take advantage of the market provided by its population of around 65,000 as well as its network of inland transport communications based on the Humber. We know that many of the coastal communities had long regarded Hull as a market for fish landed upon their own shores and were to continue to do so for the remainder of the nineteenth century. This had always been forwarded to the town by cart or boat.

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1. K.A.MacMahon, The Beginnings of the East Yorkshire Railways (1953) 6-8.
  2. Though another suggested line between York and Bridlington envisaged the development of the latter town as a fishing port; *ibid.*, 8-9.



Thanks to the prior existence of such trade, once the railway to Hull was opened, the next logical step was to utilise it as another means of forwarding fish to inland markets. However, for the first eighteen months or so after the opening of the line such traffic remained relatively insignificant: certainly at not more than three and a half tons a week. It appears, therefore, that initially this new mode of transport exhibited little evidence that it was likely to stimulate any further developments in the marketing and distribution of fish, despite speeding up journey times. Indeed, in the early 1840s it was observed that the fishery upon the east coast was languishing through lack of demand, though its catches were large and wholesome. Yet at the same time in Manchester, where there was widespread distress and want of cheap sustenance through the onset of the sharp depression of 1842, the price of fish remained high and cod fetched from 8d to 1/- per lb. Rarely did it fall as low as 4d per lb.<sup>1</sup>

This was a classic example of the vicious circle which had always held both catchers and inland consumers apart. Great want of cheap sustenance in large towns had regularly gone unsatisfied at times when coastal fishermen had landed so much fish that they had not always found it easy to dispose of them, even cheaply. The bottleneck had always been transport. Fish had long been carried inland - often in a relatively fresh state - but the cost of such movements rendered it worthwhile only to transport the most valuable fish to the most lucrative markets. This nutritious commodity was therefore usually beyond the pocket of those whose needs were the greatest. Though there is evidence that the position had been improving in the later thirties, it is clear that there were many areas in the north of England still afflicted in this way, despite the arrival of some railway lines.

The major reason for this continued state of affairs also seems to be tied up in the question of cost. This stemmed from the fact that:

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1. Hansard, 20th March 1845, 1214.

'The railway directors had followed the example of all carriers and, deeming fish a luxury which must be taken, had charged high prices for transit.' 1

In other words, they had, so far as fish was concerned, merely adopted the rates of the road carriers who, because of the problems it posed them, had charged high rates of carriage for fast transport to inland destinations.<sup>2</sup>

Though the railway companies, in many instances, allowed fish to be carried like parcels on the faster passenger trains rather than by goods, they failed to appreciate the radical potential that their system of distribution could have on the market for such a perishable commodity as fish. In 1840 the charge for transporting fish along the Selby to Leeds line - a mere twenty miles - was 6/8d per ton.<sup>3</sup>

This was only part of the problem. The fishing industry, like other economic activities, suffered from the parochial attitudes adopted by many early railway companies towards the idea of through traffic. As Bagwell has pointed out, physical contact between railways was one thing but at first business like conduct of the through traffic question was another.<sup>4</sup> Thus initially fish traffic had to contend not only with a high carriage rate but also the need for separate payments and reshipment to be arranged at the boundaries of each company's lines. On a journey from Hull to Manchester such formalities and procedures would have to be carried out at Selby and again at Leeds. Furthermore, carriage rates took no account of the different types of fish and little of the conditions under which each variety might best be carried. Because of such problems it remained at first worthwhile to transport over longish distances only such prime varieties as cod, sole and turbot.<sup>5</sup> This was not only the case with trade from Hull. Even before 1840 Newcastle had found that it could supplement its fish supply by rail from the west coast via Carlisle but that it was only worth receiving the prime varieties including sole by such means.<sup>6</sup>

1. Ibid., 1214.

2. Hansard, 20th March 1845, 1214.

3. See Appendix XXXIV.

4. P.S.Bagwell, The Railway Clearing House (1968) 21-2.

5. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq6936-7 and 6972-3.

6. W.W.Tomlinson, The North Eastern Railway: Its Rise and Development, (Newcastle 1914) 363-4.



Clearly, though the railways could speed up delivery times for fish and allow it to arrive inland in a fresher more attractive condition, they at first did little to widen the potential market by lowering carriage costs. What mass consumption of fish there was in northern inland industrial districts, such as those around Manchester, was generally restricted to the less favoured heavily cured varieties such as salt pickled herring that could be sent by the slowest and cheapest modes of transport. As late as 1842 it was observed that fresh fish was a provision rarely eaten in Manchester by the working classes and that consumption of any type was not common in such households unless they were Catholic.<sup>1</sup>

The problems of travelling over several companies' lines were a source of great inconvenience to passengers and freight customers alike. A continuous flow of complaints encouraged their managers to try and find a way of cooperating. One of the earliest attempts at commercial cooperation started in the spring of 1841 when the Boards of the Manchester and Leeds, Leeds and Selby together with the Hull and Selby reached agreement on a scheme to encourage through traffic. It was arranged that receipts should be divided in proportion to the route mileage of each concern that the traffic travelled over.<sup>2</sup>

Even before this, however, at least one individual had recognised the potential of the railways for developing fish traffic. Christopher Tennant had lived in Hartlepool since 1831 and been a prime mover in its emergence as a modern port.<sup>3</sup> During the thirties he had taken an interest in the herring fishery and planned to utilise the railways as part of his scheme to develop Hartlepool as a major fishing port. Though rail links between the West Riding and County Durham were not completed until 1841, Tennant set about trying to lay the marketing foundations there as early as 1839. Unfortunately, during

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1. Hansard, 20th March 1945, 1214.

2. P.S.Bagwell, op.cit., 24-5.

3. G.A.North, Teeside's Economic Heritage (Cleveland 1975) 14-15.

a trip to Leeds for this purpose he died and much of the impetus for the scheme seems to have passed with him.

In the latter half of 1841 the railway companies felt the sharpness of a trade depression that was to last well into the next year. During that time the Manchester and Leeds attempted to improve its financial position. It did this partly by cutting the wages of its labour force<sup>1</sup> but also by actively seeking out new business.<sup>2</sup> There arose, as a result, the first real initiative by this company aimed at encouraging the traffic in fish by adopting more sympathetic freight rates and this was made possible by the policy of cooperation. The moving force was Captain Laws, R.N., the Manager of the Manchester and Leeds Railway. After persuading his fellow directors of the viability of such a policy he was able to convince the managements of the Leeds and Selby, Hull and Selby and, also, the York and North Midland that it was in their interests to cooperate. Next, he travelled to Flamborough and Filey, as well as Hull, and entered into negotiations with the fishermen there.<sup>3</sup>

The end result of Law's activity was an agreement that the rate for the carriage of fish should be reduced to one shilling per cwt for the entire journey from Hull to Manchester. In return, the fishermen were to sell their mixed baskets of fish which were made up of cod, ling, haddock and plaice at a price which never was to exceed two shillings per stone in the latter city.<sup>4</sup> The maximum that could be earned under the scheme therefore was about £16 per ton. Even taking account of the carriage charges, the value of these mixed consignments was probably worth some £2 or £3 per ton more to the fishermen than sending quality fish for dry curing that year.<sup>5</sup>

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1. P.R.O.RAIL 343/10.

2. Hull and Eastern Counties Herald, 3rd March 1842.

3. Hull and Eastern Counties Herald, 3rd March 1842.

4. Hull and Eastern Counties Herald, 17th April 1845.

5. R.H.E., AF1/13, 10th May 1843.



Captain Laws arranged also for an area to be set aside in Manchester by the Salford side of Victoria Bridge on the old quay company's ground.<sup>1</sup> A number of persons from the fishing communities concerned opened a shop-cum-stall under the name of the Flamborough and Filey Bay Fishing Company. The arrangements made for obtaining a supply of fish were quite complex and the schedule extremely tight. The fish, after landing at Flamborough, Bridlington and Filey in the afternoon, was conveyed in carts over the thirty six or so miles to Hull. It usually reached the station there in time to be forwarded by rail the following 6 a.m. Arrival at Manchester was generally at noon, so the fish was able to be put on sale there before being twenty four hours on land. Sometimes, however, through foggy or boisterous weather, the timetable could not be fully adhered to. If this happened, then the fish usually left Hull by the 8 a.m. train and arrived in Manchester at 2 p.m. instead.<sup>2</sup>

The shop opened for the first time on the last Saturday in January 1842 and usually received a fresh supply of fish on every day but Sunday. The venture quickly proved a resounding success. Fresh sea fish, instead of selling for between eight pence and one shilling per lb was now available, though without distinction, at 1¼d per lb. At this price it required but little announcement to make 'the poorer classes flock to the shop in such numbers as to completely obstruct for a time the footpath over the neighbouring bridge'. Such was the demand that the entire 3,192 lbs available that day was disposed of within an hour and threequarters.<sup>3</sup> The story during the following week was much the same and for the first time fresh fish was establishing itself in the city as an article of cheap mass consumption. This achievement proved durable for over three years later in the House of Commons it was stated that its establishment had:

'brought the commodity within the means and inclination of so large a class of customers as to raise a demand that has kept ahead of supply...and it has led to the habitual use of fish by a large number of persons who rarely tasted it before.'<sup>4</sup>

1. Hull and Eastern Counties Herald, 27th January 1842.
2. Hull and Eastern Counties Herald, 27th January 1842.
3. Hull and Eastern Counties Herald, 27th January 1842.
4. Hansard, 20th March 1845, 1214.

FIGURE XXI: Fish Conveyed To London By Railway ca.1853

Anon., 'The London Commissariat', Quarterly Review, XCV  
(June-Sept.1854), p.273.

<u>Railway Company</u>	<u>Origin</u>	<u>Tonnage</u>	<u>Fish</u>
Eastern Counties	Yarmouth	12,081	Principally herring
South Western	South Coast	4,000	Mackerel, etc.
North Western	Ireland, Scotland and N.E. Coast of England	3,578	Principally salmon
Great Northern	Ireland, Scotland and N.E.Coast of England	3,248	Principally salmon
Great Western	Cornwall and Devonshire	1,560	Chiefly mackerel and pilchard
Brighton and South Coast	South Coast	4,000 15,000 (bushels)	fish oysters

Source: W.M.Stern, 'The Fish Supply to Billingsgate from the Nineteenth Century', in Fish in Britain, eds. T.C.Barker and J.Yudkin (1972) 58.



Within three years of the Laws Agreement coming into operation, the Leeds and Manchester line was handling not three and a half tons of fish, as formerly, but some eighty tons per week and despite the continual expansion of demand, a commensurate extension of sources of supply enabled the price to remain relatively low.<sup>1</sup>

The experiment had not been limited to Manchester, for from the first the cheap rates had applied to all stations on the lines concerned. Amongst other towns to benefit were Stockport and Ashton under Lyne.<sup>2</sup> The market at Manchester was further developed in such a way that by 1845 a great deal of the fish arriving there was redistributed to adjacent districts. Supplies were also coming in from fishing stations in North Yorkshire - via the York and North Midland Railway - as well as the north east.<sup>3</sup> That this initiative had proved successful owed a great deal to the endeavour of Captain Laws.

Despite this development, much of the Yorkshire coast had yet to be connected directly to the embryonic national railway network. Many of the coastal communities, however, were to be thus linked thanks to one of the two speculative construction booms of the mid forties. In 1845, George Hudson's York and North Midland Railway constructed a line from York to Scarborough. A spur which left it at Rillington also ended the insular existence of the line from Pickering to Whitby which was taken over by Hudson's company and converted to steam traction. The next year, Bridlington was reached from Hull and that undertaking was fully extended through Filey to Scarborough by October 1847. By the beginning of 1848, the communities of Scarborough, Whitby, Filey and Flamborough, as well as Bridlington, could all boast of their connections with the growing national rail network.<sup>4</sup>

A further effect of the Laws Agreement, and the discovery of the Silver Pits, was a small though perceptible growth of the permanent fishing fleet

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1. Hansard, 20th March, 1845, 1214.

2. Hansard, 20th March, 1845, 1214.

3. Hull and Eastern Counties Herald, 3rd March 1845.

4. K. Hoole, op.cit., 55-67.

stationed at Hull throughout the remainder of the forties. Many other craft from the south west worked there on a seasonal basis during this decade but, as Northway has shown, large scale migration from that area to Yorkshire did not occur until the early 1850s.<sup>1</sup>

On the coast also, despite the opening of direct links to Scarborough, Filey and the like, growth in the later 1840s was, as we will see below, even less spectacular. Though the total number of boats and men employed increased modestly over the decade, the first class fishing fleet actually shrank. At Scarborough and Filey, for example, the combined first class fleet actually declined from forty-six to thirty-six between 1842 and 1849. It was to take until 1857/8 for a full recovery of the first class fleet's strength to be achieved. So the railways clearly had a less immediately dynamic effect on the fishing industry of the Yorkshire coast despite the early developments.<sup>2</sup>

One reason was that the benefits accruing from the availability of this swift and relatively reliable system could not be fully realised by the industry without profound structural growth on the distributive side. Though many fishing communities found themselves connected - albeit often indirectly - with a growing number of urban centres, neither the commercial outlets, or consumer demand, could necessarily be created overnight. These were processes requiring, amongst other things, both time and energy. So the arrival of the railways could not create a huge instantaneous market. Even if such problems were overcome, there were still further barriers lying in the path of rapid expansion and these can be attributed to the policies of the railway companies.

Although Captain Law's arrangement had proved beneficial to all parties, it did contain a number of serious limitations. Under its terms, the catcher and his agent undertook not to sell fish on the inland market for more than two shillings per cwt. This amounted to a price ceiling. In times when food-stuffs were available in plenty the fish would not always realise that level

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1. R.M.Northway, 'The Devon Fishing Industry 1760-1860' (unpublished M.A. Thesis, Exeter 1970) 81-3.

2. See Chapters Five and Six.



and yet the trade was effectively prevented from cashing in on periods of intense demand. The arrangement seems to have been terminated not long after the Hull and Selby severed their very close connections with the other two companies in 1842.<sup>1</sup> This split did not end through traffic arrangements but laid the way for the taking over of the company by the York and North Midland. This later became part of the North Eastern Railway which was formed in 1854. However, the new rates appear to have removed the price ceiling, albeit in return for slightly higher charges. A further compensation for the Yorkshire coast communities from 1846/7 was that there was no need to pay the cost of overland transport to Hull to join the railway. On balance, costs may have risen slightly but the convenience of transport improved.

As we have noted, the three companies which had cooperated on through traffic between Hull and Manchester had divided receipts on a mileage basis. This principle was followed when the Clearing House was founded in 1842.<sup>2</sup> The reason why this organisation was created was to develop a systematic means of managing through traffic for the benefit of all. The Manchester to Hull companies were initially joined by the London and Birmingham, Midland Counties, Birmingham and Derby Junction, North Midland, Great North of England and the York and North Midland concerns.<sup>3</sup> Gradually most companies were to join and, as railway amalgamations strengthened the hold of several of the members, this venture was eventually to devise or influence traffic arrangements throughout the country.

During the first few years, the problems of passenger fares, wagon rates etc., took a great deal of painstaking discussion and energy. As a result, it was not until 1847 that the goods managers were able to get to grips with the formidable problems of goods traffic at their monthly meetings.<sup>4</sup> Such delays were undoubtedly aggravating for the fishing industry and it appears to have

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1. K. Hoole, op.cit., 44-5.
  2. P.S.Bagwell, op.cit., 33.
  3. Ibid., 33.
  4. Ibid., 72.

FIGURE XXII: Tonnage of Dried Herrings Carried to London by the Great  
Northern Railway

July to September 1869

Despatched from:	In Boxes	In Baskets	Total
Scarborough	531	39	570
Whitby	68		68
Berwick	19		19
Newcastle	43	48	91
Chathill	44	33	77
Bournemouth (Bournemoor Durham?)	67		67
Grimsby	636	1	637

Source: W.M.Stern: 'The Fish Supply to Billingsgate from 19th Century to the Second World War' in Fish in Britain eds., T.C.Barker and J.Yudkin.

FIGURE XXIII: A Return Showing Rates Charged for the Conveyance of Goods from Leeds to Selby - distance 20 miles.

	From 9/1834 to 9/1836	From 9/1836 to 1/1839	From 1/1839
Fish per ton	6/8	8/4	6/8

Source: S.C. Communication by Railway 3rd Report 1847 Vol.XIII. Appendix I.



been 1849 before further moves were made amongst the Clearing House companies to develop a range of rates for different types of fish. That November the goods traffic managers noted the problems that the diversity of practices which then existed amongst the various railway companies caused for the fishing industry.<sup>1</sup> More attractive rates appear to have been the result of pressure by the infant Hull fishing industry, in particular one Isaac Markcrow.<sup>2</sup> However, before a really complete and cohesive rating policy for fish traffic could be agreed one particular bone of contention had to be resolved. This concerned the question of risk. It provoked a particularly divisive class of interests. The fish merchants and salesmen wished to have the option of sending their fish by rail at the carriers' risk whilst many of the companies, noting the perishable nature of the product, were keen that it should be carried only at the sender's risk.<sup>3</sup>

Another problem that had to be overcome by the Clearing House was whether fish should be defined as goods traffic or, bearing in mind that most was sent by passenger train, as parcels traffic. Such a definition had more than an academic importance. The development of all through traffic arrangements relied on the matching up of accountancy practices and thus it was essential to reach a uniform decision about whether to assign fish to passenger or goods accounts. Each goods manager consulted his own company on the question but by the June of 1850 they concluded that they could not reach a decision alone. Accordingly, they sought a meeting with their passenger counterparts,<sup>4</sup> the coaching superintendents, and this was held on the 2nd October, 1850 in Manchester.<sup>5</sup> After lengthy discussion and a second meeting at Normanton on the 28th November, 1850<sup>6</sup> it was decided that all Clearing House companies should treat fish as passenger traffic and include it on a special Fish Way Bill which set out the terms of carriage.<sup>7</sup>

1. P.R.O., RAIL 1080/162, 20th June 1850.

2. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq.6972-3.

3. P.R.O., RAIL 1080/162, 28th November 1850.

4. P.R.O., RAIL 1080/162, 20th June 1850.

5. P.R.O., RAIL 1080/162, 2nd October 1850.

6. P.R.O., RAIL 1080/162, 28th November, 1850.

7. P.R.O., RAIL 1080/162, 28th November, 1850

FIGURE XXIV: Number of Irish Born Persons Enumerated on British Mainland1841-1911

	England and Wales	Scotland
1841	289,000	126,000
1851	520,000	207,000
1861	602,000	204,000
1871	567,000	208,000
1881	562,000	219,000
1891	458,000	195,000
1901	427,000	205,000
1911	375,000	175,000

Source: Migration and Economic Growth, Brinley Thomas.



One reason why these negotiations were protracted was because the question of terminal rates was also discussed. This was the amount of money, in addition to the mileage share, that accrued to the companies loading and unloading the fish at the beginning and end of its journey. At the October meeting it had been proposed that companies in London should be given a slightly higher allowance than was allowed at stations in the provinces. This was resolutely opposed by the L.N.W.R. who pressed for a matching provincial terminal allowance. The November meeting finally agreed that terminal allowances should be one penny per cwt at both ends.<sup>1</sup>

With regard to the risk question, it had become apparent under the terms of their various Acts of Parliament, that the railway companies could not refuse to carry fish of an individual if they refused to accept that it went at his or her risk. As late as 1854 the Clearing House postponed resolving this question until the exact legal situation had become clear. Throughout 1853 the Y.N.M.R. had been involved in several law cases on this issue with fish merchants.<sup>2</sup>

Together with other outstanding fish traffic queries, this question was resolved by early 1857. Under the terms drawn up by a Clearing House Committee representing both English and Scottish companies<sup>3</sup> it was conceded that merchants had the right to forward fish at the companies' risk but as an inducement to send it at their own risk they were offered the alternative of rates one-fifth lower.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, a whole range of rates for different types of fish were drawn up including quite attractive ones for fresh herring which, despite their propensity to deteriorate quickly, were included in lower charges offered for partially cured fish rather than with the higher ones set for fresh white fish.<sup>5</sup> Arrangements were also formulated for the free carriage of returning empty fish boxes and barrels - albeit at the owner's risk.

1. P.R.O., RAIL 1080/162, 28th November 1850.

2. P.R.O., RAIL 1080/99, 25th April, 1853.

3. P.R.O., RAIL 1080/508, 12th August 1856.

4. P.R.O., RAIL 318/1, 13th January 1857.

5. P.R.O., RAIL 527/1395 and 318/1 7th April 1857.

These desirable changes were brought about quite soon after the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway had set about developing the fish trade at Grimsby. This concern took a positive approach and tried to entice smacks there from a number of other places including Scarborough and Hull. Amongst the carrots they held out were favourable dock charges, a wide range of carriage charges and free travel for merchants endeavouring to establish marketing connections in inland towns.<sup>1</sup>

Initially, the M.S.L.R. invited representatives of the fishing interest to the Yarborough Arms at Grimsby in June 1855.<sup>2</sup> Their initiative met with a fair degree of success in that they were able to entice a number of fishing craft from Hull, Scarborough and other places and thus lay the foundations of the Grimsby fishing industry.

Such swift and positive action was in marked contrast to the slow and indecisive deliberations of the Clearing House committees and indeed provoked criticism of such lack of movement. In Yorkshire, a great deal of criticism was levelled at the North Eastern Railway and as a result it was stung into action.<sup>3</sup> It offered indeed to match the M.S.L.R. terms exactly and it seems that it was at its prompting that the Clearing House finally laid out its full terms of carriage etc.. In order to coordinate traffic policy a Humber Conference under the Clearing House auspices was set up to coordinate future rates of all kinds when they affected the N.E.R. and the M.S.L.R.<sup>4</sup> and it was this body that seems to have made future modifications to fish rates when necessary.<sup>5</sup>

The development of better and more comprehensive procedures for dealing with through fish traffic was reflected in increased range of market penetration. During the forties, railway traffic from the Yorkshire coast was largely restricted to Lancashire, Yorkshire and surrounding areas. Billingsgate

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1. Hull Advertiser, 16th June 1855.

2. Hull Advertiser, 16th June 1855.

3. Hull Advertiser 16th June 1855 and 23rd June 1855.

4. P.R.O., RAIL 318/1, 7th April 1857.

5. See Appendix XXXV.



had received its first regular supplies of fish by rail about 1846 but for much of the following ten years the bulk of its supplies were comparatively local in origin, unless the fish supplied was of high quality. Though through routes to London were available from Yorkshire by the mid forties, it is apparent that as late as 1853 the only fish finding its way from the area to London in any quantity was Salmon.<sup>1</sup> By 1863, however, London was regularly supplied from the Yorkshire coast with all types of fish, whether herring, prime or offal.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, by the end of that decade the major sources of herring for the Metropolis during the month of September were Grimsby and Scarborough respectively.<sup>3</sup> The growth in long distance transport of Yorkshire coast herring seems particularly impressive. It is perhaps not surprising that the introduction of a comprehensive system of rating by the Clearing House in the second half of the fifties coincided with a great increase in the exploitation of the herring fishery and of herring shipments from the Yorkshire coast.<sup>4</sup>

Thus the evolution of positive attitudes and sympathetic freight conditions by the railway companies occupied a period of almost fifteen years from 1842 to 1857. Such improvements played the major role in the rapid expansion of the fishing industry. not only of Hull, Grimsby and the Yorkshire coast, after mid century but also throughout England.

One enduring structural problem faced by many of the Yorkshire coast fishing communities was that the railway stations were often inconveniently situated for dealing with their catches. Only Bridlington and Whitby enjoyed direct rail links with their harbours and the former's connection was derelict by 1866.<sup>5</sup> At most other places fish had to be carted a fair distance to the station. At Flamborough, for example, the railway station was some

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1. See Figure XXI.
  2. R.C.Sea Fisheries 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq.6504.
  3. See Figure XXII.
  4. See Chapter Six.
  5. K.Hoole, op.cit., 56.

FIGURE XXV: Destinations\* of Fish Sent by Rail 1863

## Flamborough

Manchester, London, Liverpool, Leicester, Nottingham,  
Birmingham, Northampton, Huddersfielx, Bradford, etc.

## Filey

Leeds, Manchester, Nottingham, Derby, York, London,  
Huddersfield, Bradford, etc.

## Staithes

Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, London, Nottingham,  
Leeds, Huddersifled, Bradford, etc.

\*Note: Only Major Towns mentioned.

Source: R.C.Sea Fisheries 1863-6.



four miles from the landing points and the catch had to be carried over the intervening distance by donkey.<sup>1</sup> In Scarborough there were to be frequent complaints during the latter half of the nineteenth century about the nuisance caused by the carting of fish through the centre of the town on the mile long journey from harbour to the station.<sup>2</sup> Excluding Whitby, all communities between Scarborough and Redcar were to remain without direct rail connections until the 1880s. For Staithes and Runswick this meant that fish had to be carted over twelve miles in order to take advantage of Goathland.<sup>3</sup> In only the case of Whitby, therefore, were rail connections on the Yorkshire coast as convenient as those of Grimsby and later Hull.

The role of the railways in the development of the industry was crucial to the development of a mass inland market. However, at this point it is necessary to introduce to this discussion another factor of critical importance to the development of the industry at this period: namely the attitude of the mass of consumers to its products. As we have noted in the previous chapter, a great deal of controversy has surrounded the attitude of the poor to the consumption of fish in the pre railway era. Much of the debate was inevitably concerned with cured fish because for the mass of consumers fresh fish varieties were generally beyond their pockets and regarded as luxuries. When such fish were available to the poorer classes it was generally because they were at less than their best condition and consequently much less acceptable to all, whatever their status.

The gradual spread in the use of ice by boats at sea must also have helped improve the quality of the fresh fish being conveyed to the consumer. Though the use of ice for transporting salmon has been noted in the late eighteenth century it was increasingly used on longer distance trawling voyages from 1840s onwards.<sup>4</sup> Commercial manufacture of ice commenced in the 1880s and prior to

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1. Scarborough Gazette, 25th November 1887.
  2. Scarborough Gazette, 6th January 1881.
  3. R.C.Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq.5319
  4. R.H.E., AF1/14, 8th December 1847.

FIGURE XXVI: Fishmongers 1831-1871

Year	West Riding	East Riding	North Riding	Lancashire	Cheshire	England
1831						3,394
1841	222	180	99	776	82	4,933
1851	330	196	116	1,490		9,084
1861	437	252	99	1,512	117	11,305
1871	784	322	181	1,667	152	14,880

Source: Various Census Reports



this ice was collected in winter, or else imported from Norway,<sup>1</sup> and stored in insulated warehouses.<sup>2</sup> Thus even before loading onto the railway for relatively rapid transshipment much fish was probably in better condition than ever before and thus more attractive to the consumer.

Certainly, it appears from the example of Manchester that there was no shortage of demand for fresh fish, once available at the right price, but it was inevitable, given the conservative nature of the English palate that some degree of consumer resistance had to be worn down. Firstly, there was the question of the so-called offal fish such as haddock or plaice. Though long available in relative abundance in coastal districts, they had never been transported inland in any quantity and as 'new' species were probably not always immediately accepted in much the same way as the products of deep sea trawls have been greeted today. A vestige of this attitude is probably one reason why the Manchester area - long used to a supply of cod - still does not exhibit a great demand for haddock.<sup>3</sup> Such prejudices are generally overcome by only time, availability, or an attractive marketing technique. In the case of haddocks the rise of the fried fish shop - discussed below - could well fit the latter description. In other cases, the traditional prejudice against older cured products were overcome by making them more attractive. The rise in importance during this period of the Yarmouth bloater and the Newcastle kipper are examples of products which were cured with the emphasis placed mainly on taste rather than, as in the case of the traditional red, merely on keeping ability.

Apart from such improvements combining to make fish a more attractive commodity, they also coincided with an influx of consumers into the market place to whom fish was already an essential part of their diet. They were the Catholic Irish and their crucial influence upon the development of fish

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1. D.H.Cushing, The Arctic Cod (1966) 12.

2. E.Gillett and K.A.MacMahon, A History of Hull (1980) 315

3. Conversation with C.Gilchrist, Hull Fishmarket Salesman, 1983.

FIGURE XXVII: Return of Fish Forwarded By Rail from Various Stations

	Hull Tons	Scarborough Tons	Flamborough Tons	Bridlington Tons	Filey Tons	G/L Tons
1853	—	1,832	—	—	—	205
1854	1,586	2,193	464	—	809	297
1855	2,368	2,459	584	—	903	301
1856	3,922	2,068	567	—	1,055	309
1857	4,081	3,029	469	523	1,048	446
1858	3,603	4,486	557	739	1,381	215
1859	3,742	5,793	521	998	1,281	283
1860	5,535	3,975	482	955	1,222	318
1861	5,644	6,371	391	735	1,540	372
1862	5,568	6,492	629	1,062	1,817	431
1863	5,020	5,540	875	680	1,578	389
1864	6,293	6,660	643	357	1,773	335

Source: R.C.Sea Fisheries 1863-6



products as articles of mass consumption should not be underrated.

Irish immigration into Britain was particularly high even in the fifteen or so years immediately preceding the Potato Famine of 1845, thanks mainly to the pressure of a rapidly expanding population stretching a markedly backward agrarian based economy. The number of Irish born persons living in Britain and enumerated in the 1841 census was 415,000<sup>1</sup> and this figure was to greatly increase, thanks largely to the torrent of migration that followed the 1845 disaster, for at least the next twenty years. Brinley Thomas estimates the number of Irish who emigrated to England and Wales alone in the decade 1841-51 at 274,000; whilst Scotland received another 100,000. According to the 1861 census, there were by then some 806,000 Irish born people in Britain and they comprised some 3% of the population alone, without taking account of their offspring. In some areas, however, the density of the migrant population was far greater: in Lancashire - a major market for Yorkshire coast fish - they made up 9% of the population.<sup>2</sup> The bulk of these newcomers were of Catholic peasant stock for whom fish was a traditional item of consumption, because of their religious beliefs on Fridays.

The decades during which their influx was at its peak coincided with the very time that railways were making possible the large scale transportation of fish to the very industrial centres they flocked to.<sup>3</sup> Thus, it seems very likely that the Irish influence in the creation of a mass consumer market for fish at this time was of considerable importance. Indeed, during the middle decades of the nineteenth century they must have provided a powerful stimulus to the Yorkshire coast industry, as well as that of Hull, Grimsby, and other areas.

The third factor, given both the availability of an economic means of distribution and a potentially acceptable level of demand, was the establishment of a wide network of commercial connections. This required both the

1. Brinley Thomas, Migration & Economic Growth (2nd Ed. Cambridge 1972) 73.

2. Ibid., 72-3.

3. As late as 1881 one in every eight of Liverpool's population was Irish born. Source: M.P. Newton and J.R. Jeffrey, Internal Migration (HMSO 1951) 10.

FIGURE XVIII: Prices of fish in market and town of Newcastle upon Tyne on 1st March, in each of the years 1856 to 1865 inclusive

Name of Fish	1856	1857	1858	1859	1860	1861	1862	1863	1864	1865
Turbot - P.S. *10p to 12.5p	2/- to 2/6	2/3 to 2/9 12p to 14p	2/3 to 2/9 12p to 14p	2/6 to 3/- 12.5p to 15p	2/6 to 3/6 12.5p to 17.5	2/9 to 3/6 14p to 17.5	3/- to 4/- 15p to 20p	3/6 to 4/6 17.5 to 22.5	4/- to 5/6 20p to 27.5	4/6 to 6/6 22.5p to 30.5
Soles - P.P.	9d to 1/3 4p to 6.5p	1/- to 1/6 5p to 7.5p	1/- to 1/6 5p to 7.5p	1/3 to 1/9 6.5p to 9p	1/3 to 1/9 6.5p to 9p	1/3 to 1/9 6.5p to 9p	1/6 to 2/- 7.5p to 10	1/6 to 2/- 7.5p to 10p	1/9 to 2/- 9p to 10p	1/9 to 2/- 9p to 10p
Cod each	9d to 1/3 4p to 6.5p	1/- to 1/6 5p to 7.5p	1/3 to 1/9 6.5p to 9p	1/6 to 2/- 7.5p to 10p	1/- to 2/3 9p to 11.5p	2/- to 2/3 10p to 11.5	2/- to 2/6 10p to 12.5	2/3 to 2/9 11.5 to 14	2/- to 3/- 11.4 to 15	2/6 to 3/- 12.5 to 15
Codlings each	3d to 9d 1.5p to 4p	3d to 9d 1.5p to 4p	4d to 1/- 1.5p to 5p	4d to 1/- 1.5p to 5p	4d to 1/- 1.5p to 5p	4d to 1/- 1.5p to 5p	4d to 1/- 1.5p to 5p	6d to 1/- 2.5p to 5p	6d to 1/3 2.5p to 6.5	6d to 1/3 2.5p to 6.5
Haddock each	3d to 6d 1.5p to 2.5	3d to 6d 1.5p to 2.5	4d to 6d 1.5p to 2.5	4d to 6d 1.5p to 2.5	4d to 8d 1.5p to 3.5	4d to 8d 1.5p to 3.5	5d to 8d 2p to 3.5	5d to 8d 2p to 3.5	5d to 9d 2p to 4p	6d to 9d 2.5p to 4p
Skate each	6d to 9d 2.5p to 4p	9d to 1/- 4p to 5p	9d to 1/- 4p to 5p	1/- to 1/6 4p to 7.5p	1/3 to 2/- 6.5 to 10p	1/- to 2/- 5p to 10p	1/6 to 2/3 7.5 to 11.5	2/- to 2/6 10 to 12.5	2/3 to 3/- 11.5 to 15	2/6 to 3/- 12.5 to 15
Whiting - P.S.	9d to 1/- 4p to 5p	9d to 1/- 4p to 5p	9d to 1/- 4p to 5p	9d to 1/- 4p to 5p	10d to 1/2 4p to 6p	10d to 1/2 4p to 6p	1/- to 1/3 5p to 6.5p	1/- to 1/3 5p to 6.5p	1/3 to 1/6 6.5p to 7.5	1/3 to 1/6 6.5p to 7.5
Lobsters - P.S.	15/- to 20/- 75p to 100p	15/- to 20/- 75p to 100p	15/- to 20/- 75p to 100p	15/- to 22/- 75p to 110p	15/- to 22/- 75p to 110p	15/- to 22/- 75p to 110p	16/- to 24/- 80p to 120p	16/- to 24/- 80p to 120p	18/- to 25/- 90p to 125p	18/- to 25/- 90p to 125p

KEY: P.S. = Per Stone  
P.P. = Per Pair

\* Rounded to nearest half pence decimal coinage

Source: R.C. Sea Fisheries 1863-66



acquisition of an element of skill in handling and selling the product on the part of the inland wholesalers and retailers as well as a measure of trust between the inland merchant and the coastal salesman. This, of course, could not be developed overnight. It is already well documented that the M.S.L.R. encouraged the development of the fishing industry at Grimsby by allowing fish merchants free travel to inland towns in order to establish commercial outlets.<sup>1</sup> What is not so well known is that the railway companies in Yorkshire adopted a similar policy at the same time.<sup>2</sup> It is clear that from 1842 through the fifties, a gradual network of trading connections was built up. By the early sixties, the range of inland markets that were served by many of the Yorkshire coast communities was already as diverse as they were likely to be during the following century.<sup>3</sup> In other words, the modern marketing network was already well established.

The creation of the national telegraph system during the forties and fifties<sup>4</sup> also facilitated this development by allowing the inland buyers the opportunity to make their immediate needs known on the fish quays. At the same time, it also allowed the coastal salesman to ascertain where the best demand lay. Efficiency and productivity were increased through this improved mode of communication: it became far more easy to ascertain where fish was likely to fetch the best price that day and the direction of supplies could be correspondingly adjusted.

The scale of this transformation of distributing and trading arrangements can be gauged to some extent from a perusal of figure XXVI. Between 1841 and 1861, the number of fishmongers in Britain more than doubled and altogether in the thirty years following 1841 they were not far short of

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1. E.Gillett, op.cit., 228-31.
  2. R.C. Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence qq.7104.
  3. See Figure XXV.
  4. Dyos and Aldcroft, op.cit. 228-9.

FIGURE XXIX: Prices of Fish on the Hull Market

	Cod per stone	Soles per stone	Turbot per stone
1849	3/9d (19p)*	11d (4.5p)	10/7d (53p)
1850	4/4½d (22p)	1/2d (6p)	10/10d (54p)
1851	4/1d (20.5p)	1/4d (6.5p)	10/6d (52.5p)
1852	4/1d (20.5p)	1/3d (6p)	9/4d (46.5p)
1853	4/1d (20.5p)	1/4d (6.5p)	9/10d (49p)
1854	4/1d (20.5p)	1/4d (6.5p)	9/9d (49p)
1855	4/4½d (22p)	1/4d (6.5p)	10/2d (51p)
1856	4/11½d(25p)	1/6d (7.5p)	10/2d (51p)
1857	4/11½d(25p)	1/6d (7.5p)	11/3d (56.5p)
1858	4/11½d(25p)	1/4d (6.5p)	9/4d (46.5p)
1859	4/11½d(25p)	1/5d (7p)	9/10d (49p)
1860	4/4½d (22p)	1/4d (6.5p)	9/7d (48p)
1861	4/1d (20.5p)	1/3d (6p)	9/4d (46.5p)
1862	4/1d (20.5p)	1/1d (5.5p)	8/9d (43p)
1863	4/1d (20.5p)	1/3d (6.5p)	9/8d (48.5p)
1864	4/1d (20.5p)	1/2d (6p)	8/7d (43p)
1865	4/1d (20.5p)	1/2d (6p)	9/10d (48.5p)
1866	4/1d (20.5p)	1/1d (5.5p)	10/6d (52.5p)

Source: Hull Advertiser

\* Rounded to the nearest halfpence decimal coinage.



trebling their strength. In Lancashire alone in the decade following 1841 they almost doubled. So complete was this transformation that it formed the basis of the modern marketing structure - albeit today road rather than rail based. The British mass market was being opened up.

Such changes invariably affected the nature of the product offered to the consumer. So far we have noted two obvious changes in what was normally within the purchasing power of the working class household. Firstly, there was a far greater supply of cheap fresh fish available on the inland markets and, secondly, that there was a commensurate increase in the varieties being offered for sale. Despite the decline in importance of heavily cured fish in Britain, the middle decades of the nineteenth century also saw the emergence of a number of new processed products, which have previously been briefly alluded to. In the main these were the so called lighter cures. What differentiated them from traditional cured products was basically that they were processed more with regard to taste than keeping qualities. With the arrival of rail transport, keeping ability became only a secondary factor. As we have noted, during these decades the Yarmouth bloater and the Newcastle kipper were two of the most prominent new varieties of cured herring. Unlike the traditional smoked herring, such as the age old bloater or the red herring, they occupied the smokehouse for no more than eight hours rather than fifteen days. Not surprisingly, they were generally considered to be more attractive to eat.

There was, however, also a considerable financial incentive to the smokehouse curer in developing a market for lightly cured products. By adopting such processes he was able to greatly increase his output in a given period of time without any large increase in either capital investment or fuel. This was simply because of the differences in the length of the curing processes. As we have seen, though we traditionally associate the invention of the kipper with John Woodger and the bloater with Mr. Bishop, it seems quite likely that other curers were responding to this new situation at the same time by reducing the length of processing their cured fish des-

tined for the home market.

The rise in the market for fresh fish and the lighter cures also affected the demand for salt pickled herring. For centuries this had been a staple standby for the poorer classes, particularly in times of need. Indeed, a great home and lesser export trade had grown up based on the Yarmouth fishery. English curers, from the forties onwards at least, found that it proved more profitable to concentrate upon smoked herring products, particularly after the decline of the West Indian markets in the late 1830s and the Irish trade almost a decade later.<sup>1</sup> On the Yorkshire coast, for example, this happened as early as 1842. Though both types of herring curing had been established there on a commercial scale for just short of ten years, the curers were already finding it worthwhile to concentrate on smoked herring.<sup>2</sup> Within a couple of decades, home demand for pickle cured herring was all but negligible south of the border and the job of satisfying overseas demand for this product had been largely left in the hands of the Scottish and Northumberland curers. They were precluded by distance in fully exploiting the growing English markets.

With regard to white fish, Grey has noted that along parts of Scotland's east coast, that there was an increased production of light cures such as the finnon haddock even before the railways had made a full impact.<sup>3</sup> The initial stimulus was there provided by the relative proximity of growing areas of population, such as the Fife coalfield and Edinburgh. It is evident that in England also, though usually after the opening of railways, that similar light cures were of increasing importance, particularly at Scarborough and Hull.<sup>4</sup> However, the other relatively new white fish product associated with

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1. See Chapter Six.

2. R.H.E., AF1/13, 3rd May 1842 and 8th May 1844.

3. M.Grey, op.cit., 42-3.

4. R.C. Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq. 6937.



this era was destined to make an even bigger impact on patterns of consumption: this was the fried fish shop.

It is by no means certain just when the forerunner of the modern commercial fried fish shop appeared on the scene. Chaloner suggests that its emergence in London around mid century was essentially a response to the increased availability of many varieties of fish at Billingsgate. Both Cutting<sup>1</sup> and Chaloner<sup>2</sup> have noted Mayhew's observations in which he estimated the number of itinerant street sellers of fried fish in central London at between 250 and 350 in the late 1840s. At this time the link with potato chips does not appear to have been made. What is certain is that this new form of retail outlet really established itself on a nationwide scale in the three decades following mid-century. A number of firms emerged, particularly in Lancashire who specialised in the manufacture of grates and ranges suitable for fish fryers, rather than the old open pans, which lessened the accompanying nuisance. Indeed, that county figures often in the history of this trade. John Rouse (Oldham) Ltd., founded in 1880, claims to be the firm which popularised the sale of fish and chips.<sup>3</sup> Further, it has been suggested that the high proportion of women and girls employed in the cotton textile industry, rather than solely in the home, encouraged the spread of the fish shop because it provided a ready made meal. Certainly, the fish and chip shop, as we know it today, is a product of Victorian Britain.

One result of all these changes that were transforming the market was, of course, a marked expansion in all levels of activity at the seaward end. We have already noted that during the later fifties and throughout the sixties there was a marked expansion of the Yorkshire coast fishing fleet and not unnaturally a similar story becomes apparent from a survey of other data. The surviving statistics concerning fish carried inland from Yorkshire fishing stations by railway during the fifties and sixties all show that

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1. C.Cutting, op.cit.
  2. W.H.Chaloner, 'Trends in Fish Consumption', in Our Changing Fare, eds. J.Mackenzie and J.Yudkin (1966) 108-112.
  3. Ibid., 108-12.

considerable long-term growth occurred.<sup>1</sup> The incentive for the catching sector to continue this expansive trend lay in the fact<sup>that</sup> as the transport and marketing bottlenecks were breaking down there was no tendency for prices they received to fall as supply increased. Indeed at Newcastle, a favourite landing point for Staithes and Runswick fishermen, price levels rose.<sup>2</sup> A somewhat similar pattern is evident at Hull,<sup>3</sup> which still remained an important channel inland for much coastal fish. Despite a massive increase in the amount of fish being forwarded from the port inland, there was no tendency for fish prices to fall. The keynote of the era was therefore growth.

In conclusion then, it can be said that the railways were the keystone of the forces that shaped the expansion of the processing and distributive sectors of the Yorkshire coast fishing industry in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. They provided the means of transport by which fish could become a commodity of cheap mass consumption, even though it took time for the companies concerned to adopt policies conducive to such developments. This is not to assume that some growth would not have occurred without them or that they alone were the only influential factor. Others also encouraged expansion at this time, particularly on the demand side, for the construction of the national network occurred at a time when the continued growth of urban centres was placing even greater demands upon existing sources of foodstuffs; and when the influx of the fish eating Irish was reaching its height. However, the many other innovations that altered the nature of the industry or its products were in themselves largely stimulated by the opportunities provided by the railways. With only certain reservations therefore, we can assign the railways to a position of paramount importance in encouraging the development of the fishing industry at this time.

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1. See Figure XXVII.

2. See Figure XXVIII.

3. See Figure XXIX.



CHAPTER FIVE: THE TRAWL FISHERY TO THE 1870s

The dramatic restructuring of the distributive and marketing sectors of the fishing industry, that we have noted in the previous chapter, were inevitably accompanied by considerable changes on the catching side. Indeed, the period under review witnessed a great expansion of catching effort. In 1845, for example, the first class fishing fleet registered at the Custom Houses of Scarborough, Whitby and Bridlington amounted to about seventy three vessels. By 1877 these three ports could muster at least one hundred and fifty such craft.<sup>1</sup> Taken alone these statistics tended to underestimate the level of the fleet's expansion, for by the latter date the average size of fishing vessels was considerably greater and each deployed far more gear. The labour force also expanded considerably for between 1840 and 1881 the number of fishermen working from the Yorkshire coast communities almost doubled.<sup>2</sup>

This expansive trend did not lead to even development. As far as the first class fleet was concerned, it was concentrated particularly upon the Scarborough Customs Port area where registrations almost quadrupled in number. There was far less evidence of growth in the Whitby area whilst the small first class fleet owned by Flamborough fishermen and registered at Bridlington was to almost disappear. Nevertheless, as we shall see later, almost every fishing community along the coast was to experience an increase in catching activity of some form or other, if only inshore. Furthermore, from a chronological viewpoint, growth was also not even. The 1840s proved to be a decade of mixed fortune whilst the following period of nearly thirty years witnessed an almost continuous expansion for some elements of the industry.

To investigate more thoroughly the developments outlined above, it is necessary to study each catching activity in its turn. It is, therefore, the purpose of the remainder of this chapter to examine in detail perhaps the most impressive of these: the development and spread of trawl fishing.

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1. See Figure XXX.

2. See Figure XXXI.

FIGURE XXX: Fishing Fleets Registered at Yorkshire Coast Custom Houses

	Whitby	Scarborough	Bridlington	Total
1840	23	46	9	78
1841	26	51	10	87
1842	25	46	10	81
1843	27	47	9	83
1844	27	42	9	78
1845	28	38	7	73
1846	26	36	7	69
1847	26	35	3	64
1848	25	32	3	60
1849	25	36	3	64
1850	25	36	2	63
1851	24	35	1	60
1852	24	41	1	66
1853	23	43	1	67
1854	25	44	1	70
1855	23	46	1	70
1856	24	46	2	72
1857	23	52	3	78
1858	26	65	5	96
1859	28	69	5	102
1860	29	76	6	111
1861	31	81	5	117
1862	30	88	5	123
1863	28	88	5	121
1864	24	95	2	121
1865	21	96	2	119
1866	21	101	2	124
1867	24	112	1	137
1868	23	112	1	136
1869	22	110	1	133
1870	22	109	1	132
1871	22	110	1	133
1872	22	111	1	134
1873	21	112	1	134
1874	21	115	1	137
1875	19	120	2	141
1876	19	128	2	149
1877	18	129	6	153

Source: Custom House Vessel Registers



A trawl, of course, is basically a bag shaped net that is attached to the fishing boat by strong cables known as warps. This net is pulled along the seabed and traps most fish whose path it crosses. These are collected by the force of movement at the so called cod end of the gear. A trawl's catching efficiency is largely determined by the width of its open mouth. Until the 1890s the principal means of keeping this open was by fitting a large length or beam of wood across it. This is why it was called a beam trawl.

The traditional story of trawling has been regularly sketched. It is generally considered that before the early nineteenth century this was an inshore activity or else confined to the Thames approaches, worked by boats from Barking, and the English Channel, along which it was spreading eastwards from Devon. Later, trawlers were to spread across the Southern Bight of the North Sea below Yarmouth. Furthermore, almost all accounts would agree that a few craft were exploring the potential of more northerly grounds during the 1830s and that between about 1840 and 1860 the practice spread swiftly along much of the east coast of England and into the central areas of the North Sea. This was the period when Hull and Grimsby established themselves as trawling ports. A further extension included the development of a summer fishing ground between Texel and Terschelling off the Dutch coast.<sup>1</sup>

This account needs minor modification. It is certainly clear that trawlers were working out of Ramsgate as early as the 1790s for their crews are recorded as claiming freedom from impressment.<sup>2</sup> However, it does appear that the Barking trawling smacks had begun ranging further out into the North Sea somewhat earlier than the traditional chronology might suggest.<sup>3</sup> During the late 1790s, for example, some forty sail belonging to that port found constant or occasional employment trawling on grounds such as the Broad

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1. See, for example, D.J.Oddy, 'The Changing Techniques and Structure of the Fishing Industry', in Fish in Britain, eds.T.C.Barker and J.Yudkin, 12-14; J.Nicholson, Food From the Sea (1979) 60-62; and G.Morey, The North Sea (1968) 128.

2. P.R.O., ADM7/384, 11th May 1790.

3. S.C. on British Herring Fisheries, 1800 X, First Report, 130-1.







FIGURE XXXI: Numbers Occupied as Fishermen

	East Riding <sup>†</sup>	North Riding	Total
1830*			522
1840*			862
1845*			946
1851 <sup>+</sup>	222	704	926
1861 <sup>+</sup>	307	756	1063
1871 <sup>+</sup>	323	1029	1352
1881 <sup>+</sup>	417	1215	1632
1891 <sup>+</sup>	386	1050	1436

\* Source: Herring Fishery Commissioners Records

+ Source: Census Reports 1851-1891

† East Riding minus Hull

Fourteens and Brown Bent off Yarmouth. They were even recorded as far north as Smiths Knoll. Their activities also apparently took them almost to the Dutch coast.<sup>1</sup> In short, trawling was already being practised across the Southern Bight of the North Sea in the late 1790s. The stimulant for this early expansion was no doubt the high price of provisions and incentives alluded to in Chapter Two. It seems likely that this was a temporary phenomenon and a much smaller area was probably regularly trawled once the provisioning crises were over. In all other respects the traditional early story seems basically correct.

Two factors figure prominently in most explanations of why such a rapid national extension of trawling took place between 1840 and 1860. The first, of course, is the construction of the railways and the second the discovery of the Silver Pits. One interesting question which remains unanswered is just why did the railways prove so important to the spread of trawling? Why had not deep water trawling spread up the east coast of England before that date? Trawling was an ancient activity and yet the practice had been confined to certain districts until the nineteenth century. Then over a comparatively short space of time it rose to become the premier means of taking white fish. Just why was this the case? With regard to the Silver Pits, two questions emerge. Firstly, there has never been agreement about when they were discovered and, secondly, it has never been explained just why these predominantly cold weather grounds should have been so important to the establishment of a permanent - as opposed to merely seasonal - trawl fishery off the Yorkshire coast.

The practice of trawling was by no means totally unknown in this area. The Humber shrimp fishermen had long employed a form of trawl. Their gear consisted of two small trawls that were dragged behind a sailing craft at the turn of the tide.<sup>2</sup> Although small shrimps and prawns were the main catch, flat fish were also taken. On the Yorkshire coast itself, fishermen often towed a 'traul' in-shore as a means of obtaining smaller fish to use as bait on their great or long

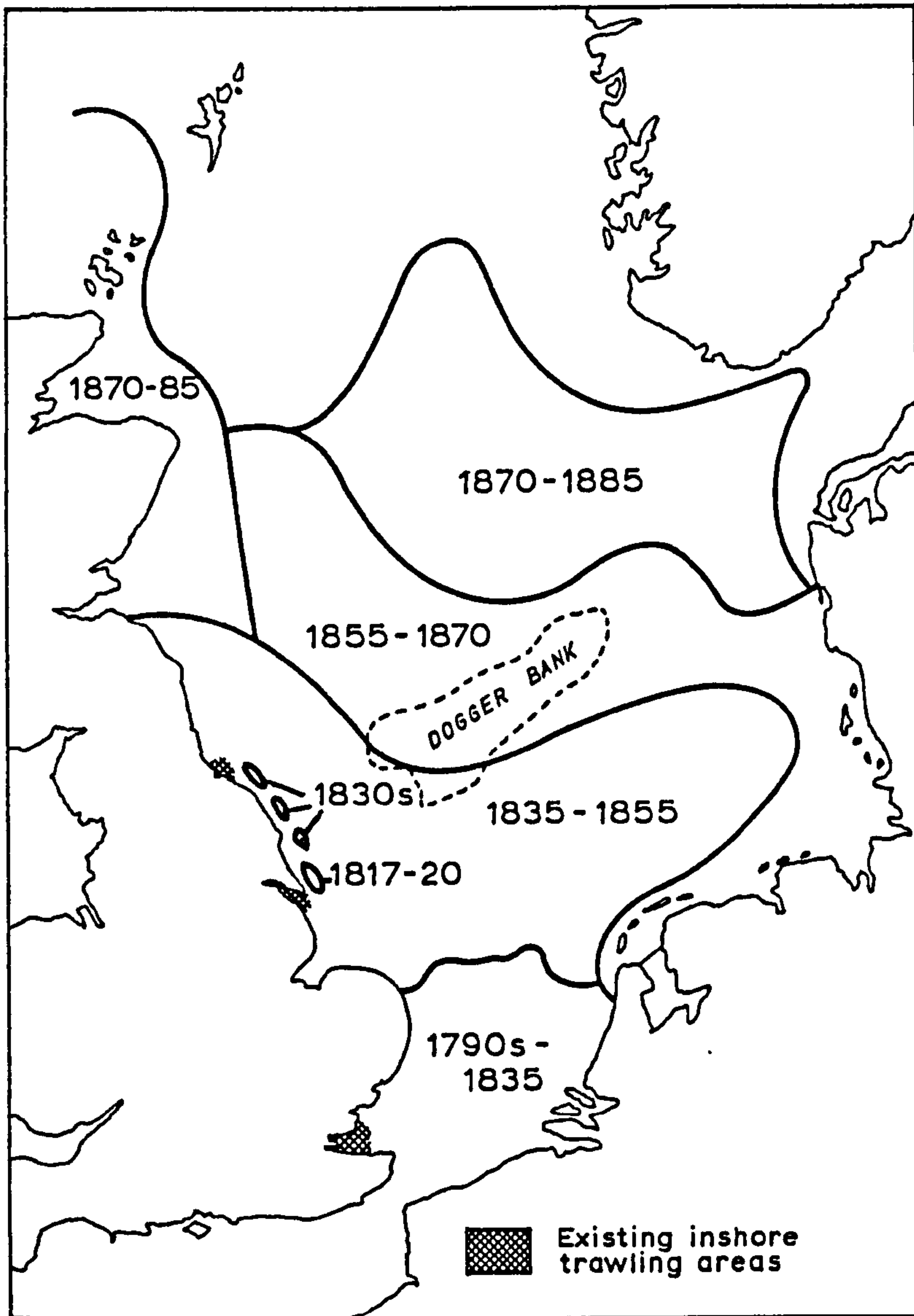
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1. S.C. on British Herring Fisheries, 1800 X, First Report 130-1.

2. H.C.R.O., North Eastern District Sea Fisheries Committee (hereafter N.E.D.S.F.C.), Minutes, 13th July 1892.



Figure XXXII Map showing the spread of trawling across the North Sea.



Source: Modified from D.H. Cushing, The Arctic Cod (1966)

lines.<sup>1</sup> A form of horse drawn trawl had been used on the edge of Filey Bay for centuries, as manorial rights there testify.<sup>2</sup> Further up the coast, at Hartlepool, a 'trolling net' was used as a means of taking flat fish such as plaice and turbot. This device was a basic beam trawl with a mouth some sixteen feet wide and sunk to the bottom by the weight of its iron trawl heads. Towed behind a coble it was used on sandy bottomed inshore grounds. The Hartlepool trawl was described by Sharp in 1816 in his account of the local fishing practices and would appear to have been an established method of taking fish in that area.<sup>3</sup>

It thus appears that the basic principles of trawling were understood and even practiced in the locality. Yet there is no evidence of its widespread commercial application in the capture of white fish on a scale to rival lining.

The earliest reference to deeper water trawling for white fish off the Yorkshire coast is that of an experiment carried out in the latter years of the second decade of the nineteenth century by a craft from Flamborough which operated on a fishing bank lying south east from Dimlington Heights in South Holderness. This certainly appears to have met with at least some initial success, for above one hundred pairs of soles were taken with one trawl of the net.<sup>4</sup> However, the experiment does not appear to have been persevered with for in 1821 there were further moves to try and establish the practice in the area.<sup>5</sup> This second initiative seems to have been prompted by one of those periodic provisioning dearths that afflicted Hull. As a possible means of increasing its market's fish supply, the Bench of the Corporation sent Colonel Ralph Creyke, of Marton Hall near Flamborough, to Plymouth in an attempt to induce trawlermen from there to try their luck out of Hull.<sup>6</sup>

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1. R.H.E., AF1/6, 25th June 1822.
  2. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., 13th October 1896.
  3. Sir C.Sharp, History of Hartlepool (1816) 180.
  4. H.R.O., Schedule 56/2375, 14th July 1821.
  5. H.R.O., Schedule 56/2374, 25th June 1821.
  6. H.R.O., Schedule 56/2375, 14th July 1821.



It is likely that the whole idea may have been Creyke's in the first place, for he was already interested in fishing. A local magistrate, he was also treasurer of the Flamborough Fishermen's Fund. This was a society set up in 1809 with the help of subscriptions from local individuals to provide benefits for the community's fishermen in the event of loss of life, boat, gear or infirmity.<sup>1</sup> It also seems quite likely that the earlier trawling experiment had been at his instigation. In the June of 1819 he had purchased a thirty nine foot, thirty three ton cutter rigged craft called Moor Park, which in description fitted almost exactly the typical contemporary trawling smack. The craft was registered in his name at Bridlington Custom House and operated on his behalf by Cornelius Young until the October of that year when it was transferred to a Grimsby owner.<sup>2</sup> From Creyke's communications with Hull Corporation it certainly appears that he had more knowledge of trawl fishing than might have been expected of a landed north country gentleman of his generation.

The inducements offered were of a lucrative nature and John Davis of Plymouth, master of a thirty two ton smack, eventually decided to venture north. Under the terms agreed, he was to receive from the town clerk one guinea upon his arrival in Hull and a further twenty guineas as a premium for landing at the port. This was to be found in three parts and paid at the end of each month he was to stay. In addition, he was to be constantly provided with an able pilot for the first month, whose wages were to be found by the Corporation.<sup>3</sup> In the event two smacks turned up, for Davis was accompanied by another skipper, Peter Williams of the same port.<sup>4</sup> This man visited Creyke who wrote a letter to the Corporation encouraging them to engage this second craft on the same terms as the first.<sup>5</sup> It is certain that they came to some arrangement with this second skipper and both smacks stayed for some time.<sup>6</sup>

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1. H.C.R.O., Flamborough Fishermen's Fund, 1809.

2. Bridlington Custom House Vessel Register, 26th June 1819.

3. H.R.O., Schedule 56/2374, 25th June 1821 and Hull Corporation Bench Book 3rd July 1821.

4. H.R.O., Schedule 56/2375, 14th July 1821.

5. H.R.O., Schedule 56/2376, 6th August 1821.

6. H.R.O., Hull Corporation Bench Book, 7th August 1821.

The venture met with mixed success. Both skippers became convinced of the potential for trawling on the Dimlington grounds but they were dogged by their unfamiliarity with the sea bed. Their beam trawls could only operate upon smooth bottomed grounds and they were unfortunate in fouling their nets and badly damaging them on underwater obstructions.<sup>1</sup> Certainly the experiment was not persevered with in the following years but the seed of future possibilities may well have been planted in the minds of the south west fishermen.

There seems to be no further reports of activity by southern smacks off the Yorkshire coast during the 1820s. It seems likely, however, that a few fishermen, probably from Bridlington, may soon have been attracted to the practice, for in 1834 there was a report of a coble being upset in boisterous seas whilst trawling for soles.<sup>2</sup> For the majority of locals, however, such deviations from traditional practice were viewed with at best deep suspicion and at worst, after the southerners renewed their interest, with outright hostility.

In 1831 trawling smacks from the south began landing their catches at Scarborough. There were at least two such vessels operating in that vicinity in the summer of that year.<sup>3</sup> Their activities were not of a permanent nature and these pioneers probably worked on the local grounds for short periods during the summer season. There were a number of features about Scarborough which these strangers found attractive.<sup>4</sup> The town was well established as a thriving and fashionable resort of the wealthy, together with their household entourage, during the summer season. At this time each year the population of the town was greatly swollen and consequently the demand for provisions much increased. Yet this sharp upturn in demand for foodstuffs occurred at precisely the same time as local fishermen were also busy supplying other outlets. Despite the fact that landings were greater in summer than winter, the catching sector was consequently often stretched to match demand during this part of the

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1. H.R.O., Schedule 56/2376, 6th August 1821.

2. Hull Rockingham, 11th November 1834.

3. Yorkshire Gazette, 30th July 1831.

4. Ibid., 30th July 1831.



year. A great amount of effort was expended upon supplying the still vigorous overseas demand for dried cod and ling as well as inland markets. Furthermore, we have also noted that from the early thirties a great deal more activity was proving worthwhile in pursuing the herring fishery with many opportunities arising of selling direct to the French or to inland markets.<sup>1</sup> The fact that so many local fishermen were engaged in these other activities left a niche in the market that the smackmen were able to exploit and so the habit of seasonal landings was established.

On occasions the impact of these landings, through sheer quantity, was sufficient to tilt the local balance of supply and demand to the disadvantage of the catcher. Such situations fuelled the local men's underlying resentment and led to periodic disturbances. Such an incident occurred in the July of 1831. Local fishermen applied to the Scarborough magistrates in an attempt to prevent two west country smacks coming in to sell their fish. The magistrates informed them that they had no legal right to interfere. This did nothing to stem the tide of dissatisfaction and the following day the town's fishermen, probably with others from neighbouring communities, took matters into their own hands. A crowd of them drew up on the beach intent on preventing the two smacks from discharging their catches. Their action met with partial success for although the two boats decided to decline confrontation by making off, one was later to return after the crowd had dispersed and successfully land its cargo.<sup>2</sup>

These smackmen must have found the season's fishing profitable for the next year they were to return in greater force. Towards the end of that May some eight trawling smacks, hailing from Ramsgate, Dover and Plymouth arrived at Scarborough. They evidently intended staying all summer for the crews brought their families with them.<sup>3</sup> This new invasion rekindled the previous year's animosity and the early part of June was marked by a series of affrays during one of which a southerner was stabbed by a local. Matters assumed such

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1. See Chapter Three.  
 2. Yorkshire Gazette, 30th July 1831.  
 3. Hull Rockingham, 9th June, 1832.

FIGURE XXXIII: Return taken by Mr. Knott, trawl-owner, of Grimsby Great; account of one vessel

		Weight of Fish						Amount realized											
		Prime			Offfal			Total			Prime			Offfal			Total Amount		
		Tons	Cwts	Qrs	Tons	Cwts	Qrs	Tons	Cwts	Qrs	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d
1860		18	19	2	66	4	3	85	4	1	320	7	9	114	0	6	434	8	3
1861		13	1	3	69	16	2	82	18	1	392	11	6	117	6	5	570	7	11
1862		12	19	1	52	14	2	65	13	3	360	4	8	105	13	1	465	17	9
1863		18	4	0	74	9	2	92	13	2	455	0	0	145	0	0	600	0	0
1864		22	18	2	94	7	3	117	6	1	443	6	0	189	7	6	632	13	6
		86	3	0	357	13	0	443	16	0	1971	9	11	731	17	6	2703	7	5

Source: R.C.Sea Fisheries 1863-6.



a serious aspect that the local magistrates felt obliged to swear in the area's preventive men as special constables. After this an uneasy peace returned.<sup>1</sup>

The trawlermen continued to make such visits throughout the thirties and occasionally there were further outbreaks of unrest. However, the heat was taken out of the situation somewhat because the remainder of the decade was generally a time of prosperity for the Yorkshire coast fishermen. It did not take long for this dangerous coastline to claim its first victim from the newcomers for the smack Ann of Sandwich was wrecked off Scarborough harbour in September 1833.<sup>2</sup> At both Scarborough and then Hull - where they also began making some landings - their activities throughout the remainder of the decade were predominantly seasonal. Indeed, the first smacks try permanent settlement at Scarborough did not register there until 1839 and 1840 respectively. It appears that a couple of craft began basing themselves at Hull perhaps a year or so earlier.<sup>3</sup> The pioneer Scarborough smacks were the Forager<sup>4</sup> and Providence.<sup>5</sup> The former was skippered by Thomas Halfyard, a native of Ramsgate who was later to become a prominent member of the Hull fishing industry.

During the forties there appears to have been a further migration of smacks from the south. This was largely to Hull which seems to have been more attractive than Scarborough. Indeed, the two Scarborough based smacks also moved to the Humber port in 1842.<sup>6</sup> Nicholson has suggested that Hull was preferred to Scarborough during the forties because the latter's harbour was too small.<sup>7</sup> However, this was a decade when the port was under used by fishing vessels and its coastal trade declining. Further, its capacity to handle

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1. Hull Rockingham, 9th June 1832.
  2. Yorkshire Gazette, 17th September 1833.
  3. J.Bellamy, 'Pioneers of the Hull Trawl Fishing Industry', Mariners Mirror Vol.51 (May 1965) 185; and R.C.English & Welsh Sea Fisheries 1878/9, 1879 XVI, Minutes of Evidence, pp.116-7.
  4. Scarborough Custom House Register of Shipping, 12th August 1839.
  5. Scarborough Custom House Register of Shipping, 18th March 1840.
  6. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register 12th August 1839 and 18th March 1840.
  7. J.Nicholson, Food from the Sea (1979) 61.

craft was considerably increased in 1844 through the dredging of the harbour which had been previously almost unusable.<sup>1</sup> Certainly the constraints that the harbour placed upon the fish trade were insufficient to prevent a considerable expansion of Scarborough's fleet during the fifties and sixties. It seems likely that the Laws railway agreement made Hull the more attractive base for a number of years.<sup>2</sup>

Thus year round trawling was established off the Yorkshire coast by the mid 1840s. The following decade witnessed a larger scale migration of fishing smacks to Scarborough, Hull and then Grimsby. Within a very few years the latter two ports became the country's largest white fishing centres.

Several theories have been put forward to explain why permanent migration occurred during this period. One explanation suggested by a number of historians including Bellamy<sup>3</sup> and Tunstall<sup>4</sup> places great emphasis on the discovery of the Silver Pits. This in itself, so the theory appears to suggest, was sufficient to encourage permanent migration. However, there are a number of problems which require answering before it is possible to accept the validity of this suggestion. Firstly, we are by no means certain just when the Silver Pits were discovered. Bellamy tells us that several dates have been put forward between 1837 and 1850.<sup>5</sup> Obviously, it is important to try and locate the commencement of their large scale exploitation so that we can relate it to the actual migration. It is also well known that the Silver Pits were particularly valued because of the large catches of soles that were to be obtained there during extremely cold weather when they congregated in such deeper water. This phenomenon itself raises a number of questions about the Silver Pits' importance to the trawling smacks. As such congregations of soles were a feature of only the extreme periods of cold weather, why were they so important to the establishment of all year round trawling? Furthermore,

1. See Chapter Sixteen.

2. See Chapter Four.

3. J.Bellamy, 'Pioneers of the Hull Trawl Fishing Industry', Mariners Mirror vol.51 (May 1965) 185-6.

4. J.Tunstall, The Fishermen (1962) 8.

5. J.Bellamy, loc.cit., 185-6.



most grounds off the Yorkshire coast must have been well known to the local fiveman boat fishermen - another early trawling ground, named by the trawlermen California certainly was<sup>1</sup> - who ventured far out into the North Sea and appreciated the value of sole. Why was it that they had not themselves discovered and exploited this phenomenon? Thus it is not possible to accept the bland assertion that the Silver Pits were a major factor in the northward migration without attempting to answer such questions.

Another possible cause of migration at this time could well have been that the traditional trawling grounds of the south west were being exhausted by trawling. However, the evidence given to the Huxley Commission by trawlermen of that area generally runs counter to that view.<sup>2</sup> Though we should accept their beliefs only with caution, recent research backs them up on this point. Northway in his work on the Devon fisheries has shown that a great deal of migration occurred at a time of renewed investment at traditional trawling stations such as Brixham which is hardly consistent with exhaustion.<sup>3</sup>

The last and most convincing reason why trawling established itself off the Yorkshire coast was - as we have already mentioned - the opening of the railways. Here again - as we have previously alluded - this answer cannot be as simple or straightforward as it might first appear. It is necessary to establish why railways were so important to the establishment of trawling from Yorkshire ports when other methods flourished even before their construction. A second and related problem that must be asked is why, if traditional practices had long been able to hold sway over a complex marketing system, were they suddenly not able to continue to dominate the catching sector?

To return primarily to the question of the Silver Pits, it is important to try and ascertain the date of their discovery which appears to have gone

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1. R.C. Sea Fisheries 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq.6820-6828.

2. R.C. Sea Fisheries 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Report XXI.

3. R.M.Northway, 'The Devon Fishing Industry 1760-1860' (unpublished M.A. thesis, Exeter University 1970) 81-3.

largely unreported in the contemporary local press.<sup>1</sup> Dates put forward by early fishermen include 1837/8, 1843, 1844, and 1850.<sup>2</sup> In view of the activity that was taking place by 1850, however, it seems fair to accept that they were already being exploited by that time. One point upon which all these sources are agreed is that the Silver Pits were certainly discovered during an extremely cold period and Dr Bellamy has shown that there were several spells of below average temperature between 1838 and 1844, the lowest of which were in January/February 1838 and December 1844.

Dr Bellamy feels it is possible that the Silver Pits were discovered in 1838 and then rediscovered in 1844:<sup>3</sup> a suggestion which would help account for the differing dates put forward. Contemporary circumstances back this theory to some extent, for a discovery in the former year was unlikely to have attracted as sustained an interest as one in the latter. In 1838, there was no direct rail link from either Hull or the Yorkshire coast inland and so marketing potential would have been limited. This was because, despite being much sought after fish, soles were difficult to transport overland before the railways. As a witness to the Huxley Commission pointed out, they did not take kindly to any of the contemporary methods of preservation in salt.<sup>4</sup> The amount that could be speedily forwarded inland without even a light salting was therefore markedly limited. Further, sole were most highly prized in London which was out of the range of contemporary modes of transportation, except the slow sea passage.

Thus, even if an extremely rich supply of soles were chanced upon in the harsh winter of 1838, the value of this discovery would have been markedly limited by virtue of the constraints of existing modes of transportation. In contrast, by 1844 Hull was linked to a number of northern cities by rail and, together with several of the coastal communities, it had an established system of rail fish transportation thanks to the Laws Agreement of 1842.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore,

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1. Except Hull Advertiser, 24th January 1845.

2. Bellamy, loc.cit., 185.

3. Ibid., 185.

4. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq.6885.

5. See Chapter Four.



even if these fish were sent out of the range of this agreement they could bear the cost of more expensive railway carriage rates, unlike many offal fish. Railways were undoubtedly the best form of transport for this fish from the Yorkshire coast and could be forwarded then swiftly to inland markets without recourse to traditional preservation on a considerable scale. Henceforth, the Silver Pits could be commercially exploited by a sizeable fleet of vessels, all relatively confident that there was little chance of their large catches of sole when they occurred glutting the market.

One possible flaw in Bellamy's thesis, however, concerns the loss and re-discovery of the ground.<sup>1</sup> It seems unlikely that experienced mariners, once they have ascertained the position of the grounds and worked them, should inexplicably fail to find them in future years. It seems more probable that their whereabouts remained the knowledge of the first handful of smack skippers who settled permanently at Hull and Scarborough. Such secrecy, of course, is far from unknown in the fishing world today. Had these grounds become widely known before the railway to Hull opened in 1840 then there was always the possibility that in winter the limited market available would have been glutted. The fact that others became aware of the ground after the opening of the railways was of less importance to the original trawlermen, for the potential market had been greatly expanded. However, the date when they became widely known is of interest to the historian concerned to trace the reason for the rapid expansion of trawling.

The fact that the Silver Pits were not previously found to be a prolific source of soles despite the existence of the first class lugger fleet can be explained, after examination of traditional fishing practices, without too much problem. Lining operations, by which these large craft caught the majority of their white fish, did not usually yield a considerable supply of flat fish. The chief way of obtaining soles and turbot on the Yorkshire coast had been by laying bratt nets.<sup>2</sup> These had often been put down relatively close inshore. In

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1. J. Bellamy, loc. cit., 185.

2. See Chapter Two.

any case, the lugger fleet were laid up during the winter months and although they might work on these grounds they did not exploit them during the very season that they were likely to prove so prolific in soles.

It is now possible to be more accurate about when the Silver Pits were first exploited on a large scale. As we have noted, one problem in ascertaining the date has always been that the event certainly did not receive the widespread coverage in the local Hull and East Yorkshire papers that might have been expected. This has probably led previous students of the fisheries to conclude that at the time the event went unrecorded. In fact this is not the case. The event was reported, but not at first locally. Indeed, the first mention appeared in the Leeds Mercury.<sup>1</sup> It seems that, as Bellamy had suggested, the Silver Pits were worked on a considerable scale in early 1845. Their value evidently had become common knowledge about the end of 1844 during an intense cold spell. These grounds swiftly attracted the attention of a number of south country smacks based for the season at either Hull or Scarborough.

The reason the event gained the attention of the Leeds Mercury was because that city and others benefitted almost immediately from the immense numbers of soles that were being forwarded inland by rail. Normally a luxury item, they were retailing at the phenomenally low price of 4d to 6d per pair and proved a great benefit to the poor in this time of dearth. The grounds at first apparently were sometimes known as the Silver Banks<sup>2</sup> and their 'discovery' even warranted a mention in The Times.<sup>3</sup> Thus large scale exploitation of the Silver Pits commenced in the winter of 1844/5.

Almost double the usual number of smacks were working the grounds off the Dogger that January and on one day alone some 18,000 pairs of soles were despatched inland from Hull.<sup>4</sup> In order to cope with the sheer quantities of fish, novel methods were devised for getting them to other markets. The boom indeed may well have created the forerunner of the later fleeting system for a number of craft that wished to sell their fish in the Metropolis did not bring their

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1. Leeds Mercury, 20th January 1845.
  2. Leeds Mercury, 20th January 1845.
  3. The Times, 4th February 1845.
  4. Hull Advertiser, 24th January 1845.



catch directly to land. After having packed their fish in hampers they hailed steamers on the southward voyage and transferred their catch to them.<sup>1</sup>

Such a discovery certainly coincided with an upturn in smack activity out of the Humber, including more permanent migration of craft. However, this sole boom was most certainly limited to the cold spells and cannot have sustained the smacks during the rest of the year. In short, as we have previously suggested, it cannot have been the major cause of the permanent migration. To understand the reasons for this then we must turn once more to the railways.

If the railways thesis is examined in more detail then a number of reasons can be identified which explain why this form of transport was so crucial to the establishment of permanent trawling operations off the Yorkshire coast. As can be seen from figures XXXIII and XXXIV, the bulk of the typical trawler's catch at this time was so called offal fish, such as haddock and plaice. We have already noted that in the pre-railway era such varieties generally enjoyed only a limited market close to the coast because of transportation costs. During the initial period of exploitation, there was always the danger of the smacks glutting the market, as happened in 1831 at Scarborough, to the detriment of themselves and every other catcher. To try and maintain the value of their landings, a fair proportion of the less valuable varieties trawled up were thrown back. During one pioneer smack's operations in the 1830s it was estimated that three bushels of fish would have to be thrown back after each six hour trawl.<sup>2</sup> Occasionally, as much as four fifths of the catch might be heaved overboard.<sup>3</sup> Such wasteful modes of operation incurred trawlermen the anger of many local line fishermen who could generally dispose of most fish they hooked. It further reinforced the latter's belief that trawling was both harmful and destructive of stocks:<sup>4</sup> a belief strongly ingrained in many traditional Yorkshire coast fishing communities by the time of the 1863 Huxley

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1. Hull Advertiser, 24th January 1845.
  2. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 6012-6
  3. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 7435-8
  4. Scarborough Gazette, 15th January 1863 and 16th April 1863.

FIGURE XXXIV: Average Catch of Trawlers Operated by Hull Smackowner,Alfred Wheatley Ansell

	Prime inc.		Offal					
	Soles Tons	and Turbots Cwts	Plaice Tons	Cwts	Haddocks Tons	Cwts	Mixed Tons	Cwts
1864	15	5	51	12	36	4	7	17½
1865	11	15	43	3	61	11	12	12
1866	9	4	52	5	49	0	6	15
1867	8	10	36	7	60	2	2	7

Source; R.C. on Trawling, 1885.



Commission.<sup>1</sup> This problem with offal fish further outlines just why the Silver Pits were of such interest at that time. Any ground upon which the proportion of prime to offal fish was high would be greatly sought after.

Whilst railway carriage rates and conditions remained relatively expensive for offal fish, the expansive stimulus was partly retarded by both this and the general depression that afflicted the country during the later 1840s. Nevertheless, the fleet based upon Hull began to grow slowly but perceptibly from 1842, the date of the Laws Agreement. That year certainly figured prominently in later complaints from Yorkshire coast fishermen about the spread of trawling. With regard to the coastal situation, the status of trawling there during the same decade was somewhat complex. The majority of established stations, including Flamborough, Filey, Runswick Bay and Staithes, continued to almost completely eschew the practice as an acceptable means of taking white fish. As we have noted, two trawling smacks had taken up residence at Scarborough in the late 1830s. Though they left for Hull in 1842, a few of the port's first class yawls took up the method, on a seasonal basis, despite widespread opposition. The traditional practice along the Yorkshire coast of laying up the larger craft for the winter months began to be broken during the 1840s when about six yawls based on Scarborough used to fit out for a few months trawling upon their return from the Yarmouth herring fishery each November.<sup>2</sup> Further down the coast at Bridlington an inshore variety of trawling based upon cobbles was also spreading at the same time and this will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Eight.

As the railway companies adopted a more positive national approach to fish carriage, was able to more fully exploit the new potential as a national market for almost all grades of white fish was created. Henceforward, the barriers lying in the path of the widespread inland sale of offal fish were removed and it was no longer an economic necessity to dump a large portion

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1. Scarborough Gazette, 15th January 1863 and R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 5688, 5964, 6173-5, 6559-61, 5291.

2. Captain Washington's Report, 1849 LI, Appendix 22.

FIGURE XXXV: Table Showing Details of Vessels Registered at Scarborough and Whitby and Engaged in Trawling Operations all year round

Registration Period	No. New Registrations	Average Age at Registration in Yrs.	No. of New Built Vessels	Where Built						Previous Port of Registration									
				South West: Cornwall Devon	Rest of South Coast	East Coast to R. Humber	Grimsby	Hull	Scarborough	Whitby	South West: Devon Cornwall	Rest of South Coast	East Coast to R. Humber	Grimsby	Hull	Unknown			
1845-9																			
1850-4	20	20.5	1	8	11	1	1		1					2	9	4		4	
1855-9	7	15.2	1	3	3	Nil	Nil								1			2	4
1860-4	6	19.1	1	2	3	Nil	Nil										1	1	3
1865-9	13	22.4	2	5	1	4		1											
1870-4	11	3.7	8	1	2											2			
1875-9	29	4.7	18	3	5				4	3	8	1*					2	8	1

\* 1875-9 - 5 vessels built elsewhere: 2 on River Humber System, 2 at Middlesborough, 1 at Peterhead.

Source: Whitby and Scarborough Custom House Vessel Registers.



of the catch overboard.

As we have noted in the previous chapter, despite the great increase in fish being landed, even at a port like Hull, there was no longer the corresponding fall off of prices that would have typified such a situation in the pre-railway era. The catching sector could and did therefore continue to expand through the fifties and sixties with no long term fall off in the value of its landings.<sup>1</sup>

One result of such developments was to make Scarborough a more attractive base for permanent settlement by some of the migratory smackmen. Within a few years of 1849 a small group of specialist sailing trawlers were registered at the port. The first owner to make the move was William Toby. In May 1850 he registered the Eliza, a 47 foot one masted smack that had been built at Plymouth and previously registered at Yarmouth.<sup>2</sup> In July she was followed by the Providence, another one masted smack. She had been constructed at Brixham in 1811 and last registered at Hull.<sup>3</sup> In October there was a third arrival. This time it was the Zephyr and she was the most elderly of the trio having been constructed in 1801. Her stay proved brief before she moved up the coast.<sup>4</sup>

The following year a further five smacks settled. The first, built at Yarmouth in 1825 was called the Rover. She was purchased by a local vessel owner called George Appleyard.<sup>5</sup> Another smack of the same name, though much older having been built at Cowes in 1793,<sup>6</sup> followed a few weeks later. Her owner was William Alward, a name later to become synonymous with the development of the fishing industry at Grimsby. In August the James Westcotts, father and son, registered their smack Gipsy Queen, previously based at Yarmouth.<sup>7</sup> The

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1. See Chapter Four.

2. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 14th May 1850.

3. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 24th July 1850.

4. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 2nd October 1850.

5. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 6th March 1851.

6. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 20th March 1851.

7. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 9th August 1851.

final addition of the year to this small fleet of trawlers came in December with the registration of the Briton, which had been built at Rye and last registered at Ramsgate.<sup>1</sup> The endeavours of this second wave of settlers at Scarborough proved sufficiently rewarding as to attract more trawling smacks. Indeed, a further thirteen were registered at the port in the following three years.

There were also attempts at this time to encourage trawling to take root at Whitby. However, this was mainly due to the efforts of local shipowning and commercial interests rather than strictly to the migratory smackmen. The latter do not seem to have been particularly interested in the port and it is highly probable that only two of the registrations there occurred principally from their initiative. In July 1849 a Cowes built smack, the King William, was based there for a short while but soon moved back west to Exeter.<sup>2</sup> The next settlement was almost equally brief, though for a more tragic reason. The Friends Goodwill was registered in 1851 but within a few months was lost with all hands.<sup>3</sup> The port's commercial community no doubt became interested after the apparent success of the Scarborough arrivals for in 1854 three secondhand smacks, built on the south coast, were registered at the port.<sup>4</sup> Although it was usual for first class fishing vessels in the Whitby Customs port area to be owned by individuals residing at Staithes, Runswick or Robin Hoods Bay, these were purchased principally by Whitby shipowning and business interests and not fishermen. Despite the optimism underlying such a venture, first class trawling failed to establish itself at the port. One of the new arrivals was soon lost at sea and only a further two such craft were attracted during the fifties. By 1869, when the fishing register opens, not one trawler was still in evidence, all having been lost or transferred to other ports.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 16th December 1851.

2. Whitby Custom House Vessel Register, 11th July 1849.

3. Whitby Custom House Register of Shipping, 15th March 1851.

4. Whitby Custom House Register of Shipping, 27th March, 1854; 19th April 1854; and 25th May, 1854.

5. Whitby Fishing Vessel Register, 1869.



Several elements in the local environment acted as a deterrent to the establishment of trawling from the port in much the same way as they retarded the development of any permanent first class fishing fleet there during much of the nineteenth century. The principal reasons for this lay in the state of the harbour and the absence of a strong corps of fish salesmen and merchants to compete for their landings and will be discussed below in greater detail.<sup>1</sup>

The influence of the vessels owned by strangers in the Scarborough fleet began to wane after 1855. Between 1855 and 1859 only a further seven craft which specialised in all year round trawling were registered at the port and only one of them had come directly from the south coast.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, a number of the newcomers who had settled in the first half of the decade decided to move on. The principal reason for this can be attributed to the inducements offered at Grimsby, for this is where many of the smacks went.<sup>3</sup> There were other factors, however, including the difficulties that they often faced entering Scarborough Harbour in winter and the fact that these outsiders found it very difficult to gain acceptance in the local fishing community. Indeed, George Alward was later to blame both of these for his father's decision to move base.<sup>4</sup> For his family it certainly paid off as they were destined to become one of the most prosperous at Grimsby before the turn of the century.

The trawling smacks that did settle at Scarborough during the 1850s had generally emerged from distant boatyards. Out of the twenty seven registered there during that decade only one had been built in Yorkshire and that at Hull. The largest group, thirteen in number, had been constructed along the south coast from Hampshire eastwards; boatbuilders at Rye accounting for six of them. The south west, including Dorset, provided a further ten, of which half a dozen originated at Brixham. The remaining two vessels had been built upon the east coast at Yarmouth.<sup>5</sup> Their origins contrast markedly with the

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1. See Chapter Sixteen

2. See Figure XXXV

3. See Chapter Four.

4. G.L.Alward, The Sea Fisheries of Great Britain (Grimsby 1932) 336-342.

5. See Figure XXXV.

traditional Yorkshire coast yawls and luggers which, with few exceptions, were all built at Scarborough or Whitby. Because these additions to the fleet were second hand or else of 'foreign' construction, the benefits accruing to the local boatbuilders from the introduction of trawling were limited. The work they gained from these first trawlers being largely limited to replacement and repair.

Most of these smacks had led a fairly nomadic existence. Although seasonal movements are not recorded in the Custom House vessel registers, it was usual for them to re-register at this time on shifting their base. Between 1850 and 1859, seventeen of these twenty seven craft had last been registered at Yarmouth, Hull or Ramsgate, the latter two accounting for seven apiece. Despite the fact that a fair proportion of these vessels had originated in the south west, only two had been last based there. This evidence strengthens the popular picture of a gradual eastward then northward movement.<sup>1</sup>

These first trawlers were also generally of good age. Only two of these registered at Scarborough during the fifties were newly constructed and the first of these did not make its appearance until 1854. Considering the chances of loss or severe damage at sea in this most hazardous of occupations, it is at first sight remarkable that the average age on first registry there was as high as 19.7 years. Indeed, five of those were over thirty years old, the most elderly as we have noted, having been constructed in 1793. Though the average age at registry was to fall to just over fourteen years during 1855-9, two of the new arrivals were again over thirty years old and the average age was to rise again in the sixties.<sup>2</sup>

The older the vessel the lower was likely to be its initial purchase price and therefore these were the easiest of acquisitions for the would be fisherman buyer seeking to become his own master, or else add to his fleet. The main drawback to more elderly craft was that they were likely to be less efficient. Apart from in all likelihood being in need of expensive renewal of hull, deck

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1. See Figure XXXV.

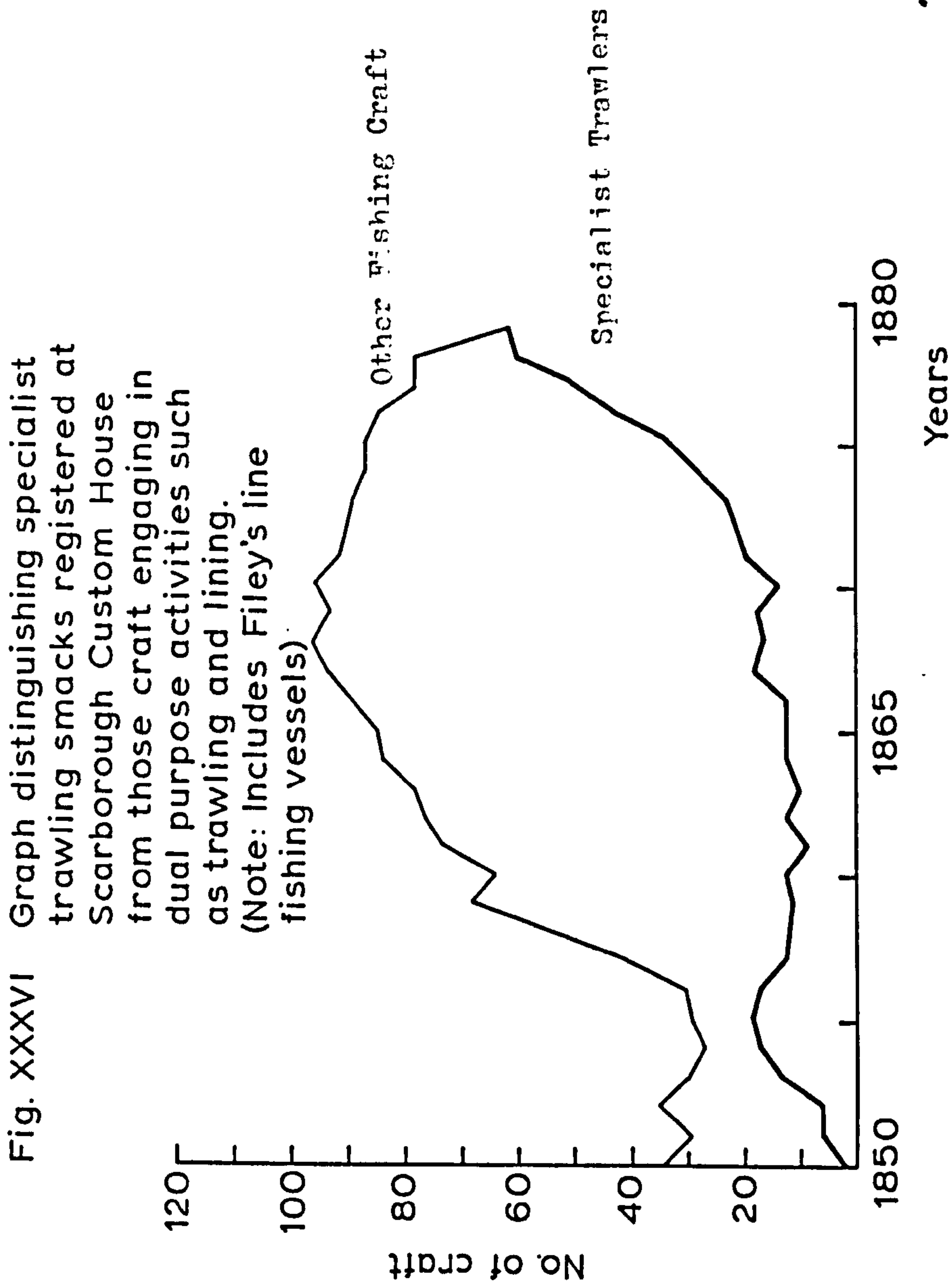
2. See Figure XXXV.



and rigging after years of hard work, they were usually smaller than smacks of recent construction. The smaller the smack the more limited its catching capacity despite the same number of crew members. Catching potential was theoretically determined by the length of the trawl beam. The longer the beam the wider the entrance of the net and the greater the area of sea bed covered by the trawl. The size of the beam that could be carried depended on the amount of room available on deck for stowing it safely away whilst sailing to and from the fishing grounds.<sup>1</sup> Over the first half of the nineteenth century it seems that smacks were steadily being constructed to ever larger dimensions and there were occasional examples of smaller ones being lengthened. The maximum beam length as decreed by Parliamentary Act in 1843 was thirty eight feet<sup>2</sup> and yet by 1863 this was regularly being exceeded.<sup>3</sup> Many vessels constructed between 1850 and 1860 exceeded sixty feet in length<sup>4</sup> and could carry much larger beam trawls than older smacks such as the thirty six foot long Fox that had been built back in 1816.<sup>5</sup>

It was natural that these older and less efficient smacks would try to minimise direct competition with their larger descendants, whose increased catching power per crew member would tend to have a damping effect on quayside prices at a time when railways were only gradually extending the market. The movement of a number of comparatively elderly smacks to a port such as Scarborough would be doubly advantageous to their owners. In the first place, competition with younger craft would be minimised and, secondly, they would be able to exploit the opportunities presented by the railways as carrying conditions for offal fish were gradually improved.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, the likelihood of them regularly glutting the market would be lower than if they were a fleet of new craft because of their lower catching efficiency. If these older smacks had not moved up the coast then it would probably have been much harder

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1. E. March, Sailing Trawlers (1953) 31-6.
  2. 6 & 7 Vict. Cap. LXXIX.
  3. R.C. Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence q.6875.
  4. For example, the smack Jackall built at Rye in 1857. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 13th April 1857.
  5. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register 22nd May 1852.
  6. See Chapter Four.



Source : Scarborough Fishing Vessel Register



for them to have earned a good return at their original more southerly bases.

It was all the more essential for them to yield a good return from each year's fishing because the majority were mortgaged. This was a new development on the Yorkshire coast for the local fishing industry had not previously used such a method of financing the purchase of craft. Indeed, maritime mortgages on any ship or boat registered at Yorkshire ports were very rare at this time.<sup>1</sup> Mortgages were apparently often raised by smack owners to cover purchase or even repair. A prospective smackowner who lacked sufficient capital of his own would often borrow money from some wealthy individual with whom he was acquainted. The vessel would then be mortgaged to him for the sum borrowed plus an annual interest rate of about five per cent.

This method of finance differed markedly from the usual practice followed on the Yorkshire coast. Normally, a local fisherman wishing to acquire a yawl or a lugger would enter into partnership with several other individuals. All venturers in the vessel would be entitled to a share of its earnings that was commensurate to their level of commitment. If the vessel fared well then the return was generally good. If not then the return was in all likelihood small or non-existent. Because all were venturers and equal owners there was thus no requirement to meet annual repayments of interest or principal, as there was under the mortgage arrangement. The Yorkshire coast system tended to spread ownership whereas the mortgage system encouraged its concentration in the hands of one man.<sup>2</sup>

The high cost of maintenance was another reason why a fisherman might look for new partners on the Yorkshire coast or mortgage his vessel - in the case of a trawling smackowner. Financial demands of this sort were quite often unexpected, perhaps being caused by gale or storm damage. It seems that quite often a mortgage might be taken out with the craftsmen who repaired the hull or

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1. In 1844 at Hull, for example, only four ships were recorded as mortgaged whilst Sunderland had one hundred and seventeen, Liverpool sixty six and London fifty six.

2. See Chapter Fourteen.

supplied a new set of sails.<sup>1</sup>

Many of these early Scarborough sailing trawlers were operated by outsiders. Typical of these were the Westcotts, father and son, previously residents of Ramsgate and Yarmouth respectively. Between them they had brought six vessels to the port by 1855.<sup>2</sup> Other newcomers included Thomas Apter from Ramsgate.<sup>3</sup> After 1855 local men began to figure much more strongly. This was an example of the gradual tendency for local men to accept this new fishing practice. The initiative was particularly with them after this date for, as we have seen, a number of the newcomers moved on to the attractions offered by Grimsby. Three Scarborough individuals figure prominently in the development of trawling from the mid fifties. They were Abraham Appleyard, the local harbour master and a shipowner, James Sellers and Henry Wyrill. The latter appears to have been the only working fisherman of the trio, though his maritime experience was much wider.<sup>4</sup> In the 1830s and 1840s he was employed chiefly in the Baltic trade and turned to fishing comparatively late. By 1845 he was already part owner of a two masted yawl<sup>5</sup> and, bearing in mind his later interest, was undoubtedly one of those engaged in winter trawling. Hard work and determination paid off for by 1859 he had interests in at least four trawling smacks.<sup>6</sup> By that time it was unlikely that he still went regularly to sea but had become well established as both smackowner and fish salesman. This latter occupation was to prove particularly remunerative during the fifties and sixties. The individuals engaged in this line of business gained in prosperity thanks to the ever growing volume of fish sales from which they earned a proportionate fee for handling the transactions. This wealth induced some of them to invest in the catching sector and none were more successful than James Sellers.

James Sellers was born in Malton in 1820 and until 1845 was engaged with his father in the fish traffic from the coast to that town.<sup>7</sup> Upon the opening

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1. For example see Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 11th October, 1853
  2. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 1850-1855.
  3. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 1st February 1853.
  4. See Appendix I and II.
  5. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 9th July 1845.
  6. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 22nd May 1852; 16th January 1857 and 8th July 1858.
  7. Scarborough Gazette, 12th May 1887.



of the railway he moved to Scarborough and, like Wyrill, began to develop a host of commercial connections with inland towns for the forwarding and sale of sea fish.<sup>1</sup> In 1852 he acquired Happy Return, a Brixham built smack,<sup>2</sup> and was soon on his way to building up a most substantial holding in the fleet.

Both Sellers and Wyrill differed from the traditional owners of vessels on the Yorkshire coast in that they were not only willing to promote trawling but were also prepared to use the mortgage system as a means of acquiring further vessels if necessary. Indeed, Sellers' second vessel was acquired in just such a fashion. The smack concerned was the Lion and the mortgage, taken out in September 1853, was arranged with the widow of the craft's former owner, Fanny Shapley previously of Ramsgate but by then residing in Hull.<sup>3</sup> Not merely were Sellers, Wyrill and, to a lesser extent, Appleyard prepared to acquire vessels outright, they also acquired half and quarter shares in other craft. Encouraged no doubt by their successes, other local individuals with capital available became willing to venture their money in trawling vessels in much the same fashion as they already did with the fleet of yawls and luggers.

The fifties and sixties were marked by a change in the rig of the Yorkshire coast's traditional first class fishing fleet. Whilst line fishing was the principal activity the yawl or lug rig remained the norm. Its disadvantages became apparent when the first few craft tried trawling. This traditional rig was unwieldy for this type of work and needed a large crew to handle it. Thus it eventually gave way to a form of gaff rig. Such rigs gave greater manouverability which was important in trawling and could be worked by the normal trawling complement of five. One disadvantage - which was to prove crucial later - was that it knocked a knot or two off the top speed.<sup>4</sup> By the seventies the new rig was found on most of the traditional type of first class fishing

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1. Scarborough Gazette, 12th May 1887.
  2. Scarborough Custom House Register of Shipping, 15th October 1852.
  3. Scarborough Custom House Register of Shipping, 13th September 1853.
  4. E.Dade, 'The Old Yorkshire Yawls', Mariners Mirror 19, April 1933, 183-4.

craft. Although they were still called yawls they were no longer rigged in such a fashion. As greatlining catches declined then the rig was even adopted at non-trawling stations, for it meant that smaller crews could be carried by all first class boats.

The gaff type rig, though more suitable for trawling than the lug rig, was apparently still not the most efficient sail arrangement. Craft which continually trawled were at first one masted cutter rigged and then, when two masts became the norm, ketch rigged. In either case their sailing gear included a boom. Such a sailing rig was most unsuitable for any craft wishing to go drifting for the boom would interfere with the work of hauling and sorting the large number of nets midships. The gaff rig then was a compromise, it did not include a boom so the sails could be furled away when the craft was working with its drift nets and yet, in terms of crew size and manouverability, it possessed several advantages over the lug.<sup>1</sup>

As we have seen, Scarborough was the only fishing community that adopted trawling with first class fishing vessels along the Yorkshire coast at this time. During the latter half of the fifties the numbers of specialist trawling smacks at the port fell away, owing mainly to the lure of Grimsby.<sup>2</sup> However, trawling as a whole from the port did not exhibit any such decline. In fact the situation was quite the reverse and the practice grew from strength to strength. The reason for this was the increased use of dual purpose gaff rigged yawls for at least most of the non-herring fishing months of the year. By 1863 there were thirty five vessels operating from that port that trawled during part of the year.<sup>3</sup> Of these, only fourteen were specialists. Some of the yawls were not merely dual but in fact triple purpose craft. Their seasonal round including herring fishing during the summer and an alternation between trawling and lining for the rest of the year.

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1. Ibid., 183-4.

2. See Figure XXXVI.

3. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, q.60,781.



Though trawling had become well established at Scarborough before the fifties were half over and an inshore variant had taken root at Bridlington, the practice continued to be almost universally abhorred along the rest of the Yorkshire coast. At this time both Filey and Staithes still possessed healthy fleets of first class fishing vessels, many of which were of a larger size than the smacks. Yet they showed no real inclination to try their hand at trawling. Indeed, like many other communities they showed an almost complete reluctance to contemplate such a change. This attitude was typified by a Flamborough witness to the 1863-6 Royal Commission. When he was asked why the local men did not try trawling when line fishing would not pay, he replied:

'We were brought up to hook and line fishing and we cannot think of commencing anything else. We never did anything at this place but fish with a hook and line and follow the herring fishing and the mackerel fishing a little.' 1

Stations such as Flamborough were perhaps too small for direct operations by first class fishing vessels but were suitable for adopting it on the Bridlington Quay scale, as early twentieth century events were to prove. A few individuals at Filey and Whitby did adopt the practice but they were very much the exceptions to the rule.<sup>2</sup> One important reason for the non-dissemination of trawling activity amongst the local communities was the strength of tradition and their overt hostility to its whole concept. They were generally close knit and inter-related groups, where individuals relied closely upon each other in order to carry out their occupational activities. Few outsiders joined them and throughout the nineteenth century, fishing remained dominated by the same family names. Yet another factor was at least partially economic: linesmen in general continued to prosper during the fifties and sixties, which further reduced any incentive to alter the usual seasonal round of operations.<sup>3</sup>

During the later sixties there was a slight increase in Scarborough registrations that specialised in round the year trawling.<sup>4</sup> However, the patterns

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1. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, q.6676.
  2. R.C.English and Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1878/9, 1879 XVII, Minutes of Evidence pp. 101 and 108.
  3. See Chapter Seven.
  4. See Figure XXXVI.

of age and origin remained much the same as they had been during the previous ten years. Most of them were second hand and often of considerable age; the average on purchasing during the period 1865-9 being almost twenty one years.<sup>1</sup> Where new vessels were acquired, the local owners preferred to go further afield and have them constructed in the traditional smack centres, often down south. By the early seventies, however, with markets expanding and prices holding, the industry enjoyed an investment boom. More capital than ever was ventured in the construction of trawlers with Messrs Sellers and Wyrill taking the lead.<sup>2</sup> The result was a marked shift in the patterns associated with trawler registry. The average age of such vessels entering the Scarborough fleet fell to just under five years in the first half of the decade.

This shift in emphasis from second hand to new was of immediate benefit to boat builders at Scarborough who for the first time began to take the lead in such construction. The first two trawling smacks to be constructed locally had been turned out in 1867/8.<sup>3</sup> During the seventies, however, the majority of such craft were built on the Yorkshire coast: sixteen being built at Scarborough alone. This was an important factor enabling the remnants of the local ship-building industry to survive at a time when orders for other vessels were disappearing from the town.<sup>4</sup>

There was also a gradual but relentless increase in the size of new sailing trawlers which enabled larger beams to be carried. This allowed a commensurate growth in their catching capacity. When the details of the smacks that settled at Scarborough between 1850 and 1854 are analysed it can be seen that their length varied from between thirty six and fifty six feet. By the 1870s newly registered sailing smacks there ranged in size from sixty two to eighty feet, with the bulk of new construction exceeding seventy feet.<sup>5</sup>

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1. See Figure XXXV.

2. See Appendix I and II.

3. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 15th November 1867 and 11th November 1868.

4. See Chapter One.

5. See Figure XXXVIII.



FIGURE XXXVII: Average Length of Newly Built Fishing Craft of All Types and Rig  
Registered at Scarborough and Whitby Custom Houses

	Scarborough Length in feet	Whitby Length in feet
1825-9	56	56
1830-4	39	50
1835-0	39	51
1840-4	46	53
1845-9	51	53
1850-4	46	1
1855-9	58	58
1860-4	58	60
1865-9	57	60
1870-4	65	62
1875-9	71	59

Average Length of All Specialist Trawling Smacks On Registration at Scarborough

	Length in feet
1850-4	45
1855-9	48
1860-4	49
1965-9	56
1870-4	65
1875-9	74

Source: Whitby and Scarborough Customs Houses Vessel Registers.

By the mid 1870s the largest trawls incorporated a beam some forty eight feet wide,<sup>1</sup> compared with about thirty eight foot in the forties.<sup>2</sup> The traditional rope warps were replaced by steel and gradually steam capstans were introduced which were a far more efficient means of hauling the gear in than the human powered capstan. Such developments meant that it was possible to work on deeper grounds which allowed much more of the North Sea to be opened up.

The working of such distant water grounds precluded the return to market two or three times a week. Craft wishing to work on them were thus obliged to stay out for a week and longer or else adopt the practice of fleeting. This, of course, meant that a fleet of smacks would work on a ground for up to eight weeks and have their catches taken to shore by fast cutter thus eliminating the need to visit port each week. Despite the greater distances involved there could be no question of letting the fish deteriorate greatly for the English consumer expected fish to be in better condition than had their predecessors. This necessitated the increased use of ice.

Ice had been first used in white fishing by craft operating out of Barking in the mid 1840s and had assisted in the exploitation of more distant grounds from that port.<sup>3</sup> Though ice was to prove of particular importance to craft that took their fish direct from northern North Sea grounds to London during the fifties and sixties, it was then of lesser importance during much of the year to those fishermen landing at Hull, Grimsby and Scarborough from grounds only forty or fifty miles from the coast. During the seventies, however, greater distances meant an increased role for ice.

Before the 1880s ice for fish was, of course, not made artificially. Some was collected from ponds and harbours during the winter months and stored in cool cellars.<sup>4</sup> Much was shipped in from Norway. Scarborough, together with Hull and Grimsby, received large shipments by schooner from that country. The trade was of great importance until the large scale artificial production of ice was introduced during the last twenty years of the century.

1. R.C.English and Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1878/9, 1879 XVII, Minutes of Evidence p.102.
2. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq.6873-5.
3. R.H.E., AF1/14, 8th December 1847.
4. C.L.Cutting, Fish Saving, (1955) 222-3.



In addition to these developments, some of the older members of the fleet were lengthened to enable them to carry larger beams. This in itself was an interesting process. The craft were not docked but dealt with on the open beach within the harbour. Everything moveable was stripped out including masts, spars and ballast. The smack was then 'neaped'. In other words it was hauled as far as possible out of the water on the top of a spring tide. Next it was cut in half at the greatest beam. Both halves were hauled apart by block and tackle. A new piece of keel was then fitted and the space above built up with frames etc.<sup>1</sup>

The increase in size was accompanied, as we shall see in detail in chapter fourteen, by an increase in construction costs. This was to make it more and more difficult for the working fisherman to raise sufficient capital to acquire his own vessel.

Scarborough had finally been outstripped as a fishing port by Hull and Grimsby as early as the 1860s. However, by the mid seventies it was well established as the then most northerly of the North Sea trawling stations. It boasted a fleet of some forty specialist trawling smacks and at least fifty more dual purpose vessels. Trawling was the principal mode of capture employed at the port and such operations were increasingly coming under the control of a small group of wealthy self-made individuals of whom James Sellers and Henry Wyrill were the most prominent. The industry was enjoying a period of rapid growth and the catching sector was spreading its nets ever further afield. Not only did Scarborough trawlers join the boxing fleets sent out from Hull and Grimsby<sup>2</sup> but they also ranged across the North Sea to the coasts of Holland and Denmark.<sup>3</sup> There is no question that this practice - so universally abhorred there some thirty five years earlier - had become engrained in the fishing tradition of the port.

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1. E.Dade, loc.cit., 363-5.

2. Scarborough Gazette, 6th May 1880.

3. R.C.English Sea Fisheries, 1878/9, 1879 XVII Minutes of Evidence, pp.102-3.

CHAPTER SIX: THE HERRING FISHERY 1840s to 1870s

For the British herring fishery as a whole, the 1840s were to prove a decade of mixed fortune. In his work on the Scottish industry, Gray tells us that high prices were prevalent during the period 1835-1842 but that the later forties were characterised by somewhat of a depression in activity. The collapse of the West Indian market for pickle cured herring in the later thirties,<sup>1</sup> after the emancipation of the slaves, was a precursor of problems to come. However, it was surprisingly insufficient in itself to bring on a slump in trade as other outlets on the Continent were exhibiting signs of expansion. Yet the Scottish trade did not avoid trouble when Irish demand first faltered and then collapsed in the wake of the 1845 Potato Famine.<sup>2</sup> After the destruction of this second traditional pillar of support, the Continental market could not at first fully compensate alone. Indeed, it was not until after 1850 that it developed to such an extent that, being the Scottish industry's principal outlet, it was able to lead a period of almost unbroken expansion that lasted until 1884.

In some respects, the experience of the Yorkshire coast herring industry during the early forties bore similarities with its Scottish counterpart. Throughout the first three seasons of the decade, the expansive impetus which had begun during the previous decade continued unabated. Local interest reached a new height in 1842 as the low prices being offered for dried fish induced many fishermen to abandon that branch of the fishery and embark upon the quest for herring shoals much earlier than usual.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, some degree of this forward momentum was lost over the remainder of the decade as the first class fleet shrank somewhat.<sup>4</sup> The 1843 season proved to be poor, though this seems to have been due to local difficulties in locating the herring shoals rather than just a diminished level of exploitation by the fishermen. Indeed, despite the problems afflicting the Scottish industry and the reduced strength of its

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1. R.H.E., AF1/13, 3rd May 1842.

2. Gray, op.cit., 59.

3. R.H.E., AF1/13, 10th May 1842.

4. See Figure XXX.



own first class fleet, a perceptible overall tendency to growth, in terms of catches and nets deployed, can still be discerned on the Yorkshire coast.<sup>1</sup>

There were three main reasons why the Yorkshire coast's herring industry was still able to develop. Firstly, the reduction in the strength of the first class fleet at this time was largely due to the decline in cod and ling drying activities and to problems facing the greatline fishery as a whole. Many of the large yawls and luggers that remained cut back drastically on this summer white fishing activity and extended their interest in herring: in other words, the changes in practice noted in 1842 and 3, assumed an air of permanence. . . Furthermore, whereas large vessels had always been essential to the exploitation of the cod and ling grounds off the Dogger Bank, they were at that time less necessary to the capture of herring. In the terminology of the contemporary fishermen, herring were to be found on what they called the inside as well as the outside grounds. Whereas the latter of these were well over thirty miles from the coast and called for the employment of seagoing decked vessels, the former were in waters within fourteen miles of the coast and often in the range of smaller undecked craft.<sup>2</sup>

During the forties the communities of Runswick and Robin Hoods Bay began to lose interest in first class luggers, one or two of which were sold off to buyers in the north east.<sup>3</sup> Though they were not to relinquish their total involvement with such craft until the sixties, they expanded their efforts at this time by concentrating on exploiting the inside grounds for herring and other fish from the smaller range of fishing vessels. By 1843 at Runswick the herring fishery was already proving for the community as a whole to be the most lucrative of the two major activities.<sup>4</sup>

The second reason for the growth of the herring fishery at this time lay in the increased catching effort deployed per boat or crew member. There was

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1. See Figure XXXVIII.

2. R.C.English & Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1878-9, 1879 XVII, Minutes of Evidence, p.109

3. Whitby Custom House Register of Shipping, 30th August, 1828 and 24th April 1829.

4. See Figure XXXIX.

FIGURE XXXVIII: Square Yards of Netting used in the Herring Fishery

## Whitby (Yorkshire Coast Principally)

1845 2,652,500

1846 2,725,000

1847 2,737,500

1848 2,780,000

1849 2,747,500

## Quantity of Herring Taken (not cured)

## Whitby District (Yorkshire Coast Principally)

## Barrels

1843 16,159

1844 23,485

1845 21,010

1846 21,791

1847 23,176

1848 23,177

1849 29,123

Source: Board of British Fisheries Reports.



undoubtedly a further increase in the numbers of specialist herring craft - the ploshers and mules - that had made their first appearance a decade or so before. Though only of use during the herring season they could, as we have seen, carry a larger fleet of nets than the traditional coble.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the first class vessels began to carry more nets and these craft were still important to the fishermen of Staithes, Scarborough and Filey. From about 1842 the practice spread amongst this fleet of discarding the main mast of the fiveman boats. At first this was for the duration of the herring season but later it became permanent. Furthermore, the newer yawls were all only built for fitting out with two masts. Though March implies that the decline in smuggling may have been the major cause of this development<sup>2</sup> it is more likely to have been adopted because the absence of the mast allowed more nets to be carried and shot.

Finally, all craft could carry more nets in a given space as they shifted over to the lighter cotton nets which were being increasingly adopted. These replaced the heavier and more bulky hemp nets that were the product of domestic labour along the Yorkshire coast. Instead, the local communities began to obtain their needs in this direction from a Musselborough manufacturer who had successfully mechanised the process.<sup>3</sup>

The combined result for the first class fleet along the Yorkshire coast was a dramatic increase in catching effort per vessel. Prior to the 1840s these craft had deployed a maximum of fifty or sixty nets.<sup>4</sup> By the end of that decade the number was up to ninety or so<sup>5</sup> and by 1863 the largest of the five-man boats and yawls could shoot between one hundred and twenty and one hundred and thirty nets.<sup>6</sup>

The third factor was the most important, for without it there would have been no stimulant to act upon those just outlined: this was a restructuring

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1. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq.6426 and 6465-7.
  2. E.March, Sailing Drifters, (1952) 58-9.
  3. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq.6718-9.
  4. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq.6039-40. White, Directory of Yorkshire East and North Ridings (Sheffield 1840) 37-8.
  5. Captain Washington's Report, 1849 LI, Appendix 22.
  6. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq.6039.

FIGURE XXXIX: Runswick Bay and Staithes

Cod, Ling and Herring Fishery for year 5th April 1843 to 5th April 1844

## Runswick Bay

	No. of Boats	Average Thous- ands of herring caught	Average value of catch per boat	Total value all boats
Herring Fishery	18	105,000	£93	£1674
Dried Cod and Ling	20		£76	<u>£1520</u>
			Total	£3194

## Staithes

Herring Fishery	31	110,000	£95	£2945
Dried Cod and Ling	54		£104	<u>£8561</u>
			Total	£11506

Source: Fishery Board Report to G.Ord, quoted in his book

The History and Antiquities of Cleveland (1846) 299-303



and growth in demand, involving a shift in emphasis from the export to the home market for almost the entire English branch of the industry. Unlike many of the Scottish, the English herring fisheries were often well placed to exploit the growing internal urban demand for provisions. We have noted that even prior to the railway developments of the 1840s, home demand for herring products had been growing. Henceforward, the same pattern was evident but the emergence of faster and better transport arrangements meant that milder and more attractive modes of preserving fish could be utilised. Indeed, as we have noted in Chapter Four, new curing processes were widely adopted which took account of such improvements in the distributive sector. Prior to the railways, herring which travelled any great distance inland had often to be heavily smoked or salt picked if they were to come within reach of prospective consumers in an edible condition. In future, once suitable carriage rates had been agreed, herrings heading inland were able to be cured with an emphasis on taste rather than keeping qualities.

We have charted the emergence of the Yarmouth bloater and the Newcastle kipper. Not only were they more attractive to the inland consumer's taste but we have seen that because the process of curing them was so much shorter than for the old reds, fuel costs were cut and a greater volume of fish could be dealt with by one kiln in a given time. Certain curers on the Yorkshire coast and undoubtedly elsewhere had long been tempted to cut corners by shortening the processing period in order to increase demand.<sup>1</sup> In the past such actions had often proved detrimental to the interests of the industry as a whole for they damaged reputations and consumer demand. After this time the reverse was almost apparently the case. It is evident that though the old name of reds held sway on the Yorkshire coast for some time, the actual product processed by the curers undoubtedly changed.<sup>2</sup> Gradually the names kipper and bloater came into use even here, though probably not much before the 1870s. What traditional red herring production there had been on the Yorkshire coast

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1. R.H.E., AF1/6, 3rd September 1822 and 24th August 1824.

2. In the 1863-6 R.C. on Sea Fisheries there is no mention in either the Report or Minutes of Evidence of the word kipper with regard to herrings. The word kipper appears to have come into widespread usage for smoked herring in the market reports of the 1870s and is mentioned in the 1878-9 R.C. on the English Sea Fisheries.

FIGURE XL: Herring Exports from the United Kingdom

	Scottish Exports barrels	English Exports barrels	Total barrels
1854	239,813	45,640	285,453
1855	344,887	37,062	381,959
1859	257,941	57,447	315,388
1857	308,627	60,487	369,114
1858	271,150	65,410	336,560
1859	204,098	62,517	266,615
1860	291,558	49,950	341,508
1861	308,719	55,399	364,118
1862	424,031	86,925	510,956
1863	335,687	103,058	438,748
1864	309,086	89,319	398,405
1865	310,638	41,612	352,250
1866	332,747	72,054	404,801
1867	436,340	88,394	524,734
1868	325,331	101,325	426,656
1869	348,991	73,727	422,718
1870	489,034	96,159	585,193
1871	505,258	154,696	659,954
1872	525,484	106,266	631,750
1873	63,542	88,124	723,666
1874	709,178	143,452	852,630
1875	627,537	57,218	684,755
1876	380,090	46,498	426,588
1877	545,900	103,952	649,748
1878	611,488	53,364	665,852
1879	637,136	99,936	637,072
1880	977,329	95,068	1,072,397
1881	712,421	92,749	805,170
1882	864,891	94,947	959,838
1884	1,149,921	182,649	1,332,570
1885	1,105,877	133,939	1,239,816
1886	910,830	155,101	1,065,931
1887	829,930	184,822	1,014,752
1888	740,154	231,338	971,492
1889	937,522	213,922	1,151,450
1890	927,534	222,641	1,150,175
1891	825,051	117,732	942,783
1892	930,224	186,994	1,117,217
1893	1,011,756	200,370	1,212,126
1894	1,181,246	205,264	1,386,510
1895	1,190,675	234,440	1,425,115
1896	1,129,565	244,262	1,373,827
1897	768,098	339,551	1,107,649
1898	1,421,397	315,104	1,736,501
1899	918,455	481,119	1,399,574
1900	988,943	544,869	1,533,812

Source: Trade and Navigation Returns



had probably all but disappeared by the 1850s.

The Yorkshire coast industry made use not only of the railways but increasingly of the growing number of steam ship connections up and down the coast to move these fish. As in the thirties and earlier decades, the opportunities offered by the growing north east coalfield and industrial regions were exploited by craft continuing to land at seaports such as Newcastle and Sunderland when marketing prospects were attractive. Smoked and fresh herring were indeed described as being 'a favourite article of food' there.<sup>1</sup> During the 1840s the local fisheries officer was regularly referring to the expansion in demand for them. At the same time, production of the heavier cured salt pickled herring also almost entirely ceased because it proved a less profitable pursuit.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the rest of the forties, as figure XXXVIII shows, catching effort and landings increased thanks almost entirely to home demand. The level of growth might have been much greater had rail carriage rates and conditions been made more attractive at an earlier date and the decade not witnessed two depressions in trade.

The trends throughout England and Wales in the following decades were undoubtedly similar. Though there was large scale exploitation of herring shoals off the East Anglian and Cornish coasts, as well as in the Irish Sea, at varying times each year, little was exported in comparison with Scotland. Indeed, as can be seen from figure XL, English exports during the fifties were only a fraction of its northerly neighbour. It was to be several decades before Scotland's pre-eminence in the overseas market could be even approached. In fact, the statistics mentioned above probably even exaggerate the importance of the export market at many herring ports around the English coast for, as far as salt pickled herring were concerned, it was only of significance in such northerly areas as Northumberland where it continued to be fostered by the Board of British fisheries after that body had ceased its other operations

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1. R.H.E., AF1/13, 13th May 1842.

2. R.H.E., AF1/13, 3rd May 1842 and 8th May 1844.

FIGURE XLI: New Registration of Yawls

	Scarborough Custom House	Whitby Custom House
1840	8	0
1841	6	6
1842	0	1
1843	2	2
1844	1	0
1845	2	2
1846	0	0
1847	0	0
1848	2	0
1849	1	1
1850	1	0
1851	0	0
1852	0	0
1853	0	0
1854	1	0
1855	0	0
1856	3	2
1857	11	4
1858	18	4
1859	3	3
1860	6	0

Source: Scarborough and Whitby Custom House Vessel Registers



south of the border.<sup>1</sup> It was probably an expansion of activity along that section of the coast that accounted for much of the rise in English exports during the 1860s. Pickle curing remained largely out of favour in both Yorkshire and East Anglia throughout this time and when it was eventually revived towards the end of the century it was to be dominated by Scottish curers who travelled south.<sup>2</sup>

From the mid fifties there was an abrupt upturn in activity along the Yorkshire coast in the herring industry.<sup>3</sup> Undoubtedly the key to this new expansive spurt lay with the introduction of better rail carriage facilities which coincided quite closely with it. The continued expansion of inland markets, as the railway network spread also provided a stimulant. There was an abrupt resumption in the construction of yawls which could be used for drifting on the outside grounds. In the first half of the 1850s, only two of these lugger rigged craft had been built and registered at Scarborough Custom House.<sup>4</sup> In the latter half of the same, registers show that thirty four such newly built vessels were added and based either there or at Filey. The story in the Whitby Customs Port area was similar with no craft at all being built in the first five years whilst thirteen were added in the last five.<sup>5</sup> This increase was centred mainly upon Staithes as there was no concerted attempt to base more such craft at Runswick and Robin Hoods Bay again. Such was the demand for these craft that the local boat builders were stretched to their utmost even when working at full capacity.<sup>6</sup> Most were turned out by yards in Scarborough and Whitby but demand was so great that some owners went to Yarmouth and Hull builders with their orders.<sup>7</sup>

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1. R.H.E., AF1/14, 12th December 1849.

2. See Chapter Fifteen.

3. R.C. on Trawling, 1883-5, 1885 XVI, Minutes of Evidence. qq.9655-7.

4. See Figure XLI.

5. See Figure XLI.

6. Whitby Gazette, 6th March 1858.

7. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 8th July 1858, nos. 19, 20, and 21.

The three fishing communities that benefitted most directly from this upsurge were Scarborough, Whitby and, to a lesser extent, Staithes. They were the main landing points and not only outsiders but vessels from Flamborough, Filey and Redcar often chose to take their catches there. The attraction was that the herring merchants based themselves in these places. Where competition for catches was at its greatest the fishermen might expect the best prices. As many as three or four hundred strangers might be found at Staithes during the 1840s and their number included men from Holland, France as well as Yarmouth.<sup>1</sup> The upsurge at Scarborough and Whitby during the latter part of the 1850s must have accounted for the rise in fish carriage by rail that was a feature of those years. In 1857 Whitby shipped out some three hundred and fifty tons by rail in three days at the height of the season which required the use of some one hundred and thirty wagons. In addition, immense quantities left the port by sea.<sup>2</sup>

Like Staithes, Scarborough and Whitby also attracted a large number of British visitors during the season. As early as 1852 the number of boats from other parts of the country that were visiting Scarborough almost equalled those belonging to the port. At that time most came from Cley, Cromer and Yarmouth.<sup>3</sup> By the opening of the next decade many came from the west country, notably Penzance and St Ives.<sup>4</sup> More and more herring merchants were attracted and the local Scarborough newspapers of the period often contain advertisements announcing that some or other herring merchant had commenced using the port during the season and was looking for business. The story at Whitby was similar and by the early sixties the Staithes fleet of first class luggers had often taken to landing herring there whilst their home community concentrated on servicing smaller vessels during the season.

Despite the greater level of exploitation, markets were rarely glutted for more than a day or so. Price levels remained attractive and some remarkable

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1. J.W.Ord, The History and Antiquities of Cleveland, (1846) 299-300.

2. Whitby Gazette, 1st August 1857.

3. Scarborough Gazette, 30th August 1857.

4. N.C.R.O., Whitby Harbour Ledgers, 1862.



profits were made. The most prosperous years were probably 1856 and 1857. One newly constructed yawl, the Olive Branch of Scarborough, realised some £1,000 and £1,200 on both herring seasons alone.<sup>1</sup> In earlier decades a good return on all fishing would have been unlikely to have even approached the lower of these figures.

The sixties proved largely to be a prosperous decade and the industry was by then robust enough to overcome a severe disaster. On June 9th 1860, thirteen of Filey's fleet of twenty two yawls were lost in a great gale that caused much damage up and down the coast. Ten were swept from their moorings in the bay and lost on the rocks at Speeton. Only one man died in the catastrophe but the property loss was estimated at upwards of £10,000 and it was rumoured that half the town was bankrupt or deprived of employment.<sup>2</sup> Despite the scale of this setback, all losses were made good within three years<sup>3</sup> even though many of the craft had not been covered by insurance.<sup>4</sup>

By this decade the Yorkshire herring fishery was one of the most profitable along the coast. Indeed, the prospect of a successful voyage was sufficient to induce a number of Scottish vessels to venture down to Whitby<sup>5</sup> and Scarborough.<sup>6</sup> Such was the attraction of the Yorkshire coast that they came when their home seasons were still in full swing.<sup>7</sup> To cope with this continually increasing level of activity both ports found it necessary to improve landing and processing facilities in order to deal more effectively with the mid summer peak.

All were assisted by the unusually favourable conditions then prevalent. During the fifties and early sixties the quality of fish landed was on balance fairly high and the length of time that the shoals could be found in abundance off the coast was far longer than was normal either before or after. Previously, the season had usually commenced at the end of July or the beginning of August.

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1. R.C.on Trawling, 1885 XVI, Minutes of Evidence, qq.8655-7.
  2. Whitby Gazette, 9th June 1860.
  3. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq.5990-5993.
  4. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq.5991-5992.
  5. N.R.C.O., Whitby Harbour Ledgers 1862 and 1863.
  6. Scarborough Gazette, 19th February 1863.
  7. M.Gray, op.cit., 87.

By 1851 it was lasting until the end of November and throughout that decade it often opened in early June. This was largely sufficient to cause the fishermen to end their traditional practice of repairing to the East Anglian fishery in the autumn.<sup>1</sup> Henceforward, they found it worthwhile to remain on home grounds. By the end of the fifties the herring fishery was lasting almost five months and was considered to be more remunerative than all other branches of the industry put together.<sup>2</sup>

The relative strengths of the herring fleets attracted to and operating from the Yorkshire coast fishing ports waxed and waned with the passing of the season. In 1862, one of the last of the really long seasons, landings at Whitby were dominated during the months of June and July by vessels from Buckhaven on the Fifeshire coast. These fishermen were amongst those who had departed prematurely from their home fishery in order to participate here. During August their influence declined. Presumably many returned to their home waters for only a few Scottish vessels were visiting East Anglia at this time. In contrast, most of the vessels landing catches at the port during this month were from St Ives, Penzance or Scarborough.<sup>3</sup> The Cornish boats were late arrivals and many of them had previously been engaged in catching herring off the coasts of Ireland and the Isle of Man.<sup>4</sup> As their home herring fishery commenced from about the middle of October they usually departed before that date. Nevertheless, in exceptionally favourable years the occasional craft might linger as late as December.<sup>5</sup> Yorkshire coast vessels were the principal group towards the season's tail end. What is immediately noticeable from the Whitby Harbour ledgers is the total absence in some years of landings by East Anglian vessels. Evidently they preferred Scarborough for they were very prominent there.<sup>6</sup> Throughout the whole season, of course, there were regular landings by the Staithes first class fleet.

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1. Scarborough Gazette 30th August 1852.

2. R.C. Sea Fisheries, 1863-6 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 5754 and 6587.

3. See Figure XLII.

4. R.C. Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 24009 and 25016.

5. N.R.C.O., Whitby Harbour Ledgers, December 1864.

6. R.C. on Harbours of Refuge, 1859 1, Minutes of Evidence, qq 22570 and 22365.



FIGURE XLII: Origins of Vessels\* Landing at Whitby During 1862 Herring Season

	Unknown	Buck- haven	Scarbo- rough	Leith	Whitby	Berwick	H'Pool	Kirkaldy	Lowestoft	Sunderland	St Ives	Penz- ance	Hull	Filey	Yarmouth	Plymouth
June	83	6	2	2	2	6	2	2	1	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
July	361	8	nil	45	NIL	33	NIL	2	1	37	NIL	12	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
August	11	233	NIL	24	NIL	33	NIL	2	1	222	103	30	7	27	1	

\* First class fishing vessels

Source: Whitby Harbour Commissioners' Ledger 1862

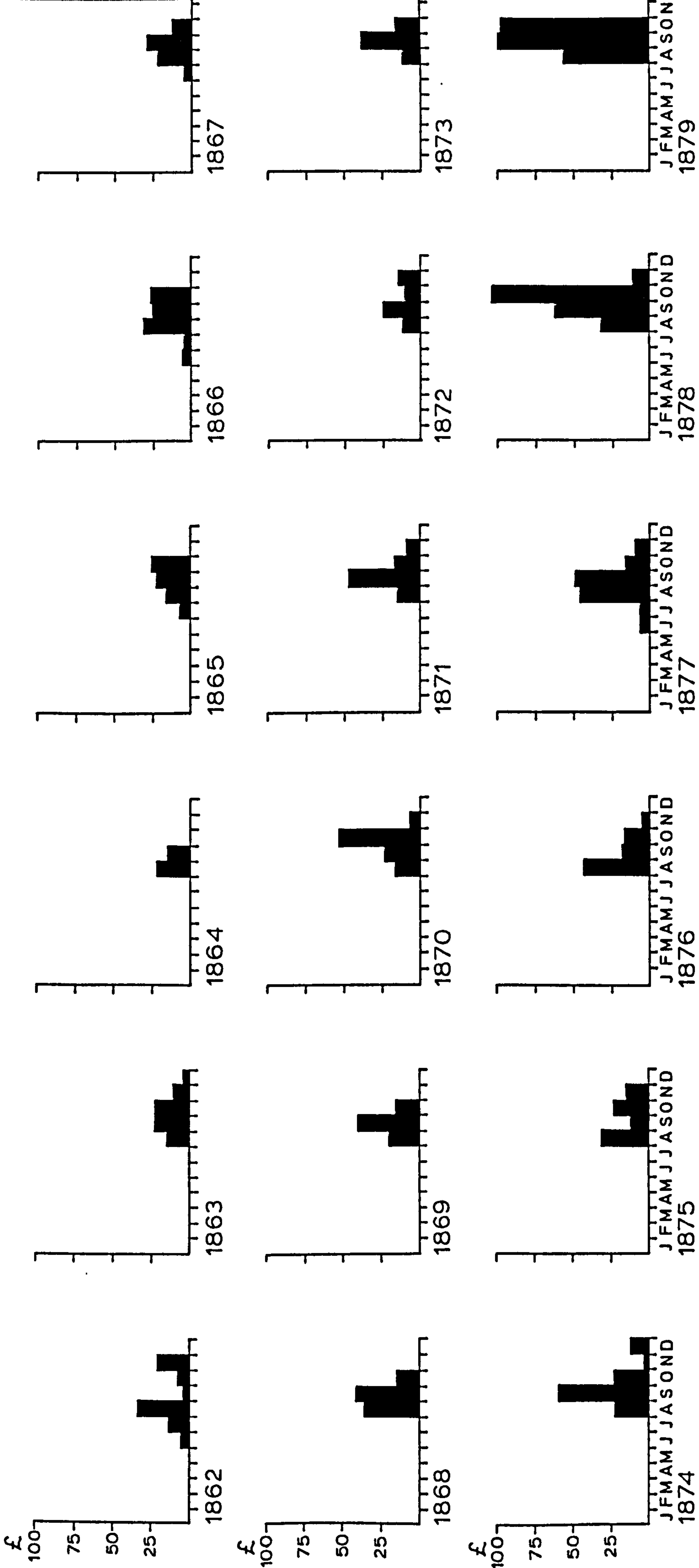
Two groups of Continental fishermen in particular maintained an interest in the herring fisheries during this period. The French, who fished along the entire east coast of Britain arrived off the Yorkshire coast about July and were in evidence until about the end of September each year. Earlier in the year most had made the voyage in their large craft to Newfoundland in order to go lining for white fish.<sup>1</sup> The even larger Dutch craft still retained a small interest, but only eight or nine were reported to be operating in the area by Flamborough fishermen in 1863.<sup>2</sup> During the fifties the French could no longer openly buy fish directly from English fishermen, though covert transactions probably continued for some time. The French Emperor, Louis Napoleon, had forbidden the practice shortly after taking power. This policy seems to have met with eventual success for, even though trade between both nations was to some extent liberalised in 1861, the practice had by then all but died out.<sup>3</sup>

During the mid sixties, the herring shoals lived up to their reputation for unpredictability as the season contracted in length. Landings during the early months were reduced to negligible proportions within a few years.<sup>4</sup> However, despite the reduction in length, seasonal landings continued an upward though fluctuating trend, as can be judged from the statistics of fish dues at Whitby Harbour. The explanation lies in the fact that though shoaling for shorter periods of time off the Yorkshire coast, they were being fished with ever greater intensity. By 1863/4 not less than one hundred boats were entering Scarborough Harbour at the peak of each season<sup>5</sup> with up to three hundred more discharging their catches into small boats outside. About twice as many men at the port were by then employed in that fishery than twenty years earlier.<sup>6</sup>

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1. R.C. on Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Appendix 41.
  2. R.C. on Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 6736.
  3. R.C. on Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq.1640-4.
  4. See Figure XLIII.
  5. Scarborough Public Library (hereafter S.P.L.) Scarborough Harbour Commissioners' Minutes, 20th February 1864 and 12th January 1865.
  6. S.P.L. Scarborough Harbour Commissioners' Minutes, 12th January 1865 and 27th August 1868.



Figure XLIII. Fish landing dues at Whitby Harbour during Herring seasons, 1862 - 1879



\* Source: Whitby Harbour Commissioners' Ledgers 1862-1879

Not only did the number of first class vessels visiting continue to increase during the sixties, but so too did the number of open boats that joined men from Flamborough, Bridlington and Whitby. During the seventies, however, the yield from the open boat fishery began in some places to fall off, complaints being particularly strong in the south of the county.<sup>1</sup> The reason being that less herring seemed to be shoaling on the inside grounds or they were at least becoming harder to locate. Whether this was due to overfishing as locals claimed is open to doubt: it may well have been a further manifestation of the herring's unpredictable habits. Certainly, a number of inshore craft found this type of fishing less remunerative than in previous decades.<sup>2</sup>

The rich herring grounds in the outside fishery were often well over thirty miles from the shore and even further from the landing station. The larger yawls, which had previously fished on both sets of grounds seem to have concentrated upon these much more in the seventies. Attempts were made to cut down the time travelling to and from them to maximise exploitation. Many craft began to adopt a practice somewhat akin to that followed when greatlining for cod and ling. The yawls would sail out on a Monday morning and stay on the grounds until Friday. Fish caught during the first three days would be partially salted and often stored in barrels. Only the fish caught on the latter part of the voyage would be landed in a fresh state.<sup>3</sup> Salted fish were worth less on landing. If herring fetched £8/15/- per last fresh then salted they would be worth only £8.<sup>4</sup> This was because the later caught fish were in better condition, having had less time to deteriorate. Nevertheless, it proved more economic for many of the yawls to operate on this principle during the seventies. Being solely reliant upon the wind, a great deal of time could be lost sailing to and from the grounds, especially in adverse weather conditions. There were, of course, variations on the theme. Some craft operated in pairs

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1. R.C.English and Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1878/9, 1879 XVII, Minutes of Evidence p.107.
  2. R.C.English and Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1878/9, 1879 XVII, Minutes of Evidence p.109.
  3. Whitby Gazette, 30th September 1876.
  4. Whitby Gazette, 22nd October 1864.



with one returning to port each day with the catch of both whilst the other remained at sea and presumably the profit was split jointly.<sup>1</sup> If a craft was fortunate enough to completely fill her hold because of the density of the shoals located then she would immediately return to port and, indeed, this was a far from uncommon occurrence.

As we have seen, the pace and prosperity of the herring fishery attracted a large number of merchants to Scarborough and Whitby in particular. In general, two or three fish merchants resided permanently at Whitby throughout the year but during the summer months upwards of twenty could be found there.<sup>2</sup> Though Scarborough had about eight permanent merchants, their ranks were also greatly swelled during the season. The majority who visited the port at this time hailed from East Anglia, in particular the ports of Yarmouth and Lowestoft. Typical no doubt was B.M. Bradbeer, a merchant based on Lowestoft who was a regular visitor from the late 1850s to the 1880s.<sup>3</sup> He would usually have operations underway at both Scarborough and Whitby by September of each season. Few such men settled there permanently but one concern that did establish itself at Scarborough belonged to the Woodger family. Though originally hailing from North Sunderland, this family had, by way of Newcastle, made Lowestoft its main base. In the late fifties Frederick Woodger had opened operations in Scarborough, which were by the seventies managed by Henry Lamble Woodger.<sup>4</sup> Initially interested in smoke curing - this family of course reputedly invented the kipper - they very soon diversified and by the end of the seventies were involved in all aspects of the port's fishing industry, including smack and yawl ownership.<sup>5</sup>

As we have noted, during the sixties the season showed a tendency towards contracting in length whilst exploitation during its peak months increased. In 1861, the maximum amount of herring landed at Whitby and shipped out by rail

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1. Whitby Gazette, 18th July 1874.
  2. N.Y.C.R.O., Whitby Harbour Ledgers, 1877-8.
  3. N.Y.C.R.O., Whitby Harbour Ledgers, 1862-85 and Scarborough Mercury, 21st August 1858.
  4. Scarborough Gazette, 10th November 1887 and 24th November 1887.
  5. Ibid., 10th November 1887 and 24th November 1887.

in one day had been 171 tons, necessitating the use of 81 railway wagons.<sup>1</sup> Some indication of the continued increase in activity can be gauged from the fact that during the 1870 season 100 railway wagons were needed to move about 300 tons out of the port on one Tuesday during September.<sup>2</sup>

The 1864 season brought a poor return but this seems largely to have been the result of a depression afflicting demand from the important Lancashire textile areas that in turn was caused by the United States' Civil War.<sup>3</sup> From this trough, however, to 1871 herring landings at Whitby, if judged from figure XLI, exhibited a fluctuating though generally upward trend. This was in turn followed by a period of five seasons which, with only one exception, seem to indicate somewhat of a reversal in this trend. To some extent, this could have resulted from competition with Scarborough, which prior to 1873 was the only Yorkshire coast harbour to possess its own steam tug that proved a valuable aid in towing sailing craft to and from the grounds during periods of adverse or light winds.<sup>4</sup> However, as far as the herring industry was concerned, the fortunes of both ports were closely linked. The main reasons appear to have been the recurrent traditional difficulty of locating the shoals and the confinement of boats to port during foul weather. The inside fishery seems to have been the worst affected, for it was during this period that a number of local men began to take a greater interest in crabbing during the summer.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, a further indication that the outside fishery was less adversely affected can be seen from the continued expansion of the Scarborough first class fleet.<sup>6</sup>

From 1876, however, expansion resumed and until the mid eighties the industry was to experience a period of almost unremitting growth. Annual increases in landings and general activity were particularly great in the later seventies and several factors helped account for this. Firstly, it seems likely that the fishermen were once more having greater success in locating

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1. Whitby Gazette, 17th August 1861.

2. Whitby Gazette, 30th September 1870.

3. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 7498.

4. See Chapter Fifteen.

5. See Chapter Eight.

6. See Figure XXX.



the shoals and thus improving their seasonal catch. Secondly, there was a continual increase in the number of large vessels participating and these brought with them an increasing number of nets. In Scotland, for example, Gray tells us that the average dimensions of herring vessels was growing thus allowing the fishermen to carry more nets.<sup>1</sup> There had since the 1860s always been a Scottish presence in the area that sometimes gave rise to complaint from the local men. New additions to the Yorkshire fleet at this time were also of the largest dimensions and considerably bigger than their older counterpart<sup>2</sup> and it seems likely that the East Anglian boats exhibited a similar tendency. Furthermore, newspaper reports of the period are generally indicative of a buoyant demand for herring. Such demand meant that prices remained high even though landings greatly increased and so activity was not throttled off by glut.

In the later seventies, the proportion of the herring catch off the Yorkshire coast that was destined for overseas markets was still negligible.<sup>3</sup> Most was sold on the home market which extended from London - whose principal supplies each September came from Scarborough and Grimsby<sup>4</sup> - across midland cities such as Birmingham through Lancashire and into the north east. A fair amount of the fish was destined for consumption in fresh form but the lightly smoked varieties were by now well established and the name kipper was now in common use on both the coast and in inland towns.

Thus, in this branch of the fishing industry also, we notice a considerable level of development and a number of important changes in both custom and practice which were caused initially by the improvements in communication and the lowering of its cost during the fifties and the sixties. Once more, the creation of a relatively accessible national market was the stimulant to the rapid expansion of catching effort along the Yorkshire coast. Unlike the Scottish experience its development was not export orientated and a number of

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1. M. Gray, op.cit., p.83.

2. See Figure XXXVIII.

3. Scarborough Gazette, 11th October 1883.

4. See Figure XXII.

subtle differences emerged which were to become apparent during the following decade when the visits from fishermen from north of the border were greatly to increase.



CHAPTER SEVEN: THE GREAT LINE FISHERY 1840s to 1870s.

The 1840s were the last decade during which the Fishery Board in Edinburgh monitored the performance of fisheries all around the coast of Britain. What national statistical evidence survives would indicate that though the output of dried cod and ling was subject to annual fluctuation, there was little tendency over the whole decade towards any major expansion or contraction.<sup>1</sup> In short, output exhibited signs of stability over the longer term. Despite this, it appears that less and less curers were maintaining the standards set by the Fishery Board or at least bothering to seek the official punch of approval, though there was a slight revival during the year 1849. After that time the whole system of officially approving the curing of white fish was given over.

Both locally and nationally, surviving data would suggest that though there was an increase in both the numbers of fishermen and nets<sup>2</sup> deployed over the second half of the decade this was not matched by any upturn in landings of cod and ling. Though landings rose dramatically after several poor years in 1849 on the Yorkshire coast<sup>3</sup>, they fell away relentlessly nationally.<sup>4</sup> Such figures do not tell us whether more or less time was devoted to the pursuit of such fish. On the Yorkshire coast, as we shall see later, more time was spent by boats which had previously followed cod and ling with great lines on long line fishing for haddock and the like. Furthermore, in Scotland and along the Yorkshire coast it could further be the case that more time was given over each year to the exploitation of the herring seasons, leaving less time available for taking large cod and ling, even though when these latter fish were sought more lines than previously were deployed. Certainly, despite serious economic problems afflicting the country, there was undoubtedly a modest overall growth in fisheries activity which is indicated by an increase in the number of fishermen. Thus the lack of growth and even decline in landings of cod and ling may most likely have been the result of increased attention being given over to other types of fishing.

1. See Figure XLVI.
2. See Figures XLIV and LI.
3. See Figure L.
4. See Figure XLVII.

As we have noted, when the Fishery Board withdrew its officers and officials from England its activities, with the exception of Northumberland, and for a time the Isle of Man, were confined to Scotland. This means that further evidence on the performance of the English fisheries is most scant. However, we have already noted that as far as the dry curing of cod and ling were concerned, the only major English producer during the first half of the nineteenth century was the Yorkshire coast.<sup>1</sup>

At the close of the 1830s, long established custom and practice still held sway over the Yorkshire coast first class line fishery. The fleet of large luggers that worked the rich cod grounds off the Dogger Bank constituted the most important branch of white fishing activity in the area. In terms of vessels belonging there, the two principal fishing stations were still - in spite of developments at Scarborough - Staithes and Filey. The major outlets for the catch were equally traditional. Much of the fresh fish caught found its way onto the plates of wealthy inland consumers by means of pannier train whilst the dried variety was still destined for the lucrative Spanish market or else London and the West Indies. Yet despite this apparent stability, these years can be seen as the end of an era. Within a decade, great changes were to be wrought as a result of which dry curing and the export trade were to be reduced to an insignificant part of the round of seasonal activity. Furthermore, though lining of all types was to remain an important even expanding pursuit both inshore and offshore, such practices were to decline in relative importance as trawl fishing gained momentum and respectability.

Once again it seems that the improvements in the speed and reliability of transport during these decades, together with a lowering of associated costs, provided part of the key, as is suggested in Chapter Four. However, a survey of this activity will reveal that there were also present other factors which acted as agents for change.

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1. See Chapter Two.



FIGURE XLIV: British Fishing Industry Statistics

	Catching Effort		Processing				Processing Total	Grand Total
	Boats	Fishermen	Coopers	Gutters	Labourers	Curers		
1840	12,422	53,939	2,231	27,379	6,093	1,908	27,611	91,550
1841	12,476	52,983	2,200	27,928	6,727	2,009	38,864	91,847
1842	12,405	54,282	2,193	27,620	6,340	2,005	38,158	92,440
1843	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1844	14,266	59,859	2,334	28,254	7,074	1,512	39,174	99,033
1845	14,649	60,279	2,375	29,242	7,169	1,530	40,316	100,595
1846	15,076	61,224	2,309	29,105	7,195	1,593	40,202	101,459
1847	15,279	61,257	2,280	28,561	7,299	1,553	39,693	100,950
1848	15,062	60,346	2,190	27,608	7,333	1,555	38,686	99,032
1849	14,962	59,792	2,181	28,993	7,360	1,619	40,153	99,945

Source: Fishery Board Reports

FIGURE XLVI: British Fishing Industry Total Cod, Ling or Hake Cured

	Cured and punched Cwts	Total cured punched and unpunched Cwts
1840	21,029½	91,494¾
1841	18,288¾	76,849
1842	10,030½	77,207½
1843	20,810½	92,813½
1844	17,940½	83,919
1845	14,372½	92,323
1846	12,387½	90,783¾
1847	8,145½	86,624½
1848	9,520	85,463
1849	15,556½	98,903

Source: Fishery Board Reports.

FIGURE XLVII: Total Quantity of Cod, Ling and Hake taken in British Isles

	Uncured	Dry cured	Total
1844	359,250	83,919	443,169
1845	330,787	92,323	423,110
1846	323,681	92,813	414,464
1847	327,106	86,624	413,730
1848	279,488	85,463	364,951
1849	276,287	98,903	375,190

Source: Fishery Board Reports.

FIGURE XLVIII: Total Quantity Cod, Ling or Hake taken in Various Stations in British Isles 1845

<u>Stations</u>	<u>Quantity</u>
Uncured	
Whitby	48,563 cwts
North Sunderland	16,845 cwts
London	72,001 cwts
Others	193,378 cwts
Total uncured	330,787 cwts
Quantity Dried all Stations	92,323 cwts
Total all Sources	423,110

Source: Fishery Board Reports.

As we have noted in chapter Three, the Yorkshire coast's hold on the quality end of the dried fish export trade was being seriously challenged in the later 1830s. The failure of curers to expand output in response to a generally bouyant Spanish demand had allowed Shetland curers to gain a foothold in a market they had long coveted.<sup>1</sup> Their successful penetration had been achieved only after steps had been taken to improve curing standards. The Shetland industry had lower costs, partly because its fishermen had little in the way of outlets other than dry curing for the fish they caught, so such competition was to have a telling effect during the early 1840s.

Inevitably perhaps, the Yorkshire coast's dry fish curing activities lost ground both nationally and within the local industry. We have noted that as early as 1839 the increased supply of quality cured fish coming on to the market from the Shetlands was affecting the balance of supply and demand and causing a fall in prices offered to curers.<sup>2</sup> 1840 was likewise a relatively depressed year and production fell nearly 750 cwt on the previous year.<sup>3</sup> Prices revived during the following year but this may well have been due in part to a further considerable drop in production. However, that year demand originated largely from the London market, which evidently still preferred the Yorkshire product, rather than the export trade.<sup>4</sup> During that season some curers who were in a rush to take advantage of prices reaching up to £22 per ton, presented their fish to the fishery board officer before it was properly dried and thus failed to secure the approved punch and the higher returns.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, this relative prosperity stimulated a revival in 1842 that led to greater output. The amount cured would have been still greater had not the latter end of the season been once more afflicted by lower prices that encouraged both fishermen and curers to turn over to the herring fishery much earlier than usual.<sup>6</sup>

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1. R.H.E. AF1/11, 7th May 1838.
  2. See Chapter Three.
  3. R.H.E., AF1/12, 20th April 1841.
  4. R.H.E., AF1/13, 3rd May 1842.
  5. R.H.E., AF1/13, 3rd May 1842.
  6. R.H.E., AF1/13, 10th May 1843.



1842 proved to be the last year during which cod and ling dry curing activities were pursued along the Yorkshire coast with anything like their old vigour. The following year saw production drop by almost two thirds.<sup>1</sup> For many, the herring fishery once more seemed the more profitable summer activity and so did fresh fish sales direct to different seaports along the coasts of Yorkshire, Northumberland and Durham, as well as by cart and railway via Hull to the interior.<sup>2</sup> Gradually, various communities abandoned or ran down the practice. It was given over completely at Flamborough as early as 1844,<sup>3</sup> and its demise there was undoubtedly related to the Laws railway agreement coming into operation. Scarborough Harbour records show that no rents were collected for drying fish on the piers there after 1842.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout the rest of the decade, the story is one of a withering activity. The maintenance of quality fell even faster than production, for after 1845 only 219½ cwts received the Fishery Officer's punch of approval. Indeed, that was all passed in 1849, the last year he oversaw fishery operations along the Yorkshire coast.<sup>5</sup> Within a few years dry fish curing had all but disappeared from the area and only Staithes seems to have persevered with the practice as late as 1863 but only four tons for every fifty or sixty previously processed was being turned out there by that time.<sup>6</sup>

The decline of dry curing activities was reflected by structural change in the composition of the labour force. Though there was to be a slight increase in the numbers of fishermen and boats employed during the forties, there was a fall in the number of gutters, packers and labourers employed. With greater emphasis being laid on fresh fish, evidently less labour was needed for processing. Even the continued development of smoked herring production did not fail to halt a considerable fall in the number of curers, though the importance of this branch of trade was undoubtedly responsible for the increase in the

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1. See Figure XLVIII.
  2. R.H.E., AF1/13, 3rd May, 1842; 10th May, 1843; and 8th May 1844.
  3. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 6443.
  4. S.P.L.Scarborough Harbour Commissioners, Account of All Monies Collected, 1842.
  5. See Figure XLVIII.
  6. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 5524.

number of coopers along the Yorkshire coast.<sup>1</sup> Finally, though there was an increase in the number of boats operating, we have seen in Chapter Six that the number of first class craft operational during the forties actually fell away so it seems that the increase was amongst the cobles and open herring boats.<sup>2</sup>

The construction of the national rail network would undoubtedly have encouraged the concentration on a home market that was losing its taste for traditional cures of fish. However, had the competition from Shetland been less successful, and prices held up more closely to their former levels, then the decline would have been less swift and not necessarily terminal. Though home markets for both herring and white fish were increasingly available during the forties, we have seen that their profitability, due partly to comparatively high rail tariffs and lack of through carriage arrangements across various company lines, was not so great for the fishermen as it was to be in following decades. That both curers and fishermen turned their whole attentions so swiftly inland was due to the damping effect that the increased Shetland production had on the quality export market. As it was, old curing skills and techniques soon fell into disuse and were to be forgotten. When English dry curing techniques were revived for the Mediterranean trade at the end of the nineteenth century, they were nurtured by the new fishing ports of Hull and Grimsby, rather than the old centres along the Yorkshire coast.<sup>3</sup>

The offtake of Yorkshire coast cod and ling for sale fresh was also subject to great fluctuation during the forties. 1843 had been a comparatively poor year but it was followed by two years of good landings. The years 1846, 1847 and 1848 saw a marked fall which was evidently due to a scarcity of fish - the liners were later to blame the increased attentions at this time of the trawling smacks. They witnessed an increase in the value and number of lines being deployed but this may have been in the inside longline fishery from the open

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1. Many smoked fish cured locally were in those days packed in barrels.
  2. See Figure LI.
  3. Anon, Hull as a Fishing Port (1915) 93.



boats. During 1849, however, the last year for which figures are available, there appears to have been a considerable revival.<sup>1</sup>

There were also changes in the amount of gear carried by each boat. The change over from lug to gaff rig meant that a smaller crew could be carried and over the next two decades the average number of men taken out on each trip dropped. It became usual to carry just one coble out on a first class yawl rather than the traditional two.<sup>2</sup> To compensate, the length of the great line deployed per crew member was doubled.<sup>3</sup> In earlier times, the first class craft had occasionally also tried their hand at longlining and this practice seems to have increased after mid century, probably because of the belief that the numbers of really large fish, for which the great lines were set, were more scarce. Previously, when this practice had been adopted it had involved the shooting of nine lines, which in combination totalled some three miles in length, from each coble carried to sea. By the 1860s and 1870s, the single coble might be shooting up to twenty two lines, each of the same length as formerly.<sup>4</sup> Despite this considerable increase in catching effort per crew member, contemporary reports of the Yorkshire coast fishermen suggest that if anything the yield per boat from line fishing was declining after mid century but that the system was bouyed up by the better prices that fish was earning at the quayside with the availability of cheaper rail carriage.<sup>5</sup>

As we have seen then, the decline of dry curing and the rise of trawling did not spell the end of first class lining from the Yorkshire coast. That this mode of fishery could still be made profitable is evident from the fact that specialist line fishers from more southerly bases were to be attracted to the new fishing ports such as Grimsby during the forties and fifties.<sup>6</sup>

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1. See Figure L.

2. R.C. on Trawling, 1885 XVI, Minutes of Evidence, q.9498.

3. R.C. on Trawling, 1885 XVI, Minutes of Evidence, q.9507.

4. R.C. on Trawling, 1885 XVI, Minutes of Evidence, qq.9498 and 9507.

5. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 5048-9.

6. G.L.Alward, The Sea Fisheries of England and Wales, (1932) 200 and R.C. Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq.7214-7218.

FIGURE XLVIII: Total Quantities of Cod and Ling Dry Cured on Yorkshire Coast

	Total cured & Punched Cwts	Total cured punched and unpunched Cwts
1840	3,529½	4,275¾
1841	1,730½	3,067½
1842	3,048½	4,054½
1843	913	1,441½
1844	627½	1,430
1845	499	1,317¾
1846	-	1,138½
1847	-	757½
1848	-	638
1849	219½	1,804½

Source: Fishery Board Reports

FIGURE XLIX: Line Fishing Gear Deployed on Yorkshire Coast

	Yard of line	Value of Line £
1845	3,458,400	8,045
1846	3,198,000	8,160
1847	3,564,000	8,215
1848	3,748,000	8,430
1849	3,735,600	8,360

Source: Fishery Board Reports



Indeed, the practice, albeit on a reduced scale, has survived into the last quarter of the twentieth century. During the period under review, great and long lining activity was, in terms of gear and vessels deployed, to increase during the forties and fifties, albeit at a slower pace than trawling.<sup>1</sup>

The reasons for its expansion are not too difficult to locate. The first, as we have seen, was economic. The fishing communities along the coast, including Filey and Staithes, found eventually that landing prices for fish rose steeply as inland demand rose and transport costs fell. Thus all grades of fishery became more profitable. Secondly, there was a further spurt of expansion for the herring fishery during the 1850s and 1860s.<sup>1</sup> Yorkshire coast first class fishing vessels used in the herring fishery were always, as we have seen, dual purpose craft that went drifting and lining in alternative seasons. Such practices continued and as more craft were built to exploit the summer herring shoals there were obviously more available for greatlining during the off seasons, even though a number of them took up trawling.<sup>2</sup> The third reason was very much in the traditional vein: communities such as Staithes and Filey remained resolutely opposed to trawling. Even at Scarborough, where the practice was more or less accepted, there remained pockets of hostility that occasionally manifested themselves as when a group of herring fishermen tried to exclude all trawlermen from membership of the local fishermen's benevolent society.<sup>3</sup> As long as great lining remained profitable, therefore, there were always groups of fishermen ready and willing to pursue it.

In the very early years, the greatliners may have profited more from the arrival of the railways than the trawlers. This is because they were geared to catch only the largest and most valuable fish and it was these that could best stand the cost of carriage to the inland markets. When rail traffic arrangements improved, and it was possible to concentrate on quantity rather than quality then the greatliners did not receive much extra benefit, unlike the trawlers with

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1. See Chapter Five.

2. N.Y.C.R.O., Scarborough Register of Fishing Vessels, 1869-70.

3. Scarborough Gazette, 18th August 1874.

FIGURE L: Total Quantities of Cod and Ling Taken and Not Dry Cured on  
Yorkshire Coast

	cwts
1843	27,966
1844	51,719
1845	48,563
1846	22,439
1847	22,756
1848	25,613
1849	48,096

Source: Fishery Board Reports



their large catches of offal fish.<sup>1</sup> This helps to explain why their growth rates were so different.

Seasonal practices underwent a great deal of alteration in the decades following 1840. Concentration on the herring fishery meant that greatlining gradually ceased during the months of June, July and August, though many vessels going drifting also took a few handlines with them with which to pursue cod and ling.<sup>2</sup> Also fitting out in March, the first class yawls and luggers would emerge from their winter lay off in the harbours of Scarborough and Whitby and commence greatlining until sometime in June. The craft would then be fitted out for the herring fishery.<sup>3</sup> The success and length of that season determined whether the boats returned to great lining for the final months of the year before being laid up for the winter - a practice continued by Staithes men into the twentieth century<sup>4</sup> though by the 1860s, the winter break was shortened and the Staithes fleet was sometimes in operation by the middle of February.<sup>5</sup> Though the economic incentives to lengthen the yawl's fishing seasons were great, so were the accompanying risks. Bad weather was prevalent during the winter months and local harbours remained notoriously difficult to enter in such conditions. The onset of an unexpected storm could scatter the fleet along the length and breadth of the coast leaving the fishing communities with a wait of several anxious days before news of their whereabouts could be obtained. The earlier the vessels fitted out the more often such incidents were likely to occur. In February 1865, for example, sixteen of the Staithes luggers were caught on the fishing grounds by a severe storm. Several days later, the local press were able to ascertain that six of the craft had managed to make Hartlepool, three others had sought shelter in Bridlington Bay and a further two in Runswick Bay. One vessel was known to have been wrecked, and the whereabouts of three others still unknown.<sup>6</sup> Though they were eventually located, the disruption and anguish felt by the local community through this

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1. See Chapter Five.
  2. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 5353-5359.
  3. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 5350-1.
  4. J.R.Bagshawe, The Wooden Ships of Whitby (Whitby 1933) 63-4.
  5. N.Y.C.R.O., Whitby Harbour Commissioners Ledger Account of Landings 1862-70.
  6. Scarborough Gazette, 23rd February 1865.

calamity were considerable. Such incidents served as grim reminders as to why the winter lay up was part and parcel of traditional fishing practice.

By the 1860s greatlining from first class vessels was concentrated on Filey, Scarborough, and Staithes, though a couple of yawls operated from Whitby for a few years around the end of the decade.<sup>1</sup> Many catches were landed at Sunderland and Newcastle, continuing traditional practice. However, the development of Grimsby as a fishing port in the 1850s provided further opportunities that were soon exploited, especially by Filey craft.

The zenith of the greatline fishery was probably reached in 1862 with the launch of the lugger Contrast. Built by Samuelson of Hull for a Scarborough shipowner Josiah Hudson,<sup>2</sup> the craft incorporated both traditional and contemporary maritime practice. Though a three masted lugger she was, at sixty five feet, longer than her predecessors and was the first Yorkshire coast fishing vessel to be constructed with an iron hull. She was built with the aim of expanding the greatline fishery, for it was intended that she would not only work on the North Sea grounds but also on reputedly rich cod banks off Rockall.<sup>3</sup>

During the seventies the steady extension of the greatline fishery that had occurred during the previous decades was no longer sustained. The number of craft following the practice began to decline. A principal reason was the difficulty of obtaining regular and cheap supplies of bait. When the trawlers first arrived they had provided, through their offal fish, an additional source of bait.<sup>4</sup> By this decade, however, a great deal of this could be sold for human consumption. An alternative was to use barrels of Scottish and East Anglian herrings. These were shipped in during the great lining seasons, but also rose in price during the seventies which raised operating costs and cut into profit margins.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, supplies were often disrupted and there were

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1. Whitby Custom House, Register of Shipping, 26th July 1867 and 21st July 1867.
  2. Scarborough Custom House Register of Shipping, 22nd July 1862.
  3. Scarborough Gazette, 24th July 1862.
  4. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 6046-7.
  5. R.C.English and Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1878-9, 1879 XVII, Minutes of Evidence, pp.100-1.



FIGURE LI: Yorkshire Coast Fishing Industry

	Catching Effort		Coopers	Gutters & Packers	Processing		Processing Total	Grand Total
	Boats	Fishermen			Labourers	Curers		
1840	239	862	18	303	686	31	1038	1900
1841	244	877	22	297	671	27	1017	1894
1842	244	889	22	297	671	26	1016	1905
1843	263	946	22	293	669	16	1000	1946
1844	262	946	22	273	669	16	980	1926
1845	262	946	22	273	661	16	972	1918
1846	265	923	24	253	634	14	925	1848
1847	270	939	25	243	582	13	863	1802
1848	284	947	25	243	582	13	863	1810
1849	283	950	25	243	582	13	863	1813

Source: Fishery Board Reports

also complaints about craft being unable to put to sea solely through a lack of bait. To add to this, there was an increased spate of complaints about the dearth of really large fish in the sea.<sup>1</sup> Though the local fishermen were notorious for crying wolf, as chapter eleven shows us, there may have been some substance in their claims that the traditional grounds were being overworked.

Certainly greatlining proved less attractive for the response at Scarborough was to trawl rather than work lines during the off herring seasons in increasing numbers in the later seventies. Even the Contrast abandoned greatlining and was converted into a trawling smack.<sup>2</sup> Ports such as Filey and Staithes, however, still eschewed trawling and steadfastly stuck to their old practices.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, it is apparent that this branch of the Yorkshire coast fishing industry also underwent a period of both growth and structural change. In part again they were due to the radical expansion of communications during the 1840s and 50s, though of course other factors also played their part. However, its expansion was overshadowed by other developments taking place in the fields of trawling and drifting. It is perhaps not surprising to find that this was one sector of the local fishing industry in which decline had set in before the close of the last decade covered by this chapter.

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1. R.C.English and Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1878-9, 1879 XVII, Minutes of Evidence, pp.104,107. and 144.
  2. Scarborough Custom House Register of Shipping, 22nd July 1862.
  3. R.C. on Trawling, 1885, XVI, Minutes of Evidence, qq.9740-4; 9759; 10,679-10,698.



CHAPTER EIGHT: THE INSHORE FISHERIES 1840s to 1870s

The marked transformation of the first class catching sector during the decades under discussion should not be allowed to overshadow the inshore fisheries for they too were subject to considerable growth. Indeed, their pattern of development was by no means dissimilar. Expansion, for example, was not evenly spread along the Yorkshire coast and there is also evidence that some new techniques and practices were adopted despite the apparently ingrained innate conservatism of many communities. Once more, the arrival of the railway seems to have provided much stimulus for this quickening in the pace of change.

At first glance, statistical evidence relating to the inshore fisheries during the first sixty or so years of the nineteenth century seems scant. Because of their diminutive nature, the craft employed were not recorded in the first class register kept by the local custom houses and separate registration of all fishing vessels did not commence until 1869.<sup>1</sup> However, as we have noted in chapter two, these institutions did keep registers of boat licenses for a time which can be most useful to the historian. Apart from indicating the number of small craft kept by each community they also provide information on usage, which means fishing vessels can be identified. The Bridlington and Whitby area registers that commenced in 1813/14<sup>2</sup> still exist. The data they contain has made it possible to ascertain the strength of the inshore fleet near that time and, when compared with entries in the 1869 fishing vessel register, light is thrown on several facets of development over the intervening years.

The number of cobbles licensed at Flamborough in 1817 was forty nine but during 1869 the community had registered some one hundred and sixty nine inshore fishing craft. Similarly, in 1817 Bridlington Quay possessed only sixteen licensed cobbles and most of these fished for only part of the time as they were usually engaged in pilotage work. By 1869 the port could muster some forty nine fishing cobbles and mules. Even more remarkable was the growth of Whitby. In the former year there were just thirteen cobbles licensed for fishing out of its harbour but by 1869 the fishing vessel register shows that the fleet had grown

1. See Appendix III.

2. See also Chapter Nine.

to some one hundred and twenty three small fishing craft.<sup>1</sup> Growth also occurred over the same period at Staithes and almost certainly there was a similar expansion in the size of the Scarborough and Filey inshore fleets<sup>2</sup> even though the registers covering vessel licenses for these ports have vanished. The fishing communities of Runswick and Robin Hoods Bay are exceptions to this rule as both experienced a long term decline in the strength of their fleets.<sup>3</sup>

As we have already seen, all fishing vessels along the Yorkshire coast had benefitted from the renewal of interest in the herring fishery that had been shown in the 1830s. However, as was the case with the first class fleet, the evidence given to the Huxley Commission strongly suggests that there was a considerable upturn in growth after the railways began to make their mark.<sup>4</sup> In the case of the inshore fisheries this probably commenced in the later forties and went on through the fifties. The amount of capital deployed by many inshore crews certainly increased as more of the somewhat larger open craft, first noted in the thirties, were constructed.<sup>5</sup> Because these were used only during the herring fishery there must have been many crews who held shares in two vessels instead of using their cobbles for all activities as had been formerly the custom.

The railways provided the incentive for this second push. After the Laws Agreement of 1842, villages such as Flamborough and Filey increasingly concentrated on a home market that was ever widening. For example, by 1863 the former was despatching fish as far afield as Manchester, London, Liverpool and Leicester.<sup>6</sup> Further up the coast the story was similar. Whitby's rapid development was undoubtedly related to its direct rail connection between the harbour and the station, as well as the increased amount of mooring space available for

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1. See Figure LII.
  2. S.P.L. Scarborough Harbour Commissioners' Minutes, 26th August 1868.
  3. See Figure LII.
  4. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 6337 and 6419.
  5. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 5334.
  6. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 6503-6505.



FIGURE LII: Inshore Craft Registered at Various Fishing Stations1817 and 1869

	Staithes	Runswick	Whitby	Robin Hoods Bay
1817	67	31	13	36
1869	84	22	123	20

	Scarborough	Filey	Flamborough	Bridlington
1817			47	16
1869			169	49

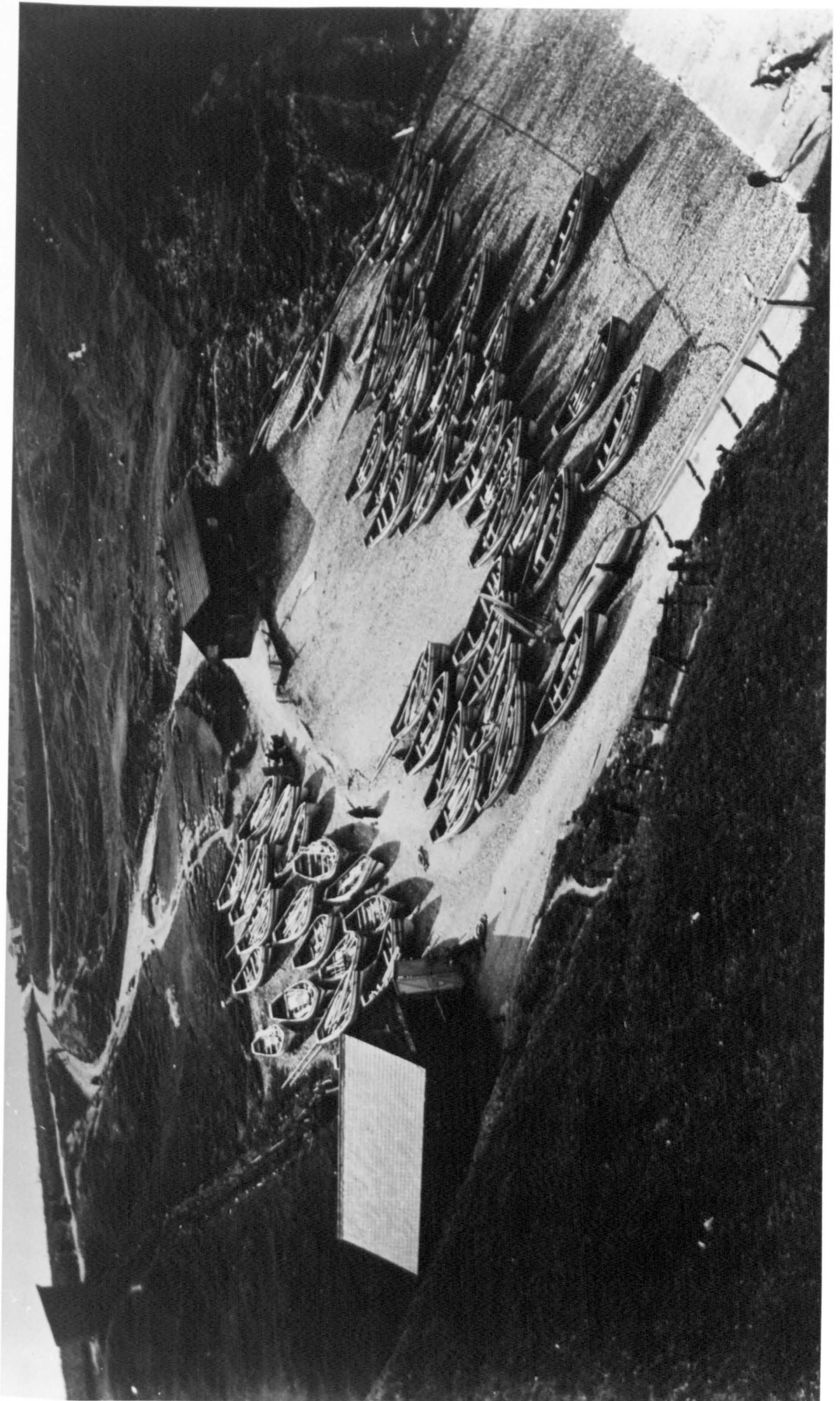
	Hornsea	Withernsea/Owthorne
1817		4
1869	14	7

	Sandsend
1817	5
1869	3

Sources: Custom House Registers of Boat Licenses 1813-17;

Trade and Navigation Returns 1869







small vessels as other forms of maritime commercial activity there declined.<sup>1</sup> Such facilities were sufficiently attractive to entice individuals from surrounding communities to the town. This helps to account for the lack of growth at both Runswick and Robin Hoods Bay. Staithes was able to resist such a trend at this time because its fishing industry was so strong, well organised and firmly entrenched. Though more than twelve miles from the nearest railway station, which was Goathland,<sup>2</sup> it was able to overcome this disadvantage by transporting fish there by means of carts.

Any fishing community that could make use of the railway benefitted. By the late fifties the lowered cost of overland transport combined with the growing national market meant that, like the first class sector, the inshore men received more money for each given quantity of fish they landed. A typical consignment of forty pair of sole and twenty stone of haddock landed at Flamborough before the railways were built might have realised £1 for a coble's crew relying on bratt nets and lines. By 1863 anything less than £5 for the same catch would have been considered poor. This experience was repeated at numerous communities along the Yorkshire coast.<sup>3</sup>

The prosperity that this brought was tempered to some extent by a fall off in the size of landings. Though nineteenth century fishermen were notorious for their willingness to cry wolf on many occasions there is some justification to back up the inshore men's complaints, especially during the fifties and sixties. Along the whole of the Yorkshire coast and further north they complained that their catches had fallen off since the 1840s with consistent regularity when questioned by the Huxley Commission.<sup>4</sup> All pinpointed the decline to the time when first class trawling on a large scale commenced off the coast and it seems certain that they had been confined to a far smaller area of the seabed than had hitherto been the case.

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1. See Chapter Four.

2. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq.5318-9.

3. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq.6770-2.

4. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq.6430-1; 6818-9; 5279; 6037; 6008 and 5881. Also the Scarborough Gazette, 26th March 1863.

Though they had generally preferred the areas of rocky seabed, the long-line men had also worked some lucrative grounds with smoother bottoms. Unfortunately, these were the very grounds that the trawlermen sought as they could not operate on rocky grounds for fear of fouling and damaging their gear.<sup>1</sup> Unlike the more robust greatlines used by the first class yawls and luggers, the longlines were easily damaged and often lost when passed over by the trawl. Indeed, there are many instances of this happening given in evidence to both the 1863/6 and 1878/9 sea fisheries commissions.<sup>2</sup> Some trawlermen seem to have shown a blatant disregard for the traditional inshore men and the latter had to retreat to the rocky areas and leave many soft bedded grounds they had exploited for generations. Off Flamborough, for example, to the southward of the headland,<sup>3</sup> was a soft bedded ground that had been worked by local fishermen since time immemorial. Indeed, during the early nineteenth century it had been known to yield one hundred stone of large fish in a day.<sup>4</sup> When the trawlermen discovered it in the 1840s they nicknamed it California because of the rich harvest it yielded. They operated with such intensity that the local linemen complained of much damage to their less robust gear and finally retreated from the ground. At the same time the latter were finding it much more difficult to work in Bridlington Bay thanks to the inshore trawlers working out of Bridlington Quay.<sup>5</sup> Staithes, though blessed with much rocky ground, also faced competition from trawling smacks on a much frequented patch of soft ground and so did Filey.<sup>6</sup> Thus, at a time when their numbers were increasing, the linemen were retreating to a smaller area of the seabed so it is perhaps not surprising that their yields were said to be falling.

Though yields fell the smaller catch still fetched more money than larger ones had done in the pre-railway era. Thus it was still possible for the long line sector to expand in what would otherwise have been considered adverse circumstances.

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1. R.C.English and Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1878-9, 1879 XVII, Report p.XXVII.
  2. See Chapter Nine.
  3. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence,qq 6820-6828.
  4. R.C.Sea Fisheries,1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence,qq 6820-6828.
  5. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence,qq 6667-9.
  6. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, q.5688.



Yet, like the first class yawl and lugger fleet, the fifties and sixties were a time when the inshore fishermen made more money from the herring season than the rest of the year put together. The returns more than justified their capital outlay on specialist vessels. Though a certain amount of herring were landed on their home beaches, the fishermen of communities such as Flamborough, Runswick and Robin Hoods Bay preferred to work for the season out of Scarborough, Staithes or Whitby. Indeed, in later years the Flamborough men were able to negotiate a specially reduced rate for using Scarborough harbour.<sup>1</sup> These herring centres proved attractive because the travelling merchants gathered there which made for a more competitive market and the likelihood of higher prices.

One innovation that owed its adoption largely to the marketing opportunities provided by the railways was inshore trawling. As we have noted, experiments were taking place in Bridlington Bay during the 1810s<sup>2</sup> but the practice really took off during the 1840s and 1850s.<sup>3</sup> The railways proved crucial because the Laws Agreement of 1842 provided a market for those Bridlington Quay individuals who wished to concentrate on fishing rather than other maritime pursuits. As rail carriage conditions improved over the next decade or so then the offal fish, which made up a considerable proportion of the inshore trawler's catch, could be disposed of at more attractive prices.

Bridlington Quay became the major inshore trawling centre on the Yorkshire coast for two principal reasons. Firstly, the bay offered a considerable area of soft bottomed sea bed most suitable for trawling.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, there was no established fishing community at the port.<sup>5</sup> This meant that those who adopted the technique were not bound by the traditional practices which governed many other local communities and faced less immediate hostility to trawling. Some of those who took up trawling came from other coastal towns and villages but many were locals who had previously been engaged in servicing the passing collier fleets. This coastal trade declined somewhat after the construction

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1. S.P.L., Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Minutes, 9th July 1877.

2. See Chapter Five.

3. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 6744-6.

4. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., 15th August 1891 and 8th July 1896.

5. S.C.on Harbours of Refuge, 1836 XX, Minutes of Evidence, qq. 725-6.

of the railways so it was natural for the Bridlington Quay men to look more to fishing as an alternative. Others had considerable experience in the mercantile marine and were described in 1863 as a 'race of men...who have served perhaps seven years to the sea and then get up one of those boats (cobles) and go trawling'.<sup>1</sup>

The whole inshore trawling operation was on a much smaller scale than that carried out by the smackmen. The cobles involved never exceeded thirty feet in length and were often much smaller.<sup>2</sup> Rigged with a fore lug and jib they pulled a trawl whose beam varied between twenty and twenty four feet in length.<sup>3</sup> The crew was often just two men whilst three were usually carried by a craft going long lining.<sup>4</sup> The normal season lasted between February and October,<sup>5</sup> and by 1869 Bridlington Quay possessed forty two trawling cobles.<sup>6</sup> In the off season line fishing and, of course, collier servicing were the pursuits often followed.

Despite its success at Bridlington Quay the practice did not take root elsewhere on the Yorkshire coast at this time. As late as 1863 only a handful of cobles were trawling from either Filey or Scarborough and only occasionally did an isolated crew attempt the practice from Whitby.<sup>7</sup> Most fishing communities remained implacably hostile and thus discouraged any widespread acceptance.

Another inshore activity that was to benefit from the construction of the railway was the crab and lobster fishery. Previously, the exploitation of shell fish on the Yorkshire coast had been quite limited in nature. A few craft had followed this pursuit from most communities but their crews had generally been made up of old men and young boys. At Staithes, for example, in 1817 there were a mere eight cobles making their living from crabbing during the season. The low level of operations reflected the limited nature of the market. Some Yorkshire coast crabs and lobsters found their way by boat to London but the metropolis seems to have obtained considerable supplies of the latter fish from

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1. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 6737.
  2. H.R.O. Hull Register of Fishing Vessels, Bridlington Entries 1869.
  3. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 6743.
  4. H.R.O., Hull Register of Fishing Vessels, Bridlington Entries 1869.
  5. Sea Fisheries (England and Wales) Inspectors Report 1890 VIII.
  6. H.R.O., Hull Register of Fishing Vessels, Bridlington Entries, 1869.
  7. R.C. on trawling, 1885 XVI, Minutes of Evidence q.10,055.



Norway. Others were despatched inland to places like York, usually in containers placed upon the tops of stage coaches. However, most were retailed locally. As with white fish, it proved economical to send only those of the very highest quality inland and their carriage was complicated by the need to ensure that those despatched alive survived the journey. The inland trade was only really of importance at the height of each season when shell fish in peak condition were being landed. The method of capture the common along the Yorkshire coast reflected the constraints of the market, for prior to mid century almost all were taken with trunks.

A trunk, or ring as it was sometimes called, consisted of an iron hoop about five feet in diameter from which was attached a basket like net of about three feet in depth. The bait, usually plaice or dabs, was fastened to the hoop by a band stretched across the centre and the whole device was then lowered to the seabed. When properly set the ring and net lay flat on the ground. The idea was to attract, by means of the lure, crabs or lobsters into the middle of the hoop. As there was nothing to prevent the shell fish leaving the bait at any time, it was necessary to examine each trunk frequently. Great skill and caution were required when hauling one up, for if the shell fish took alarm it might still escape over the top of the contraption. The whole device was designed to take only the largest and most valuable as the mesh of the net let smaller ones escape. The site where each trunk lay was marked on the surface by a cork buoy and a line of them - which seldom exceeded twenty four - had larger floats placed at each end.<sup>1</sup>

This method of capture had several disadvantages. In the first place, it was essential that the fishermen remain constantly with their gear in order to take any fish on the bait. As trunking was usually carried on after dusk, much of the night might be spent by these traps. Each trunk had to be checked every thirty to forty five minutes otherwise the bait could have been totally consumed and the shell fish would then have moved on. Because such regular attention was needed, few crews could deal effectively with more than a score of

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1. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 6799-6807.

trunks. Another drawback was that trunking could only be carried on successfully in water less than ten fathoms deep<sup>1</sup> so a number of potential grounds in deeper water remained unexploited. Yet despite its relative inefficiency, trunking did provide a few fishermen with a means of supplying the small pre-railway market with the type of crabs and lobsters that yielded the best return for their exertions.

After the railways made their mark the market for crabs and lobsters was gradually extended to cover much of the country. By 1876, for example, Whitby crabs were being sent as far afield as Darlington, Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds,<sup>2</sup> whilst Birmingham was supplied by Scarborough.<sup>3</sup> The reduced costs and increased speed of conveyance meant that it was no longer necessary to forward only the largest and most valuable shell fish inland. Henceforward, not only were large crabs and lobsters likely to command better prices because of increased demand but smaller ones were now worth landing. It is therefore not surprising that the inshore men began to adopt a new method of capture imported from outside the area: this was the creel or pot.

Unlike the trunk, this type of trap was far less discriminating about the size of fish it would take but this factor was less important from a marketing aspect. The creel, which is still used today, was rectangular at its base with a curved top covered in net. It had two funnel shaped entrances through which the unsuspecting crab or lobster could easily pass inwards but not back out. The lure or bait was generally provided from a variety of cheap fish or mussels. This type of trap had several advantages over the trunk. Firstly, though a level of expertise was still of importance in placing the creels, no real skill was required in the actual process of capture. It was thus no longer necessary for the fishermen to suffer the discomfort which accompanied constantly attending the creels. Once they had laid the pots they could return to shore until it was time to check them. Further, because they did not require constant

1. R.C.Crab and Lobster Fisheries, 1876-7, 1877 XXIV, Minutes of Evidence, 17th November, 1876.
2. R.C.Crab and Lobster Fisheries, 1876-7, 1877 XVIV, Minutes of Evidence, 17th November, 1876.
3. R.C.Crab and Lobster Fisheries, 1876-7, 1877 XVIV, Minutes of Evidence, 18th November, 1876.
4. R.C.Crab and Lobster Fisheries, 1876-7, 1877 XVIV, Minutes of Evidence, 20th November, 1876.



attention, each crew could work more traps. Finally the creels could be laid in deeper water than the trunks which increased the number of grounds that could be exploited.

Creels were introduced to the Yorkshire coast about mid century and within about ten years had become the principal means of taking crabs and lobsters in the area. By 1863 the only community still preferring the trunk was Flamborough. The creel was viewed with disfavour there because the old catching skills were no longer needed. Indeed, one Flamborough fisherman contemptuously told the Huxley Commission in 1863 that 'any tailor or landsman could lay them'.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, over the next thirteen years even this prejudice was overcome, for we find that by 1876 truncking was all but extinct on the Yorkshire coast.<sup>2</sup>

One result of this changeover, of course, was a marked increase in the catching power of each coble and its crew. Furthermore, the continually expanding market encouraged more individuals to partake in the fishery. We have already noted that Staithes possessed only nine crab and lobster cobbles in 1817 but we find that by 1876 that number had reached thirty five.<sup>3</sup> What had formerly been the preserve of the elderly or very young at Robin Hoods Bay provided employment for the crews of twelve to fourteen boats each season in the mid seventies. At Scarborough the fleet of cobbles going crabbing rose from half a dozen in the mid 1820s to nearly forty some half century later and the same story can be told of Filey, Flamborough and Bridlington Quay.<sup>4</sup>

The trunks had creamed off only the very highest quality crabs and lobsters and the low level of exploitation in the pre-railway era posed no real threat to stocks. The stocks were initially able to sustain the increased interest shown after mid century thanks partly to the much wider area of sea bed that could be exploited with creels. Yet by the mid seventies the season was often lasting from March to October with some craft regularly setting over sixty creels compared with the trunk maximum of twenty four.<sup>5</sup> Not surprisingly, there were

1. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence q.6799.
2. R.C.Crab & Lobster Fisheries, 1876-7, 1877 XXIV, Report, pp.V-VI.
3. R.C.Crab & Lobster Fisheries, 1876-7, 1877 XXIV, Minutes of Evidence, 17th November 1876.
4. R.C.Crab & Lobster Fisheries, 1876-7, 1877 XXIV, Minutes of Evidence, 17th, 18th and 20th November 1876.
5. Scarborough Gazette, 23rd November 1876.

soon complaints about falling catches off the Yorkshire coast and elsewhere. The disquiet such feelings raised, prompted the institution of a royal commission in 1876 to look into the condition of the nation's crab and lobster fisheries.

The royal commission visited all stretches of the coast and from the evidence they collected it is apparent that fewer large crabs were being taken. Indeed, their report found that along the Yorkshire coast from Filey Brigg northwards, there had been a gradual and serious decline in the yield of both large crabs and lobsters per boat deployed.<sup>1</sup> The railways had created a demand even for small crabs which were previously unsaleable but by the mid seventies might fetch two or three pence per score.<sup>2</sup> Thanks to this report, Parliament passed a statute which enabled the Board of Trade to prohibit the landing on the Yorkshire coast of immature crabs less than four and a half inches across the back.<sup>3</sup> Yet despite the evidence of overfishing and the fall off in the numbers of large crabs and lobsters caught by each boat, more and more men continued to join this branch of the fishery right into the eighties.

The 1860s probably witnessed the zenith of the Yorkshire coast inshore fisheries and it is unlikely that they have supported more men and boats either before or since. During the following decade the total number of open boats began to decline.<sup>4</sup> The termination of growth in the white fisheries is evident when comparing statistics showing the amount of fish being forwarded from Flamborough by rail in the early 1860s and late 1870s.<sup>5</sup> In part, of course, this was due to problems already discussed. However, there was another and growing problem afflicting both the crab and long line fisheries: this concerned the supply of bait.

The great increase in line fishing activity, as well as the spread of creels for taking crabs and lobsters, meant a greatly increased demand for bait. Traditionally, shell fish bait such as cockles and mussels had been collected by the women and young children along the shoreline.<sup>6</sup> This had often been supple-

1. R.C.Crab & Lobster Fisheries, 1876-7, 1877 XXIV, Report IX-XIV.

2. R.C.Crab & Lobster Fisheries, 1876-7, 1877 XXIV, Minutes of Evidence, 20th November 1876.

3. 40 and 41 Vict.cap.42.

4. See Figure LIII.

5. See Figure LIV.

6. C.Kendall, Gods Hand in the Storm (1870), 8-9.



FIGURE LIIII: Inshore Fleet Registered at Various Local Custom Houses

	<u>Hull</u> *	<u>Scarborough</u>	<u>Whitby</u>	<u>M'Bro.</u>
1869				
1870				
1871	341	153	286	
1872	340	186	277	55
1873	349	152	259	64
1874	327	156	253	77
1875	315	151	249	76
1876	328	135	255	72
1877	320	123	257	69
1878	257	119	246	69
1879				
1880	205	113	231	67

\* (Mainly Bridlington, Flamborough Head and Holderness Coast Villages)

#### Hartlepool

1869	
1870	
1871	164
1872	172
1873	155
1874	159
1875	142
1876	143
1877	142
1878	142
1879	142
1880	142

Source: Annual Returns of Trade and Navigation

Note: A change in registration procedure for open boats made in the later seventies means that after 1880 these records are not a reliable guide to numbers in the following decade.

mented by supplies fetched from beds nearer the mouth of the Tees. Some communities also dredged up shell fish from the sea bottom: Flamborough obtained a great deal in this way from Bridlington Bay.<sup>1</sup>

The Seal Sands on the northern side of the River Tees deep water channel were an abundant source of cockles, whilst the beds on its southern side were noted for their mussels. The importance of the Tees beds to local fishermen had been affirmed as far back as the sixteenth century in a charter granted by Queen Elizabeth which included the privilege of allowing them to take mussels.<sup>2</sup> Another outside source from which bait had been sometimes obtained was the Wash and exploitation of the beds there was controlled principally from the ports of Kings Lynn and Boston.<sup>3</sup> Again, rights of charter affirm their traditional importance to the men of that area.

By the later 1850s local supplies were unable to cope with growing demand. To ensure that they could obtain supplies of bait in measure enough to sustain their fishing operations, Yorkshire coast men increasingly took shellfish from these grounds. In doing so they sometimes incurred the wrath of the men who traditionally worked there. The Yorkshiremen were not the only visitors; indeed, boats from Northumberland and Scotland were obtaining mussels from the Tees at this time and there was a similar widespread interest in the Wash.<sup>4</sup> It did not take long for the Wash fishermen to realise the potential of the market then existing amongst the northern fishing communities and they soon commenced a lucrative trade involving the collection and delivery of shellfish along those coasts. Boats engaged in this activity would sail from the Wash with a full cargo and call at such places as Flamborough, Staithes and Whitby. At each they would sell their sacks of cockles and mussels which would generally be deposited amongst rocks near the high water mark until needed.<sup>5</sup> One of the principal boats engaged in this trade during the sixties was the

1. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6,1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 6560-6567.
2. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6,1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 5007-8.
3. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6,1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 6560-6.
4. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6,1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 14946-8.
5. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6,1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, q 6566.



FIGURE LIV: Quantity of Fish Forwarded by the North Eastern Railway from  
Flamborough (in tons)

	Herring*	Other	Total
1854	146	318	464
1855	155	429	584
1856	64	503	567
1857	161	308	469
1858	85	472	557
1859	68	453	521
1860	58	424	482
1861	27	364	391
1862	47	582	629
1863	47	628	675
1864	40	603	643
1879			322
1880			357

\* Herring shipments from Flamborough probably declined during the fifties because their fishermen increasingly landed their catches at Scarborough, Staithes and Whitby, where more merchants were available to compete for their catches and thus probably offer higher prices.

Source: Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables

Camot of Lynn which was a regular visitor to Whitby.<sup>1</sup> Such boats worked the coast of Northumberland also, for we hear that the fishermen of Cullercoats had started receiving their supplies in that way by 1864.<sup>2</sup> The railways were also often utilised and special rates were set for the delivery of such bait.

During the sixties, however, other potential outlets were vying with the bait trade for the produce of the cockle and mussel beds. The coming of the railways not only helped satiate the Victorian appetite for oysters - more of which became available in inland towns than ever before - they also laid the way open for increased human consumption of cockles and mussels. Even before 1863 the Midlands had become an important market for mussels from the Wash<sup>3</sup> and the Tees beds' shell fish were despatched to Scotland and other places.<sup>4</sup> Agriculture made demands also and there were several complaints about farmers taking cart loads of shell fish to spread as manure on their fields.<sup>5</sup> That the beds were being visibly depleted was evident to contemporaries and it was obvious that they would not recover without some policy of conservation replacing the free-for-all that existed. As early as 1859 attempts were made to rectify the situation. That year the Tees Conservancy Commissioners attempted to introduce a system of licensing to control the taking of mussels from beds in that estuary and to ensure that small ones were left to mature. This move - and the five shillings per quarter cost of the licence - aroused the opposition of the very local fishermen it was designed to protect. Though content to see other people restricted they did not wish to see their own freedom of action curtailed or have a price put on it. As it was also contended by their supporters that under the Charter given by Queen Elizabeth they had an unfettered right to collect mussels from there, the whole scheme was soon abandoned.<sup>6</sup> Similar early initiatives from the corporations of Kings Lynn and Boston also aimed at conserving stocks met with little success.

1. N.Y.C.R.O., Whitby Harbour, Ledgers, 1862-70.
2. The Shields Daily News, 6th September 1864.
3. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 14935-9.
4. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 5014-5018.
5. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 14419.
6. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 5005-5022.



In 1870, the Corporation of Boston, for example, had managed to get an order to control the oyster and mussel beds under an Act passed in 1869.<sup>1</sup> Parliament had passed this legislation in order to provide machinery for the conservation of bait grounds in line with suggestions made by the report of the Huxley Commission in 1866 but, before the Corporation could get their policy fully implemented, the elements intervened to dramatically worsen the situation. In 1874 about 195 acres of mussels were killed in one evening thanks to a severe easterly gale. Then in 1877 and 1878 sharp frost depleted the surviving stocks still further.<sup>2</sup> As a result, the supply of mussels available from the Wash was much reduced. In order to preserve and renew what stocks were left, the beds were closed for the summer season.<sup>3</sup>

The story of the Tees at this time is also a sad catalogue of continual and unrestricted stock depletion. Furthermore, commercial development of the estuary was accompanied by growing pollution.<sup>4</sup> This together with the unceasing removal of shellfish for both bait and human consumption reduced the numbers of large mussels left on the beds.<sup>5</sup> The majority were so small that it was often necessary to use four or five as bait on one hook.

As we have noted with the great line fishery, the supply of bait is a factor of critical economic importance for any catching activity based on the hook. As the long line fishermen came to rely on ever more distant and yet rapidly depleting stocks their costs increased. During the early sixties, prices had remained steady at nine or ten pence per bushel of mussels.<sup>6</sup> By the mid seventies the fishermen were being forced to look as far as the Continent, especially Hamburg, for supplies. By this time a bushel might cost in the region of two shillings and sixpence:<sup>7</sup> a rise in the region of three hundred per cent. On this basis a long line fishing coble's bait bill for the

1. 31 & 32 Vict. c 45.

2. R.C.English and Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1878-9, 1879 XVII. Minutes of Evidence p.118.

3. R.C.English and Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1878-9, 1879 XVII, Minutes of Evidence, p.134.

4. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Minutes 13th July 1892 and 30th September 1906.

5. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Minutes 13th July 1892 and 30th September 1906.

6. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, pp 5091-5.

7. R.C.English and Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1878-9, 1879 XVII, Minutes of Evidence, p.134.

season's fishing would have risen from about £20 to £60 in less than fifteen years.<sup>1</sup> Yet supplies were not only more expensive they were also more uncertain, there being numerous occasions when the fishermen could not put to sea for lack of bait. It was not really possible to switch more to white fish or herring as bait for, as we have seen with the great line fisher, this source of bait was beset with problems also.<sup>2</sup> The bait question therefore had a marked effect on the viability of long lining and it is perhaps not surprising that it was pursued with a falling vigour by the end of the seventies.

The crab and lobster fisheries were in their turn also affected by the high cost and indifferent availability of bait. However, their demands though considerable were somewhat less voracious, so this fishery was not quite so badly affected. Yet because the long line fishery was proving less profitable there was an increasing tendency to try and stretch the shell fish season in length.<sup>3</sup>

Once more it seems that the railways played a major role in encouraging change and expansion in a branch of the fisheries. To a certain extent, however, the bouyant conditions they created carried with them the seeds of possible destruction for this new found prosperity. It seems obvious that, by responding to market demand by increasing the levels of activity and landing less mature fish, the inshore fishery was stripping its resources and paying the price for the absence of agreed codes of operational practice and conservation. Nevertheless, decline during the seventies was only marginal and, taken in the long term, the decades between 1840 and 1880 were remarkable for both evidence of growth and changes in traditional practice.

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1. R.C.English and Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1878-9, 1879 XVII, Minutes of Evidence, pp.100-101.
  2. See Chapter Seven.
  3. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Minutes, 25th March 1891.



CHAPTER NINE: THE STATE AND THE YORKSHIRE COAST FISHERIES 1790s to 1878

The tangle of enactments which record the State's interest in the sea fisheries prior to the 1860s may at first sight appear to have been primarily the result of unsystematic accumulation rather than part of some ordained economic or administrative strategy. Yet whilst it is true that some Acts had originated as a response to the requirements of a specific situation, many of the legislative strands when viewed as a whole show much cohesiveness of policy. During much of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, for example, it is possible to discern a mercantilist type thinking behind a lot of legislation. There were quite stiff restrictions placed upon the import or landing of many foreign caught fish in addition to other enactments designed to encourage the expansion of native activity by means of financial inducements called bounties. These were payable to certain vessels, types of catch, methods of processing or on fish exported. By the early nineteenth century such policies were coming increasingly into question and later legislation shows the influence of the laissez-faire school of thought.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the State's concern for the fisheries had not been solely derived from a desire to exploit resources such as the herring shoals that had been largely left to the Dutch. Contemporaries with an eye to international rivalry and security often regarded the fisheries as a nursery for seamen. They were considered to be of vital importance to a nation so reliant on maritime activity for commercial prosperity and secure defence.<sup>1</sup> Such a belief was far from new and was to be long enduring, being echoed in the House of Commons as late as 1959.<sup>2</sup> Thus it was considered to be of vital importance that this nursery be encouraged to flourish by the State.

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1. Even Adam Smith conceded that there might be some justification for the State aiding the fisheries on this account. A. Smith, An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, (1776 Routledge ed., 1946) 345-8.
  2. R.H. Barback, The Political Economy of The Fisheries (University of Hull 1966) 28.

It is somewhat of a paradox that, despite the low level of fisheries exploitation and the almost constant exhortations for expansion which were accompanied by legislation with this aim in mind, various administrations also believed some stocks were in danger of being overfished. Accordingly, regulations of a conservationist nature, governing such items as minimum mesh sizes and maximum length of a trawl beam, were from time to time enacted. The fears on which these actions were based were sometimes centuries old, and possibly without strong foundation at the time, but formed yet another strand of the State's involvement with the fisheries.

This era was also witnessing the transformation of the economy from an agrarian and rural to an industrial and urban base together with a marked rise in the nation's population. Such restructuring brought in its wake a whole host of provisioning problems that were aggravated in the long term by transportation difficulties and periodically by the spectre of harvest failure or the dislocation brought about by war. Such crises often prompted additional emergency legislation from the state which was aimed at inducing, as we noted in Chapter Two, the greater supply or consumption of fish by the masses.

Fishing is most obviously a maritime activity and as such it has always been governed to varying extents by legislation affecting the merchant fleet or aimed at controlling illicit seaborne activities such as smuggling. This latter pursuit was, as we shall see below, considered to be closely associated with fishermen who, as a result, were subject to close attention and restriction when it was at its height.

In crude terms, government legislation or interest can be divided into national and international spheres. The first of these covers enactments concerned solely with aspects of the native fishing industry and the second could be defined as that dealing with the relationship between home and foreign fishing activity. To some extent, the areas contained within such divisions overlap and this renders too rigid a definition of their boundaries as simplistic and unreal. Indeed, as we shall see, one stumbling block was the very practical question of the boundary. Initially, there was no real agreement on just what constituted national and international waters. Such problems need to be



taken account of in any discussion of state intervention categorised in this way.

One problem facing legislators was that of ensuring that their statutes were enforceable and not ignored. Given the maritime context of this particular economic activity, ensuring observance of the law was fraught with obstacles. Those which could be enforced from the shore probably presented the least problems. Even so it was undoubtedly difficult to render them anything like effective in all circumstances. Regulations which were the responsibility of the Customs were probably the most rigorously applied. From 1786, for example, all British vessels of over 15 tons burthen were required to be registered at the Custom House with responsibility for their home port.<sup>1</sup> Originally such legislation was passed to make the Navigation Laws and their enforcement more effective. In practice, it proved a useful means obtaining statistical information on the nation's shipping fleets and implementing later legislation. Thus registration outlived the modification of the Navigation Laws in 1824 and their repeal in 1849.<sup>2</sup> Though the system has been reformed and refined, it exists to this day (1984).

Under the system of registration introduced, details of a vessel's ownership, rig and dimensions etc., had to be recorded. The effect of this on the Yorkshire coast fishing fleet was negligible and probably represented no more than a bureaucratic inconvenience for the owners of first class craft. Furthermore, the large fleet of open cobles were totally exempted from these regulations. Nevertheless, the local custom houses did enforce another system of accounting for the activities of fishing boats which was potentially more restrictive. This was the licensing system.

The licensing system, as it operated on the Yorkshire coast at least, seems to have principally affected fishing boats though its *raison d'être* had little to do with fishing. It was designed directly to thwart another flourishing coastal activity, that of smuggling. Fishing boats, by virtue of their

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1. E.A. Carson, 'Customs History and Records of Trade and Shipping', Mariners Mirror 58, 1972, 460-1.

2. *Ibid.*, 460-1.

normal work, were naturally involved in the type of operations - especially nocturnal - that could be used as a front for smuggling. Indeed, the temptation to follow this line of employment was great and in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, most Yorkshire coast communities harboured this flourishing but illicit industry.<sup>1</sup> In order to curtail this, Pitt passed the so called Hovering Act in 1784. This legislation modified in 1816<sup>2</sup> and again in 1826,<sup>3</sup> required certain types of small boats to obtain a license.

Before such a document could be obtained, the owner of the boat had to give a bond equivalent to its value and produce two sureties of whom the Custom House approved. Additionally, before the licence could actually be granted by the Board's headquarters in London, a private report by a local customs officer signifying approval, was required. The purpose of all this was, as an 1833 report explained, to ascertain whether the party applying was suspected of smuggling and therefore not deemed to be a fit person to be licensed, or in other cases to be favoured with an extension of his licence to within a league of the foreign coast.<sup>4</sup> The whole system was an attempt to overcome the problem of controlling smuggling. Convictions were notoriously difficult to secure amongst maritime communities who viewed it as an acceptable if illicit source of revenue. Often Customs officials knew the names of suspected smugglers but were powerless to bring them to justice unless caught in the act.<sup>5</sup> Under the licensing system though, they could curtail the activities of suspected smugglers in their own small boats.

When granted, the licence strictly limited the area over which the craft was allowed to operate. Boundaries varied from port to port. They were at their most restrictive in the Channel where the risk or ease of smuggling was considered to be greatest.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, the maximum crew that a craft could carry was also laid down. In the case of the Bridlington Customs Port area,

1. See chapter One.

2. 56 Geo.III c 104.

3. 6 Geo. IV c 108.

4. S.C.on British Channel Fisheries, 1833 XIV, Report, 11-12.

5. S.C. on British Channel Fisheries, 1833 XIV, Minutes of Evidence 66.

6. S.C. on British Channel Fisheries, 1833 XIV, Minutes of Evidence, 67-8.



the crew size for a coble was usually set at three and the normal limit of its operational area was forty leagues along the coast and four leagues from it.<sup>1</sup> Depending on the vessel, its crew, and the approval of the Customs, this might be extended. Again in the Bridlington area, several boats had their operational limits extended southwards to the Wash and northwards to the Tweed.<sup>2</sup> Scarborough and Whitby boats were allowed similar extensions north and south after application and approval.<sup>3</sup>

The penalties for infringing the terms of the licence could involve, in the least, a further restriction of the operating area, sometimes to within two leagues of the coast. More severely, the bond could be confiscated or the licence lost.<sup>4</sup> Not unnaturally, there was considerable dissatisfaction amongst fishermen about the licensing system. The chief complaints were expressed in the 1833 Select Committee Report on the British Channel Fisheries. In the first place, it was considered injurious to fishermen because many valuable grounds, lying beyond prescribed limits, had to be abandoned to foreigners. Secondly, it was considered to be unsound because it relied to a considerable extent on the partiality of local Customs officers and not necessarily on evidence that would stand up in a court of law. Thirdly, the securities required to be given by the party applying for the license were considered to be oppressively high as they reflected the value of the boat.<sup>5</sup> In the case of a Bridlington coble this could amount to £60.<sup>6</sup> Finding such sureties must have caused problems for many fishermen. Finally, it was argued that the natural effect of the system was to encourage the absolute use of foreign vessels for smuggling, making it yet more difficult to detect possible activity.<sup>7</sup>

There seems to have been a fair degree of truth behind many of these criticisms. Indeed, though the licensing system had an amount of built in flexibility, its existence must have been, on balance, restrictive. Furthermore,

1. Hull Custom House, Bridlington Register of Boat Licenses, 1816-22.
2. Hull Custom House, Bridlington Register of Boat Licenses, 1816-22.
3. P.R.O., Cust., 91/120 and 121.
4. S.C.Channel Fisheries, 1833 XIV, Report, 12.
5. S.C.British Channel Fisheries, 1833 XIV, Report, 12.
6. Hull Custom House, Bridlington Register of Boat Licenses, 1816-22.
7. S.C.British Channel Fisheries, 1833 XIV, Report, 12.

though areas of operation could be extended after going through a process of application, the fact that there was some degree of control would tend to inhibit any temptation to explore new fishing grounds untried by these small boats. The procedure of extending the licensed area seems, from a survey of the Yorkshire registers, to have been limited to areas of known value to the north and south.<sup>1</sup> In contrast to this system of close regulation, increasing numbers of French boats were pursuing the herring fishery off the Yorkshire coast without any such restrictions from the early 1820s. It was no doubt partly due to this type of foreign activity and the hostility of the 1833 Select Committee Report that the licensing system was gradually discontinued in the later thirties and forties.<sup>2</sup>

Another rigorously applied and yet controversial set of regulations that were enforced by the Customs until 1824 were the so called Salt Laws. Salt was an essential ingredient in most contemporary methods of food preservation and was also an important traditional means of raising revenue for the State. Indeed, the amount raised by such duties was substantial. The nett contribution to the Exchequer from such sources in England in 1801, for example, amounted to £845,423.<sup>3</sup> In the years leading up to their repeal, many fishing interests and commentators on London's food supplies often complained that the Salt Laws had a detrimental effect on the level of the fish trade.<sup>4</sup>

The problem was not due to the payment of duty, as salt used for the purposes of fish curing in England was totally exempt from 1786.<sup>5</sup> The source of irritation for the fish trade were the steps which had to be taken to obtain exemption. A parliamentary report on the operation of the Salt Laws in 1817 reported the situation thus:

'Fish curers, before they can receive salt duty free must make entry with the Excise and (except where the Lords of the Treasury shall interpose their warrant) must provide cellars and warehouses for storing the salt. They must give a bond to account annually

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1. Based on a survey of the surviving Registers of Boat Licences.
  2. All four Yorkshire Custom House Licence Registers ceased in the mid 1830s.
  3. S.C.on Salt Laws, 1805, III, Report, 69.
  4. Papers Relating to Salt Duties, 1817 XIV, 383-5.
  5. Salt for certain fish curing purposes, particularly export, had been duty free prior to this.



with the Excise for all salt received, and not to misapply any part of it. They must also verify their annual accounts on oath and produce to an excise officer all fish for which they mean to take credit; and they are required in some cases to mark the fish in the presence of officers and in others to brand the casks in which they are packed.' 1

Such procedures were, it was admitted, both troublesome and expensive for the fish curers and involved them in obviously higher levels of capital outlay for providing the necessary secure warehouses etc., to say nothing of the inconvenience and cost of accounting for all salt used and in taking the fish to an accredited officer for verification. Moreover, since 1778, as a result of calculations made by a Whitby Customs Officer, curers had been limited to 50 lb of duty free salt for each cwt cured. This had been applied nationwide and yet did not take account of regional curing variations. For example, there were bitter complaints from fishermen at Gravesend, who did their curing at sea, that this amount was insufficient.<sup>2</sup>

A further precaution, which was also intended to prevent duty free salt from being misappropriated, required the shipping agents at the port of despatch to place a bond with the Customs there. This could be only released on receipt of an official acknowledgement from a Customs official at the port of destination that the cargo had arrived intact.<sup>3</sup> So duty free salt from Liverpool to Whitby required the forwarding merchant to place his bond with the Customs at Liverpool. It was not uncommon for disputes to arise because of some difference between the weight shipped and that landed. Yet, as the shippers complained, such discrepancies could result from causes other than misappropriation. For example, sea water getting amongst the cargo was a not uncommon hazard and yet could play havoc with the weight of a salt consignment. It is therefore not surprising that, in view of the restrictions and uncertainties of the trade, many Liverpool shippers refused to have anything to do with it.<sup>4</sup> This alone could cause problems in obtaining supplies all round the coast.

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1. Papers Relating to Salt Duties, 1817 XIV, 383-5.

2. Papers Relating to Salt Duties, 1817 XIV, 383-5.

3. S.C. on Salt Laws, 1805 III, Report 69-84.

4. S.C. on Salt Laws, 1805, III, Minutes of Evidence 101-2 and R.H.E. AF1/5, 3rd May, 1821.

The official view on these regulations was most clearly put by William Jackson, Esquire, Commissioner of Excise, when he told the 1805 Select Committee of Enquiry into the Salt Laws 'that while a high duty is to be collected on salt, the laws which relate to the use of that article duty free cannot be materially altered or fairly relaxed'. In explaining his opposition to a measure of relaxation he stated 'by that alteration the Revenue would be more exposed to fraud'.<sup>1</sup> Despite assertions by other witnesses to this and later enquiries that the Salt Laws restricted the supply of food to the poor, there was little likelihood of any relaxation in the restrictions short of removing the tax completely.

The Yorkshire coast curers, in common with many others, received their salt coastwise from Liverpool. The latter place was the traditional transhipment centre. From there salt mined in Cheshire or imported from abroad was despatched to fish processing centres.

Along the Yorkshire coast, the curers appear generally to have overcome the inconveniences of the Salt Laws and obtained the supplies as they wanted them. Nevertheless, strict enforcement of the legislation could cause problems. In 1821 for example, Richard Richardson, master of the Endeavour of Scarborough, found it necessary to make a voyage to Hull during the summer cod season when he wished to land at Scarborough because the curer who normally took his fish had her salt seized by Excise officers.<sup>2</sup> Yet most of the time, because of their wide trading connections and the long established nature and reputation of their operations, the North Yorkshire curers had strong links with the Liverpool merchants and were thus able to secure their requirements with a minimum of difficulty.

Their strong position was in marked contrast to that of smaller and less well established curers. Many merchants were loath to supply them because of the possibility of failing to secure the return of their bond should something go amiss with the transshipment and such processors often found difficulty in

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1. S.C.on Salt Laws, 1805 III, Minutes of Evidence, 101-2.

2. R.H.E., AF1/5, 22nd May 1821.



obtaining regular deliveries. Indeed, the smaller or less securely established the enterprise the more uncertainty surrounded the continuity of supplies. For example, in the period immediately following the Napoleonic Wars the shrimp fishermen of Patrington on the River Humber experienced considerable difficulty in trying to extend their markets because of such problems over the supply of salt. In 1817 they petitioned Parliament to this effect praying for the total repeal of the duties on salt.<sup>1</sup>

The whole concept of applying duties to such products as salt increasingly came to be regarded as suspect and calls for their repeal grew during the first two decades of the nineteenth century. One reason was the lively debate that ensued over ways to improve the supply of cheap provisions to the growing industrial areas. This was usually at its sharpest when there was widespread distress and fear for public order. Despite the strength of the arguments marshalled by the abolitionists, who cited the way it damaged the fish trade in particular, another select committee came to the conclusion in 1818 that the Salt Laws and their associated regulations had no really detrimental effect on the supply or price of fish and recommended their continuance.<sup>2</sup>

Though this was a setback, the abolitionists' cause was to grow from strength to strength during the following few years. This was the period when Adam Smith's doctrines regarding free trade were gaining ever more influence in the body politic. The Salt Laws were an obvious target for adherents of this vigorous philosophy, as from a laissez faire standpoint it could be argued that they were an unwarranted intervention of government in the free working of the economy. In many respects the attacks upon the Salt Laws can be likened to those which followed on the Corn Laws. Unlike the latter legislation, however, the former statutes did not enjoy the backing of a powerful vested interest in both Parliament and the country. It was also recognised that they

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1. House of Commons Journal 57 Geo.III, 4th July 1817.

2. S.C. on Laws Relating to Salt, 1818 V, Report 339.

were retarding the development of the infant chemical industry. Their death knell was sounded as the Treasury and other government departments became increasingly responsive to Adam Smith's philosophy which paved the way for the shift to free trade during the thirty or so years following 1820. The restructuring of Lord Liverpool's Cabinet in 1822/3 with the elevation of the so called liberal Tories, including Peel, Huskisson and Robinson, speeded up this change. One early result of the subsequent alteration in the Government's strategy was the reduction and then abolition in 1823 and 1825 of the duties on salt together with repeal of the associated legislation.<sup>1</sup> From that date onwards, the fish trade was free of this burden.

If the effect of the Salt Laws were to be solely judged on the performance of the Yorkshire cod and ling fisheries before and after repeal then their influence would have to be regarded as minimal. Far from encouraging any upturn in curing output, the Yorkshire coast communities were faced with a downturn in activity which lasted into the early 1830s. Though this was largely due to other reasons, discussed in chapter three, the fact remains that repeal does not even seem to have provided a cushioning effect as the slump was quite severe. Indeed, in England as a whole, their repeal does not appear to have stimulated traditional fish curing activity. At Yarmouth, for example, there was a decline in the salt intensive white herring production throughout the 1820s.<sup>2</sup> Against this, however, the smaller producers may have benefitted from more regular supplies. Certainly no more complaints on this score are heard from the Humber area shrimp fishermen. In the very long term, salt was to be of reduced importance for the English home fish trade as the railways would speed up delivery times and lessen the need for heavy salt based curing.<sup>3</sup>

One area of legislation which could be considered mercantilist in sentiment included those laws specifically designed to benefit the native fisherman at the expense of the foreigner. There was a long tradition of enactments dating

1. 3rd Geo IV Cap.LXXXII and 5th Geo IV Cap.LXV.

2. R.H.E., AF1/7, 7th October 1828.

3. See Chapter Four.



back to at least 1563 that forbade foreign fishing vessels from landing their catches. This had been reaffirmed by legislation in 1716.<sup>1</sup> This latter Act also prevented British fishermen buying fish from foreign catchers on the high seas. All foreign fish entering the country was required to do so in merchant vessels and was subject to varying rates of duty. The liberalisation of trade which occurred in the nineteenth century saw a gradual removal of such barriers. The ban on foreign landings was removed in 1861<sup>2</sup> and all other surviving restrictions were swept away by the 1868 Sea Fisheries Act.<sup>3</sup> Despite their removal, and the occasional disturbance, such as the Scarborough fishermen's protest in 1862 against the Dutch bringing their catches into the harbour,<sup>4</sup> landings in England during the remainder of the nineteenth century were to remain dominated by British vessels.

Closely linked with the earlier protectionist measures were others designed directly to stimulate growth. In the seventeenth century the emphasis in this direction had been on establishing fishery companies which were granted monopoly powers in certain export fields. Such initiatives met with little success but the company concept was periodically reintroduced, most notably in 1750, though on that occasion without the accompanying monopoly powers. Once more, this line of policy proved a failure. In 1786, however, Parliament supported the creation of the British Fisheries Society. Though this was to prove particularly enduring, lasting until 1893, its influence was limited largely to developments in the north and west of Scotland.<sup>5</sup>

Other State stimulation came in the form of cash aid. This took the form of bounties of one type or another. These varied greatly during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and different systems appear to have been in operation at different ports at varying times.

Basically, bounties took four different forms. They might be merely paid for fish cured, secondly, on fish exported.<sup>6</sup> Thirdly, as we have noted in

1. 1 Geo I Cap.18.

2. Scarborough Gazette, 27th February, 1862.

3. 31 & 32 Vict. Cap.45.

4. Scarborough Gazette, 27th February 1862.

5. See J.Dunlop, The British Fisheries Society (1978).

6. Cutting tells us that from 1718 a bounty of three shillings per cwt was payable on dried cod and ling and that 2/8d was payable for every barrel of white herrings exported with lesser rates for full and shotten reds. C.L. Cutting, Fish Saving (1955) 94-9.

Chapter Two, they were periodically offered at London and other places as an inducement to fishermen and merchants to supply their markets instead of others. Fourthly, the bounty might be offered to those who fitted out large decked vessels for the fisheries in accordance with prescribed sets of regulations.

Both Cutting<sup>1</sup> and Dunlop<sup>2</sup> have noted that in 1750 an Act of Parliament was passed giving bounties of thirty shillings per ton to owners of large busses fitting out for the herring fishery. Though subject to some modification over the following decades, it remained the basis for the tonnage bounty system until its complete removal in 1829.

This type of bounty does not seem to have been claimed along the Yorkshire coast until the 1820s because the fishermen there, as in East Anglia, seem to have been unwilling to conform to the conditions attached. Even when the bounty was related to their cod and ling fishery in the 1820s they felt that smaller crews could be carried and disliked being tied solely to one type of fishery for three months. Although the bounty was then claimed, the accompanying regulations were sometimes infringed.<sup>3</sup>

From 1778 until 1820 the system of bounty in operation on the Yorkshire coast was one concerned primarily with stimulating trade by increasing exports.

The scheme was overseen by the Customs and provided a cash inducement of four shillings for each cwt of dried cod and ling, or four shillings for each salted barrel of the same, exported. Because the Yorkshire coast industry was the best developed in this respect they were the most important recipients of this subsidy in the country.<sup>4</sup> A major criticism of this system of payments was that it took no account of the quality of fish destined for export. The quality of the cured fish was principally dependent on the care and expertise of the curer.<sup>5</sup> Standards thus varied enormously. It was widely believed by merchants and others concerned with exportation that the key to increased penetration of foreign markets lay in improving and standardising the quality of

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1. C.L.Cutting, op.cit., 94-9.

2. J.Dunlop, op.cit., 8-11.

3. R.H.E.,AF1/6, 20th June 1823 and 29th April 1823.

4. R.H.E.,AF4/2, 18th December 1820.

5. C.L.Cutting, op.cit., 96-8.



cured fish.<sup>1</sup> The first attempts at standardising quality by means of bounty were introduced for the herring fishery in 1808.<sup>2</sup> A similar system was introduced for the cod and ling fishery from the beginning of 1821.<sup>3</sup> It was this latter system that was to prove of benefit to the Yorkshire coast.

In order to carry through its commitment to improving the quality of cured herring, the Government created in 1807 what could now be described as a quango. This was called the Commissioners for the Herring Fishery. Its primary responsibility was to promote the expansion of the herring fisheries around British coasts by improving methods of curing. The major obstacle to increased penetration of overseas export markets was the superiority of the Dutch mode of curing and the high standards they maintained. The Herring Fishery Commissioners were empowered to pay a bounty, at first of two shillings, on cured fish if they reached a desired standard. The body drew up a set of processing regulations and appointed officers who were stationed around the coast to oversee their implementation. If herrings were cured to the regulations and passed inspection then they were entitled to the bounty. To signify that they had reached the standard, an official crown mark was branded on the side of each barrel thus passed. At first the export bounty was retained, though at a reduced level of two shillings per barrel. From 1816 this was dropped and a full four shillings per barrel was allowed on branded herrings. In addition to this, herring fishermen were still entitled to collect the traditional vessel tonnage bounty which was now paid by the Herring Fishery Commissioners. It could be claimed by first class vessels, cleared by one of the new inspectors in accordance with a prescribed set of regulations covering mesh size, length of voyage and number of crew. The rate was again thirty shillings per ton burthen.<sup>4</sup>

Although the Herring Fishery Commissioners had their headquarters in Edinburgh and were ultimately to evolve into the Scottish Fishery Board, their activities at this time were by no means confined to north of the border.

1. C.L.Cutting, op.cit., 96-8.
2. M.Gray, op.cit., 50-54.
3. R.H.E., AF7/27, 6th November 1820.
4. R.H.E., AF7/27, 5th February 1821.

A perusal of the districts with inspectors reveals that in 1820 they had officials stationed along many stretches of the English coastline and at major ports. Places covered include London, Bristol, Liverpool, Yarmouth, North Sunderland, St Ives and Whitehaven.<sup>1</sup> Because of the lack of native interest in the herring fishery along the Yorkshire coast at that time no inspection district was created in the area. The inspectors appointed were usually experienced curers themselves and, apart from overseeing curing operations, they were expected to ensure that other laws relating to the fisheries were observed. These included checks on mesh size, enforcing the prohibition of fishing on the Sabbath, and watching for the encroachments of foreign fishing vessels.<sup>2</sup>

The work of the Herring Fishery Commissioners and the new bounty system was considered to be sufficiently satisfactory as to encourage its extension to the cod, ling and hake fisheries in 1820. The body was accordingly given powers over these activities. The aim was once more the same: to improve the quality of the cure and thereby expand the export markets. The methods implemented were quite similar in outline. A set of regulations were drawn up covering both barrel and dry curing. Legislation was enacted allowing the payment of four shillings per cwt on dry cured fish and four shillings per barrel on pickled fish providing they were considered by the inspectors to have been cured to the appropriate standard. The Commissioners were also empowered to pay a bounty of thirty shillings per ton burthen to first class vessels fitting out for these fisheries in accordance with a set of regulations similar to those covering the herring fishery. In the case of barrelled fish these were branded in a manner similar to herring barrels. The dry cured fish had their tails marked with an approved punch which signified they had passed inspection. Bounties were not paid directly in cash, but a form of coupon was issued by the inspector which could be redeemed at the local Custom House. Needless to say, the old export bounty was abandoned.

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1. Report of the Commissioners for the Herring Fisheries, year ending 5th April 1821, 1823 VII, 155.
  2. R.H.E., AF7/27, 6th November 1820.



The major area of activity falling under this category was the cod and ling drying trade and, of course, this was of great importance along the Yorkshire coast. In order to oversee operations there effectively, a new inspection district was created and an officer appointed and despatched to Whitby early in 1821.<sup>1</sup> Most men created inspectors seem to have been Scottish in origin and the Whitby officer, George Smith, was no exception.<sup>2</sup>

The area Smith was expected to cover corresponded with the distribution of curing operations. This meant that it stretched from Flamborough Head in the south to Hartlepool in the north. In the latter place a couple of curers appear to have operated in the early twenties.<sup>3</sup> In general, activity was concentrated on the region between Staithes and Flamborough. Initially, the officer was based on Whitby but it soon became apparent that this was not the best centre from which to direct operations as fishing activity there was at the time quite limited in nature. Staithes and Scarborough were suggested to the Commissioners as more suitable headquarters because of their greater involvement in the trade. In 1823 the officer's base was moved to Scarborough.<sup>4</sup>

As was the case in other districts, the officer along the Yorkshire coast was responsible for overseeing and inspecting the related curing operations, clearing out vessels for the tonnage bounty, certifying all bounty claims in his field of activities, as well as collecting the associated statistics. He had also to enforce existing legislation covering the fisheries and his early reports describe his efforts in this direction. He was backed up by an annual inspection from the principal officer at London and an occasional one from the Edinburgh based secretary to the Commissioners.<sup>5</sup> Certainly his duties represent the zenith of State intervention in the activities associated with the Yorkshire fisheries at any time before 1886.

The new bounty system hardly had time to become fully effective when fisheries policy abruptly changed. The new tendency of the Government during the

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1. R.H.E.,AF1/5, 5th April 1821.
  2. He seems to have lived previously in or around Anstruther.
  3. R.H.E.,AF1/6, 4th June 1822.
  4. R.H.E.,AF1/6, 2nd September 1823.
  5. R.H.E.,AF1/7, 6th September 1825.

last years of Liverpool's premiership was towards the freeing of the economy from many artificial forms of restriction and control. This policy line led to a systematic reduction of taxation and lowering of duties on many imported raw materials but it also spelt the withdrawal of many bounties. The repeal of the Salt Laws was one aspect of this new policy line to affect the fisheries but the other was the withdrawal of bounties from 1825. By the end of 1829, all had been phased out despite the protests of a large number of fishing communities, including several along the Yorkshire coast. The inhabitants of Staithes, Runswick, Robin Hoods Bay, Scarborough, Filey and Flamborough all petitioned Parliament on at least one or more occasions between 1825 and 1829 praying for their continuance.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the termination of the bounty system, the State's interest in the Yorkshire coast fishing industry did not completely cease. The work of the Commissioners and their officers continued here as elsewhere, though in other parts of the country a number of districts were amalgamated to cut staffing costs. Along the Yorkshire coast, the inspection of cured fish together with the system of branding and punching continued though without the reward of a bounty.

In 1840 a new Secretary to the Commissioners was appointed called A.Fox. He visualised an increased role for the body in overseeing the activities of the British fishing industry. After taking a voyage around the English districts Fox proposed a chain of superintendance covering the coasts of England and Wales.<sup>2</sup> He would undoubtedly have put this into effect was he not at the same time faced with a Treasury request for economies.<sup>3</sup> In line with his basic idea, however, the organisation's name was changed to the more comprehensive Board of British Fisheries. The collection of statistics was extended to include data not necessarily connected to fish being cured. To compensate for the lack of officers, some districts had their boundaries extended. The Whitby

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1. See Chapter Three.

2. R.H.E.,AF1/5, Report of the Secretary on His Voyage of Inspection, 1842.

3. R.H.E.,AF1/5, Report of the Secretary on His Voyage of Inspection, 1842.



District was enlarged to cover the area from the Tees to the Wash.<sup>1</sup> However, this extension never proved to be more than a change of name. The amount of travelling undertaken by the officer covering the area actually fell dramatically during the 1840s, if his expenses claims are to be believed,<sup>2</sup> and there is no evidence that statistics were ever collected for this southern extension.

Nevertheless, along the Yorkshire coast, the local inspector collected a greater range of statistical evidence relating to the number of nets and lines utilised and other items including estimates of the total amount of fish landed. Thanks to Fox's exertions, other officers were doing the same and he had laid the foundations for the erection of a supervisory body capable of overseeing the operations of the entire British mainland fisheries capable of acting as both advisor and tool of the Government with regard to the formulation and operation of future policy.

So far as England and Wales were concerned, this foundation was to be firmly uprooted by the beginning of the 1850s. The relaxation of State interference in economic activity, which had brought about the repeal of the Salt Laws and bounty system in the 1820s, as well as the later abandonment of Customs licenses continued through the forties. It reflected a continuation of the shift in the weight of informed and influential opinion in the direction of the precepts laid down by Adam Smith. Inevitably, this eventually brought the very existence of the Board of British Fisheries into question. Indeed, as early as 1831, the possibility of its entire abolition had been mooted by the Treasury.<sup>3</sup> That department's tight financial hold had ensured that the Board's establishment of officers in England had fallen from seventeen in 1820 to eight by 1849.<sup>4</sup>

In 1848, a Treasury backed enquiry was conducted by George Shaw Lefevre into the Board's future.<sup>5</sup> Despite the development of its role as a body capable

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1. R.H.E., AF1/5, Report of the Secretary on His Voyage of Inspection, 1842.
  2. R.H.E., AF1/5, 18th March 1847.
  3. R.H.E., AF1/8, 8th January, 1831.
  4. R.H.E., AF1/14, 12th December 1849.
  5. Report to the Treasury by Mr. J.G. Shaw Lefevre on the Fishery Board 1849, 1856 LIX, 185-6.

of general superintendance, discussion centred about its work of supervising the curing of fish and the collection of related statistics. The Board's position had been further weakened by the death of Fox in the same year. His replacement T.Primrose, does not appear to have adhered as strongly to the concept of its wide ranging all Britain role and seems to have been more interested in the Scottish operations related to the herring industry. Because of this emphasis it was soon evident that if the Board was to survive at all then its activities would be restricted more or less to Scotland.

The result of the latest enquiry was survival. Though Lefevre thought that 'the system of authenticating the quality of goods by the agency of a government officer...objectionable in principle', he was not prepared to go the whole way and recommend the discontinuance of the herring branding system.<sup>1</sup> This was because of the widespread support it received from all sections of the industry and the likelihood of a dislocation of the marketing system through the withdrawal of the mark of quality. However, because of the fall off in the practice of branding barrelled cod and the punching of dried cod, ling and hake, he recommended their discontinuance.

Little real interest was attached by Lefevre to the other duties carried out by the Board so there seemed small justification for the continued existence of the remaining English districts. This was because the practice of producing salt cured herring in England had declined dramatically since 1820 and very little branding took place in many districts.<sup>2</sup> Even on the Yorkshire coast, where white herring production had been reintroduced in the thirties, most that were cured in the forties were in fact reds and this activity had never been covered by the Board. The only area on the mainland where branding was carried on to any large extent was Northumberland. In view of this, it was decided to suppress all districts south of the border. In future, Northumberland's activities were to be covered from the office at Eyemouth, north of Berwick. Thus, from the 5th January, 1850, the Board of the British

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1. Report to the Treasury by Mr.J.G.Shaw Lefevre on the Fishery Board 1849, 1856 LIX, 185-6.  
 2. R.H.E.,AF1/7, 7/10/1828 and 14th September 1830.



Fisheries withdrew from the rest of its activities in England.<sup>1</sup>

The suppression of the district covering the Yorkshire coast inevitably meant a marked reduction in the State's ability to superintend fishery operations in the area. For several decades there was to be no one body clearly responsible for this or any other English fishery. In reality many existing statutes, such as those relating to mesh sizes, ceased to be enforced. Certainly, there was no such check of nets carried out between then and 1863 at Flamborough.<sup>2</sup> No longer was there any attempt to compile statistics at any of the fishing stations.<sup>3</sup> It seems likely that the enactment prohibiting Sabbath fishing was not always observed for in 1862, we hear that the Scarborough fish merchants were making a determined stand in an attempt to wipe out the practice by refusing to buy fish on Sundays.<sup>4</sup> In practice then, the suppression of the Yorkshire district created the nearest thing to an activity freed from legislative control as was to ever exist in the nineteenth century fishing industry. The age of laissez faire for the Yorkshire coast fisheries can be said to have truly arrived in 1850.

During the following years, this freedom, coupled with the lack of a government department ultimately responsible for the fishing industry was to aggravate problems that resulted from its restructuring following the coming of the railway age. This basically involved the arrival of large scale trawling off the Yorkshire coast and the rise of Hull and Grimsby as fishing ports. Relationships between the trawlermen, who were at first mainly outsiders, and the traditional line and drift fishermen was often poor.<sup>5</sup> There were frequent claims that the trawlermen overfished the stocks and damaged other men's gear. The lack of available statistical information or a local individual responsible for the fishing industry made such assertions very difficult to prove or refute, as a subsequent report was to prove.

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1. R.H.E., AF1/14, 12th December 1849.
  2. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866, XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence qq 5521-3.
  3. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866, XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence qq 5521-3.
  4. Scarborough Gazette, 26th March 1863.
  5. See Chapter Five.

The problem became worse as trawling increased throughout the later fifties and early sixties. In 1862 an attempt was made to secure the legal prohibition of trawling by the traditional fishermen of Northumberland, Durham and the East Riding of Yorkshire. Meetings were held at many fishing communities and Parliamentary representatives petitioned.<sup>1</sup> The storm finally spurred the Government back into action. In the following year, the most influential nineteenth century report on the fishing industry was set up by the Palmerston Ministry. This was the Royal Commission on the Sea Fisheries of the United Kingdom and it was to report in 1866.

The three commissioners appointed reflect, to a fair degree, the dominant scientific and economic orthodoxy of the period. George Shaw Lefevre, MP, had been responsible for confining the activities of the Board of British Fisheries to Scotland. James Caird, writer and agriculturalist, had played a prominent part in the free trade controversies of the 1840s and had been an ardent supporter of the Manchester School.<sup>2</sup> Their chairman was one of the most eminent scientists in the land, Thomas Henry Huxley. This brilliant and largely self-taught man was noted for his sound defence of Darwin and his theories on evolution as well as his own work in the biological field.<sup>3</sup>

The three men visited most parts of the British Isles and interviewed a wide range of people connected with the industry from fish curers and fishermen to the Secretary of the British Fisheries Board. Their quest to ascertain the existing state of the fisheries was hampered in two main ways. In the first place, of course, there was a marked lack of information available or consulted. Even in Scotland, where the situation was a little clearer, there was still an absence of information not clearly related to the cod, ling and herring fisheries, despite the changes of 1842. In England, though it proved possible to extract information on fish traffic from the railways, much else was lacking. Compilation of the Scottish type of data had, of course, ceased in 1850.<sup>4</sup>

1. Scarborough Gazette, 26th March 1863 and Whitby Gazette, 13th December 1862 and 18th April 1863.

2. S. Lee, ed., Dictionary of National Biography (2nd ed., 1920, repr. 1925) 187.

3. See C. Bibby, Scientist Extraordinary The Life and Scientific Work of Thomas Henry Huxley (1972).

4. Thanks, of course, to the 1849 report of Mr. G. S. Lefevre, one of the 1863-6 Commissioners.



Indeed, no attempt appears to have been made by the Royal Commissioners to obtain the information collated before that date. It was, therefore, necessary to rely on what local data was available or presented. This was extremely patchy in nature. Though long runs of data on Hull landings were presented,<sup>1</sup> none was produced for the Yorkshire coast and many other districts.

However, the bulk of evidence came from witnesses at the local enquiries that the Royal Commissioners made on their journeys around Britain. Quite naturally this sort of information was often subjective in nature and differed widely according to the position of the witness in the fishing industry. For example, the bulk of the evidence given by the traditional Yorkshire and north east line men and their associated merchants was that the size of landings was on the decline. This was in direct contradiction to that put forward by trawlermen at ports such as Hull and Grimsby who claimed that supplies were on the increase.<sup>2</sup>

The Royal Commission also faced another problem. This was that scientific observation and understanding of marine activity was a discipline still in its infancy. This made the task of trying to ascertain the effect of differing methods of fish capture on the level of stocks ever more difficult.

In broad terms, a great deal of the evidence collected pointed to the conclusion that activities associated with the catching of fish around the coasts, were in the main expanding. The railway returns showed marked increases in the carriage of fish over the previous decade.<sup>3</sup> Undoubtedly, the numbers of men and boats employed had grown over the previous twenty years, especially on the Yorkshire coast, where many of the chief complaints about declining stocks and overfishing had originated.<sup>4</sup> The data on landings provided at Hull and Grimsby painted a rosy picture of expansion. Thus the long term picture appeared to be one of buoyant expansion.

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1. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866, XVII-XVIII, Appendix No.6.
  2. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866, XVII-XVIII, Report XVII-XXVI.
  3. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866, XVII-XVIII, Appendix Nos.3-5,7,8,9-19,23-5.
  4. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866, XVII-XVIII, Appendix No.4.

However, the crucial point on which the Commissioners had little or no hard data was whether this continued increase in the catching effort was accompanied by a commensurate increase in the amount of fish landed. In other words, whether the marginal returns, in terms of fish landed for each extra unit of capital and labour employed were constant, increasing or diminishing. It is evident from the information presented to the Royal Commission that, in terms of financial returns on capital and labour employed, the white fishing industry had fared no worse and probably better in the previous fifteen or so years than in the earlier part of the century. Indeed, it is inconceivable that the large increase in the size of the industry<sup>1</sup> would have taken place if it had become less profitable. However, the fact was that over this period, the landing price of fish had risen markedly because the railways had provided a cheap means of transport to inland markets. This rise was considerable and, as is pointed out in Chapter Five, made it worthwhile for fishermen to land types of fish that had never previously commanded any value and had often been thrown over the side. Thus it might be possible for boats to yield larger financial returns even if their catch was smaller than in previous years because the value of fish had risen considerably. No statistical evidence existed which enabled the Royal Commission to test such a thesis but the verbal evidence put forward by the Yorkshire coast long line fishermen suggested that this was the case.<sup>2</sup>

The Royal Commission chose to ignore this possibility and concentrated on the fact that because of the increase in the numbers of boats operating, the total catch of fish landed was increasing. As they put it in their conclusion they believed that 'the supply of fish obtained upon the Coasts of the United Kingdom has not diminished of late years but has increased.' They were further sustained in reaching this conclusion by the prevailing biological orthodoxy of the day. As Barback has noted, there was little knowledge about

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1. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866, XVII-XVIII, Report c111
  2. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866, XVII-XVIII Minutes of Evidence, qq 5029-30, 5037-47, 5683-6.



activities of fish apart from the fact that it was known that they produced millions of eggs.<sup>1</sup> Huxley certainly believed that fishes were so prolific and the sea in which they swam so large that men could not have any real effect on the size of stocks.<sup>2</sup> The logical extension of this argument, therefore, was that it was really unnecessary to prevent or prohibit any type of fishing gear as it was impossible for man to affect the numbers of fish.

In view of these assumptions, the Royal Commission felt able to recommend the application of the principles of free trade to the areas of fisheries activity still covered by Government regulations. Their report was published in 1866 and seems, in the words of Professor Barback to be 'so far as the fishing industry is concerned...the true and final apotheosis of classical laissez faire'.<sup>3</sup> It recommended that 'all Acts of Parliament professing to regulate and restrict modes of fishery in the open sea be repealed and that unrestricted freedom be permitted hereafter.'<sup>4</sup> A similar state of affairs, with minor safeguards was envisaged for the inshore fisheries. Many of these recommendations were accepted by the Government and incorporated into a new Sea Fisheries Act passed in 1868.<sup>5</sup>

So far as the Yorkshire coast was concerned the Report of the Royal Commission and the subsequent Act merely legalised the situation that had existed since the suppression of the Whitby District of the Board of British Fisheries in 1850. In addition, both went further and firmly rejected the demands of the traditional line fishermen for greater restrictions on the activity of trawlers. In future, as indeed in the past decades, trawlers and line fishermen would be free to work and compete in the same waters, subject only to a code of operational practice, reaffirmed in the 1868 Act, designed to prevent damage or accident. The prosperity and survival prospects of both types of activity would be decided by their ability to compete on the open market. No account seems to have been taken of the effects of such a policy on the local fishing communities. Neither does one find much mention in

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1. R.H.Barback, The Political Economy of the Fisheries, (Hull 1966) 18-19.
  2. Ibid., 18-19.
  3. R.H.Barback, op.cit., 18-19.
  4. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1853-6, 1866, XVII-XVIII, Report cvi.
  5. R.H.Barback, op.cit., 18-19; 31 & 32 Victoria Cap.45.

Government circles at this time of that traditional reason for State promotion of the fisheries: that of providing a nursery for British seamen. Such was the confidence and dominance of the adherents of the philosophy of laissez faire that the law of the market place was determined to be the only decisive factor.

Despite the acceptance of the above aspects of the Royal Commission's Report, its whole was not so totally or immediately accepted as it might appear. It proved itself hostile in particular, as might be expected, to the continuance of the Government sponsored branding system that survived in Scotland and Northumberland but did not succeed in forcing its abolition. Such was the support that the activities controlled by the Board of British Fisheries received from the various groups involved in the production and sale of salt cured herrings that all attempts to remove the hand of the State were thwarted. The one change that the Treasurer had earlier been able to obtain, was the introduction of a payment for the branding of barrels from the curers.<sup>1</sup> Such was the reputation enjoyed by the brand that even this step did little to affect its long term popularity.

Another area where the recommendations of the Royal Commission were not carried through lay in the collection of statistics. Its Report had conceded that the systematic collection of data was a matter of great importance in order that a trustworthy conclusion could be drawn on the state of the fisheries in future times of dispute. Without this it recognised that there would be no means of preventing 'the constant recurrence of panics to which the fishery interest has hitherto been subjected'.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, such a collection would have served to test the conclusions which the report itself had received on the state of the fisheries and the effects of overfishing.

In the event, the Government were to take no action on this account and it was to take two more Royal Commissions and several 'panics' to effect the systematic collection of fishery statistics over the whole of the British Isles.

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1. This had commenced in 1859 before the Huxley Commission took up its task.
  2. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866, XVII-XVIII, Report cv1.



How these statistics would have been collected was not seen as too much of a problem by the Royal Commission. It did not feel that it would be necessary to create a special body to oversee their compilation. Indeed, as we have noted, it recommended the abolition of the Board of British Fisheries that still collected certain Scottish statistics. The task, it felt, could be entrusted to some body such as the Coastguards or the Customs. In the event, when collection was properly commenced in 1886 they were to be under the aegis of a fishery department controlled by the Board of Trade.<sup>1</sup>

Much of the legislation discussed above, by virtue of being controlled to a considerable degree from the land, was relatively easy to implement or enforce when the Government was thus determined. When it came to upholding or establishing law and codes of conduct on the high seas, the situation was subject to far more vagaries and problems. Indeed, the actual legal position of the State in offshore waters was shrouded in obscurity and uncertainty for much of the nineteenth century. Outside of territorial waters, the effective regulation and supervision of fishery operations was often rendered totally ineffective because the Admiralty had no authority to intervene. The situation was aggravated because there was no agreed system or code of international conduct in existence. Such waters, being thus out of the jurisdiction of the State, might almost warrant the definition of a legal no man's land.

Territorial waters were regarded as being under the authority of the Crown but even here there were problems. In the first place there was the problem of defining them. It was traditional amongst many countries bordering the North Sea to regard three miles as the usual limit of national jurisdiction, though this had no sound basis in international law. Moreover, there was the difficulty of placing the actual boundary. As Jenkins tells us, there was no real agreement or definition as to whether the limit was three miles from the cliffs, the high or low water mark, or whether bays and estuaries were included.<sup>2</sup> The three mile limit had not been determined by fishery operations. It is claimed to have been the limit of a cannon shot from the shore.<sup>3</sup>

1. See Chapter Ten.

2. J.T.Jenkins, The Sea Fisheries (1920) 159-163.

3. *Ibid.*, 163.

Even in the area of territorial water, effective supervision was the exception rather than the rule. This task was normally the responsibility of the Admiralty, though on the west coast of Scotland, fishery patrol vessels were often operated on behalf of the Board of British Fisheries. The effectiveness of such patrols was often limited on two counts. In the first place, until a declaration in 1840 by Sir Denis le Marchant, Secretary to the Board of Trade, that 'no foreign nation whatever had a right to fish within three miles of the coast',<sup>1</sup> the legal position regarding the activities of foreigners was far from clear. Secondly, it seems apparent that, on the Yorkshire coast at least, Admiralty policing of the fisheries was often too limited to be effective. In 1837 and 1838, for example, despite numerous complaints about the activities of foreign craft, no vessel was sent to superintend this fishery. When the brig Nautilus was despatched for this purpose in the summer of 1840 she was also responsible for overseeing waters as far up as north Northumberland.<sup>2</sup> In short, she had to cover almost two hundred miles of coast.

In the years immediately following the cessation of hostilities with France in 1815, such chronic imperfections in the system of superintendance were more apparent than real. The level of exploitation of the North Sea was still relatively low and did not expose the existing weaknesses. From 1824 onwards, however, French herring fishermen were to be found in increasing numbers off the North Sea coasts during the summer months.<sup>3</sup> Along the entire coast complaints were regularly voiced by British fishermen about the conduct of their Gallic counterparts. Usually, these concerned alleged damage to gear or intimidation by the French who possessed larger vessels, stronger gear and bigger crews. Some of these craft carried thirty men and their stout lines needed barrels to keep them afloat whilst the British gear could be sustained by only cork floats. If the two came into contact, the British it seems inevitably lost out.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Report of Commissioners for British Fisheries, 1849, 1850 XXVII, 19.
  2. R.H.E., AF1/12, 11th August 1840.
  3. See Chapter Three.
  4. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq. 5210-1, 5336-7 and 6103-4.



Such complaints were by no means one sided. In the Channel it appears the problem was often created by the British. The French fishermen there complained that the British dredged up oysters outside of the accepted season and often too close to the coast.<sup>1</sup>

The increasing levels of activity and complaints prompted both British and French governments to look at the existing national regulations and work out an agreeable code of legal practice. As a result, in 1839 a Convention was agreed to by both nations followed by a commission which drew up mutually agreeable rules and regulations. All of these points were embodied in acts passed by both national legislatures, the British one entering the statute book in 1843.<sup>2</sup>

The first major point of the Convention was that both nations' territorial waters, in which it was determined that their own nationals had the exclusive right of fishery, were defined as being the area stretching to three miles from the low water mark. The exception to this was in the case of bays less than ten miles in width. There the boundary was reckoned from a straight line drawn between the low water marks of the two headlands. There was also a multifarious list of regulations covering everything from close seasons for oyster fishing and the prohibition of fishing on the Sabbath, to rules regarding minimum net mesh size.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, a strict code of practice was drawn up governing fishery operations by various types of vessels in an attempt to minimise the risk of collisions and entanglements of gear which had been the source of much annoyance and ill feeling. As part of the strategy aimed at preventing large vessels with the heavier gear from damaging the smaller open boats and their lighter equipment, both types were prohibited from commencing catching operations within three miles of each other. To make it easier to ascertain the type of operations being carried out by each boat an identification code was also agreed which utilised coloured vanes flown at the mast head. For example, a British trawler

1. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1864-6, 1866, XVII-XVIII, Report LXII.

2. 6 & 7 Vict. Cap. LXXIX.

3. 6 & 7 Vict., Cap. LXXIX.

had to carry a red vane and the French one a blue. A British drifter had to carry a white and red one and its French counterpart one of white and blue. The provisions were also very specific and restrictive about the circumstances in which boats of one country were allowed to approach the shore of the other.<sup>1</sup>

To deal with cases of vessels or persons who contravened these regulations a standardised legal procedure was drawn up. If a boat committed an offence in the territorial waters of the other nation then she could be taken into one of its own ports. In Britain, the offending party would be placed before a magistrate or J.P. who could punish the offender if the case were found proven. If the offence took place outside territorial waters then a similar procedure would be carried out except that, instead of punishment being meted out, a deposition of the proceedings and all other documents forwarded by the Collector of Customs to the British Consul in the French boat's home port. The judiciary of that country would then be expected to carry judgement into effect, that is if it was considered fair.<sup>2</sup>

The effect of the Convention and subsequent legislation must be regarded as an almost total failure if judged on their ability to end complaints and disputes with foreign fishermen. In the North Sea the agreed codes of conduct, policing and systems of redress proved to be totally inadequate. Very few convictions or even detentions were made by the British authorities despite the fact that the level of complaints about the activities of the French remained high throughout the forties, fifties and early sixties. Indeed, between 1843 and 1846 there were no convictions of French vessels at Yorkshire ports and only two elsewhere along the coast. Both of these were at Berwick and occurred on consecutive days in August 1843 for contraventions of the three mile limit. In fact, around the entire English coast there were only seven convictions against French craft with the maximum fine levied being £1 and three days detention of the boat. It also appears that a conviction was never made for an infringement of the Convention taking place in international waters. The

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1. A Return of British and French Vessels Seized under the Convention Act, 1846 XLV, 378.
  2. Report of W.H.Higgins, Esq., Q.C., on the Outrages Committed by Foreigners upon British Fishermen in the North Sea, 1881, LXXXII, 541.



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French authorities proved more vigorous, for during the same period thirty cases were proven by them against British fishermen, though all were for offences committed in their three mile limit.<sup>1</sup>

One reason for this relative ineffectiveness was undoubtedly the complexity of the regulations and the difficulties associated with their interpretation. The two countries had agreed a whole host of provisions associated with close seasons, methods of fishing and mesh sizes that were quite technical in nature. In ideal circumstances, checking for infringements would have been a formidable task for the non-specialist naval officer, whose brig might be engaged in patrolling the fisheries. Circumstances were usually far from ideal. The task was made doubly difficult, even though boats were required to be numbered for easier identification, by the fact that herring fishing, with which the French were concerned, took place mainly at night.<sup>2</sup>

However, probably the most important reason why the Convention remained, in many respects, almost a dead letter was rooted in the ambiguity of many of its provisions. One area where there was a marked lack of clarity concerned the precise area it was designed to cover. For example, its definition of the area of international waters in which it was to be carried into effect was markedly obscure. These were laid down as the seas lying between the coasts of Great Britain and France. If this was interpreted strictly, then it could be said to refer only to the English Channel, despite the intention of the Convention's framers to cover the North Sea as well. The uncertainty raised by this legal point was sufficient to ensure that the provisions regarding conduct etc., in North Sea international waters, were never put into operation, as the Huxley Commission and a Board of Trade Enquiry of 1880 clearly show.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, other of its provisions were considered to be sufficiently obscure as to confuse the legal issue as to whether the regulations were even enforceable within the three mile limit. The Huxley Commission reported that eminent legal opinion was divided on the subject.

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1. A Return of British and French Vessels Seized under the Convention Act, 1846 XLV, 378.
  2. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866, XVII-XVIII, Report IX.
  3. Report of W.H.Higgins, Esq., Q.C., on Outrages Committed by Foreign upon English Fishermen in the North Sea, 1881 LXXXII, 541.



These drawbacks were fully outlined to the Government by the Huxley Commission in its report of 1866 and thus it sought to obtain a new and more effective convention with the French. It is true that there had been certain modifications made to the original Convention in 1855 but these were concerned purely with aspects of the Channel oyster fisheries. In 1867 another Convention was agreed between the two nations and Britain embodied its terms in the 1868 Sea Fisheries Act.<sup>1</sup> The main aim of the 1867 Convention and new Act were to convert the cumbrous regulations of the old agreement into a short and simple police code that could prevent 'collisions' at sea and bring offenders to justice with all possible despatch. There was also the intention to end the uncertainty about the limits the Convention would cover, so that in future adequate policing of fishery operations in the North Sea could be undertaken. In line with the spirit of the Huxley Commission Report, the legislation referring to minimum net meshes, close seasons etc., was removed and a basically free and open international fishery outside the three mile limit was recognised.

As we have noted, the terms of the Convention were ratified by the British Government in the 1868 Sea Fisheries Act. The French legislature took longer in dealing with the matter and was overtaken by the Franco Prussian War of 1870 and the fall of the Emperor Louis Napoleon. The result was that it was never to be ratified by the French and so the uncertainty continued.<sup>2</sup>

Had the Convention been ratified by both nations, it would still not have settled the problems which prevented the effective policing of the international fishing grounds, for as yet there had been no adequate consultation or agreement with other nations whose boats fished in the North Sea. By the 1870s the activities of the Dutch and Belgian trawlers, for example, had assumed a considerable importance.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the cosmopolitan nature of the fishing fleets working in an ever more congested North Sea, coupled with the lack of international codes of conduct, led inevitably to more and more clashes and complaints.

1. 18 & 19 Vict., Cap.9.

2. Report of W.H.Higgins, Esq., Q.C., on Outrages Committed by Foreign upon English Fishermen in the North Sea, 1881, LXXXII, 541.

3. See Chapter Ten.

The controversies which these aroused were to be the subject of much international discussion and enquiry during the 1880s.

Despite the efforts of both British and French Governments, the fog of legal uncertainty which enveloped the North Sea Fisheries was not lifted during the period under discussion. In terms of international agreements and understanding, the boundaries between international and sovereign jurisdiction were almost as vague in the 1870s as they had been fifty years earlier. The role of the individual nation in the control and operation of the international fisheries had yet to be determined. And yet this lack of any multilateral agreement does not appear to have retarded the expansion of the fishing industry. Rather, it was the continual increase in the level of exploitation of the fishing grounds which was creating the need for greater international cooperation on formulating codes of conduct.



CHAPTER TEN: THE STATE AND THE YORKSHIRE COAST FISHERIES 1878-1900s

One constant and growing North Sea problem which had not been effectively tackled by the 1868 Sea Fisheries Act arose from the absence of proper arrangements for policing fishery operations in international waters. As we have noted in Chapter Nine, the only supposedly binding arrangements that the British Government had entered into that were concerned with this matter were those arising out of the Anglo-French Convention of 1839. Despite its glaring inadequacies, this code of conduct was restated by the British Government as late as 1877 as it had proved the only way of possibly dealing with the large number of French vessels working off the coasts.<sup>1</sup> The Convention of 1839 was supposed to have been replaced by the later one of 1867 that had been incorporated into the 1868 Sea Fisheries Act and so its resurrection might have appeared to have been a retrograde step. However, the move was forced on the Government when the French still showed no enthusiasm for ratifying the later Convention.

From then on the bi-lateral policing assumed a marked degree of ambiguity. In British eyes the French were still governed by the earlier arrangement but their own subjects were expected to adhere to the somewhat differing set of regulations agreed in 1867. In other words, two codes of conduct were in operation in the same waters at the same time and the one a fishing boat was supposed to comply with depended on whether it was British or French.<sup>2</sup> Yet, even if the French legislature had ratified the terms of the 1867 Convention there would still have remained the formidable problem of reaching similar arrangements with other European nations who worked on the North Sea. Men from these nations could safely ignore many of the regulations covered by the Anglo-French Conventions, whether 1839 or 1867.

This was a growing problem during the 1870s. The Dutch and French had been active off the coasts of Britain for many years - or more accurately, in the case of the former, for many centuries. By this decade, however, the level of international exploitation of the North Sea had grown in both scale and

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1. First Report of the Inspector of Sea Fisheries, 1886, 1887 XXXI, 129.  
 2. Report of W.H.Higgins, Esq., Q.C., on the Outrages Committed by Foreign upon British Fishermen in the North Sea, 1881, LXXXII, 541.

complexity. Greater numbers of boats from countries such as Belgium, Denmark and Germany were working on an ever increasing number of grounds frequented by the British. In the case of the Belgians in particular, some of the most rapid growth seems to have come in the case of the trawling sectors and there was a similar development with the Dutch Fishing industry. This was to cause particular problems which will be outlined below.

For some time after 1868, the Government paid scant attention to this problem and effectively did little to stem the growing tide of complaints that arose on the increasingly congested fishing grounds. By the later 1870s, it could no longer afford to be so complacent and the situation seems to have reached a critical pitch about 1880. Indeed, it was reported in the House of Commons that 'open warfare was carried on at sea in which stones carried by the boats as ballast were used as weapons and firearms on occasions were resorted to'.<sup>1</sup> The basic source of such international hostility was the age-old problem of one boat damaging the gear of another. The situation had become much more acute not only because of the higher levels of exploitation, but also through the adoption of trawling.

In earlier times, the principal means of taking white fish in the North Sea had been by line whilst herring were still mainly caught by the traditional drift net. To a considerable extent, such activities were compatible because lining was then sometimes a daylight activity whilst drifting was carried out at night. Furthermore, the former was basically a static activity in which the lines were often laid on the bottom and while the drift net travelled some considerable distance its efforts were directed in the upper levels of the water. As a result, the risk of collisions or entanglements between boats carrying on these different operations was minimal. Indeed, as we have noted in Chapter Nine, the main source of complaint lay in entanglements between drifters with gear of differing strength.

The advent of the more mobile trawler in the North Sea changed all this. We have noted that the trawlers often obliged the linemen to abandon smooth

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1. Hansard, 12th June 1883.



bottomed grounds they sometimes frequented because of the risk of their gear being swept away by a passing trawler.<sup>1</sup> The drifters were also affected. Trawling took place increasingly at night and inevitably this led to unwelcome contact with the drifter. The Conventions of 1839 and 1867 had tried to deal with this problem by stipulating that trawlers should keep three miles from drifters, who in turn should be clearly lit. All boats were also required to carry their identification marks clearly visible on both hull and sail. Systems of redress for collision were worked out.<sup>2</sup> In practice, such a system was difficult to operate on the high seas. There was a general belief amongst many fishermen that the surface and bottom fish resort to the same place at the same time and thus the trawlerman was always tempted to come amongst the drifters.<sup>3</sup> Even if he wished to avoid those craft he might entangle himself by accident. The lighting regulations were both confused and inadequate, as the whole trade recognised.<sup>4</sup> A trawler shooting its gear three miles to the windward could still come amongst the drifter's nets because of the differing rates at which they moved. The drifter carried by the tide moves only at the rate at which it is running whilst the trawler moves faster than the tide. Even if the trawler were to shoot to the leeward of the drifter, entanglement could still occur, for if the wind were to drop then the drifter could overtake the trawler with similar results.<sup>5</sup> When the two types of fishing boat came close together entanglement could not always be avoided even when they had seen each other. Whilst her nets were out, the drifter was in a helpless position and such a long fleet as the craft had laid took a time to haul in.

Yet, even if the regulations had been more practicable, their effect would still have been most limited. This was because they referred only to Britain and France. Boats from other nations had no obligation to accept them. Indeed, from the 1870s onwards, the main source of trouble for British fishermen lay with boats from Belgium and Holland. What was particularly irritating was

1. See Chapter Seven.

2. 31 & 32 Vict. c45.

3. R.C.English and Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1878-9, 1879 XVII, Report XXV.

4. Report of W.G.Higgins, Esq., Q.C. on the Outrages Committed by Foreign upon British Fishermen in the North Sea, 1881, LXXXII, 541-8.

5. R.C.English and Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1878-9, 1879 XVII, Report XXV.

that when entanglements occurred many of the foreign trawlers freed themselves with little regard for the other's property. Certainly, reports of lost gear through such incidents were both common and expensive. One not untypical victim was the Scarborough yawl Rejoice which lost sixty nets and associated gear valued at £300 in 1874. Her master, John Wilkinson, claimed that the unidentified foreign boat simply parted his nets as they drifted on to its cable without any attempt to resecure them after it had freed itself.<sup>1</sup>

The correct practice for a trawler that had become entangled in a drifter's nets was to fasten the warp, on either side of where it had been necessary to cut it, to a line passed astern. Such a practice was known as 'knotting the warp' and if carried out correctly, would cause only minimal damage. Other allegations pointed to an even more blatant disregard for other fishermen's gear. A number of Belgian trawlers were claimed to be attaching a cutting device to their gear that the English fishermen nicknamed 'devil'.<sup>2</sup> It resembled an anchor somewhat in appearance but had its flukes sharpened. This enabled the craft that carried it to cut straight through any fleet of nets that impeded its course. One such 'devil' was recovered by English fishermen as the result of an entanglement in 1880 and was later publicly displayed at several fishing ports including Scarborough.<sup>3</sup>

To investigate such complaints, the Board of Trade instituted an inquiry under the aegis of W.H.Higgins, Q.C., in May 1880. He visited Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Grimsby, Hull and Scarborough. The story which unfolded before him was one of lawlessness and occasional violence that was often fuelled by 'floating grog shops'. These craft were also known as 'bum boats' and were usually finely built vessels, often with Dutch masters, that sailed about the North Sea carrying out a trade known as coopering. All were well supplied with spirits, cigars and tobacco which were retailed to passing craft. Much business was done with fishermen. In some cases the merchandise was purchased with a

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1. Report of W.H.Higgins, Esq., Q.C., on the Outrages Committed by Foreign upon British Fishermen in the North Sea, 1881 LXXXII, 541.
  2. Hansard, 17th February 1881 and 11th March 1881.
  3. Scarborough Gazette, 18th September 1884.



view to being smuggled ashore without payment of duty. Certainly, the Coastguards at Whitby believed this trade to be rife amongst the visiting herring fleets and seized and searched several craft entering the harbour on one occasion in September 1884. Their efforts on that day, however, brought them little reward, for the fishermen had apparently 'got wind of the raid' and only one craft was found to contain contraband.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever the real reasons for cooping, unrestricted sales of liquor to men engaged in such hard and unremitting labour often resulted in trouble. On one typical occasion John Sheader, master of the Scarborough yawl Mary and Anne, sent some of his men across to one of these craft with a basket of herring that he wished them to exchange for water, of which he was in short supply. The master of the 'bum boat' was also short and gave them instead four bottles of spirits. Three of these were swiftly consumed resulting in a drunken knife drawn brawl that endangered both lives and vessel.<sup>2</sup> In another incident, an apprentice was sent by a vessel's master to such a craft on a similar mission and he returned not only dead drunk but naked, having exchanged all his clothes for liquor. There was also at least one occasion when a trawler's master, with the connivance of his crew, landed on the Continent to illicitly sell the fish and obtain money to spend on the coopers.<sup>3</sup> Despite these evils, the North Sea 'grog shop' trade flourished unlicensed and unrestricted.

W.H.Higgins, concluded that British fishermen, despite such self induced excesses, were suffering intolerable treatment at the hands of their foreign counterparts. The root cause he found to be the lack of internationally agreed codes of conduct covering the North Sea. Faced with these findings the Government at last acted and this report was communicated by the Foreign Office to the countries concerned. As a result of this initiative, a Convention was duly agreed to at the Hague in 1882. This was probably the first time that more than two nations had come together to discuss the exploitation of the North Sea

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1. Scarborough Gazette, 18th September, 1884.
  2. Report of W.H.Higgins, Esq., Q.C. on the Outrages Committed by Foreign upon British Fishermen in the North Sea, 1881, LXXXII, 543-7.
  3. Report of W.H.Higgins, Esq., Q.C. on the Outrages Committed by Foreign upon British Fishermen in the North Sea, 1881, LXXXII, 543-7.

fisheries. The representatives of Great Britain, France, Holland, Germany and Denmark, worked out a code of conduct and system of redress for fishing vessels in those waters and their legislatures subsequently passed ratifying acts.

The British legislation was known as the Sea Fisheries Act 1883<sup>1</sup> and, though the terms of the Convention related only to the North Sea, this extended them around all of the United Kingdom's coasts.<sup>2</sup> The Hague Convention had drawn greatly upon the abortive Anglo-French Convention of 1867 and thus firmly placed many of the 1863-6 Huxley Commission recommendations on fisheries supervision as part of international law. In short, the major countries which bordered on the North Sea then recognised the basic right of open fisheries in international waters, subject only to an agreed code of conduct and system of redress for collisions and damage. Some slight modifications were soon required to simplify proceedings between Great Britain and Belgium. These were brought into effect with the Sea Fisheries Act of 1891.<sup>3</sup>

One controversy that was not resolved by the 1883 Convention concerned the North Sea liquor traffic. Surprisingly, in view of the evils exposed, one objection put forward to its regulation was that such a move would constitute an interference with trade. Eventually, after more discussion and inquiry into the subject, a conference was held at the Hague in 1886 and this resulted in the signing of a Convention in the following year. This agreement was initialled by representatives of the same countries who had signed the 1883 Convention and prohibited entirely the sale of liquor on the North Sea. Furthermore, it also subjected the sale of other goods to a careful system of licensing. The introduction of the Convention was, nevertheless, delayed because, once more, the French failed to ratify. To overcome this setback the other nations entered into a Protocol in 1893 and thus agreed to enforce the terms of this Convention as far as their own subjects were concerned. It was left to the French to give their agreement at some later date.<sup>4</sup>

1. 46 & 47 Vict. c22.

2. First Report of the Inspector of Sea Fisheries, 1886 XXXI, 129-131.

3. J. Johnstone, British Fisheries (1905) 52-3.

4. Ibid., 52-3.



This arrangement was ratified by the British Parliament in 1893 and the liquor traffic was almost effectively suppressed from May 1894 some twelve years after the evils had been exposed.

Basically, the Conventions of 1882 and 1886 laid the foundations for future multilateral cooperation in the field of international fisheries. Though their provisions were far from perfect and applied only to the North Sea, they nevertheless provided a working model by which other similar European fishery problems could be discussed and resolved during the twentieth century. A further foundation, this time paving the way for greater scientific discourse, was laid with the calling of a Conference by Sweden in 1899 that was followed shortly after by two others. As a result, the International Council for the Exploration of the sea was founded in 1902.

Such promising cooperative noises, however, were not to herald the swift emergence of any internationally agreed policies on conservation or quota system for catches to be taken by each nation. Nor was there any major extension of territorial waters until after the middle of the twentieth century. Procrastination on such points was at the root of many problems that afflicted the fishing industry after the Second World War.

#### National Legislation

In England, the first step backwards from the unrestricted freedom to fish as one pleased that had been introduced with the 1868 Sea Fisheries Act, can be said to have occurred because of the findings of the Royal Commission of 1877 into the crab and lobster fisheries. This had been instituted because of claims that stocks were being over-exploited. In the same year Parliament passed the Fisheries (Oyster, Crab and Lobster) Act.<sup>1</sup> This allowed the Board of Trade to introduce orders that prohibited the taking of shell fish under certain conditions and size along stipulated stretches of the coast.<sup>1</sup> Such an order was immediately instituted along the Yorkshire coast between Filey and

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1. 40 & 41 Vict. c42.

Bridlington Quay.<sup>1</sup> However, during the following few years the principal concern of the legislators was to be, as in the international field, with relationship between the different types of fishermen.

During the 1870s, the latent hatred of trawling that was part and parcel of line and drift fishing communities flared up once more into outright opposition. The revival on the home front of this by now traditional antagonism, seems to date from 1877 and coincides with the introduction of steam trawling from converted paddle tugs that began about that time at North Shields.<sup>2</sup> The Government was faced with a great deal of protest once more and, in response to complaints of damage and claims that inshore grounds were being overfished, appointed its two Inspectors of Salmon Fisheries, Frank Buckland and Spencer Walpole, to a new Royal Commission on the English and Welsh Sea Fisheries. After taking evidence at many of the more important fishing stations and inland markets they concluded in their report that, whilst there was no evidence that trawling involved the wasteful destruction of fish and spawn, it could cause considerable damage to both line and drift gear. This, they believed, had probably increased with the advent of steam trawling. In order to lessen this problem they advocated better lighting regulations covering boats operating at night.<sup>3</sup>

Despite their apparently firm belief that trawling could not harm stocks they did not totally rule out the possibility of damage being caused on certain grounds for they advised also that some areas of territorial waters might need to be closed to this practice after future inquiries by themselves. Like the 1863-6 royal commission they were hamstrung by the lack of statistical evidence upon which to base their judgements and urged the Government to provide them. The lack of a single body with responsibility for the English sea fisheries was also noted and they advocated the extension of their own Salmon Fisheries Inspectorate to oversee them in the manner similar to that of the Scottish Fisheries Board.<sup>4</sup>

1. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., 25th March 1891.

2. See chapter Twelve.

3. R.C.English and Welsh Sea Fisheries 1878-9, 1879 XVII, Report XXXIX.

4. R.C.English and Welsh Sea Fisheries 1878-9, 1879 XVII, Report XXXIX.



The Government ignored this latter advice but did take a tentative step forward in the direction of providing statistical information. From 1878 onwards, each railway company was required to forward returns of the tonnage of fish carried inland from every coastal station. For the Government, this system had the advantage of being cheap as it did not require them to provide personnel of their own at the numerous landing points around the coast. However, the information provided was by no means satisfactory. No account was taken of the proportions of each species shipped or of the actual amounts landed and moved out by other modes of transport. Furthermore, this type of data could provide no information on the differing modes of capture employed in taking the fish or the grounds on which the craft had worked. Finally, it did not even differentiate between English-caught fish and that which was being imported in increasing quantities from abroad. The main use to which it can be put is as a general indicator of the level of traffic of fish generally carried overland.<sup>1</sup>

We have noted above that the 1870s and 1880s were notorious for clashes between fishermen in both a national and international context. Apart from the 1881 Inquiry headed by W.H.Higgins, Q.C., there were other attempts by the Board of Trade to get to the root of the problem by means of similar investigations.<sup>2</sup> The lighting regulations were tightened up in 1883,<sup>3</sup> but the Board also reached the conclusion that the troubles at sea might be reduced if the standard of the fishing boats' crews were improved. As a result the Government passed the Fishing Boats Act of 1883.<sup>4</sup> Under the provisions of this legislation skippers of boats of over twenty-five tons were required to obtain certificates of competence similar to a system enforced in the Merchant Navy since 1867.

This Act further clarified a series of regulations covering the engagement of fishermen. Apart from requiring the skipper to keep a log in which all accidents and disciplinary action were noted, it was also required that every crew member should sign an agreement with the skipper regarding the terms of engagement and that upon discharge each should be furnished with a full report

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1. See Chapter Eleven for a full discussion of the limitations of this data.
  2. First Report of the Inspector of Sea Fisheries 1886, 1887 XXI, 129.
  3. First Report of the Inspector of Sea Fisheries 1886, 1887 XXI, 129.
  4. 46 and 47 Vict. c22.

of wages, etc..<sup>1</sup> In addition, other provisions laid down the procedure for the settlement of disputes and the maintenance of discipline. One aim of this legislation was to improve the notoriously hostile atmosphere of suspicion and distrust which pervaded the relationship between masters and men in such ports as Hull and Grimsby which had merited a report of its own.<sup>2</sup>

Yet another important provision was designed to prevent any recurrence of the notorious cases of cruelty and death at the above two ports<sup>3</sup> that had aroused public indignation over the way young fishermen were recruited and employed. In future, it laid down, no boy under the age of sixteen years could serve on a fishing vessel of twenty five tons and upwards without being properly bound by apprenticeship indentures. Only boys over thirteen years old were legally allowed to enter into such an agreement and the whole arrangement had then to be sanctioned by a superintendent of the Mercantile Marine who had to satisfy himself as to its desirability.<sup>4</sup>

The apprenticeship controversy had originated mainly because of the large number of young persons recruited under a system of indentures at Hull and Grimsby. The system was only used on the Yorkshire coast at Scarborough and even there the number of young persons recruited in that way was very small and had been in decline since before 1880.<sup>5</sup> This is not to say that there was little recruitment of boys upon fishing boats along the Yorkshire coast for there was a long tradition of embarking upon such a career as young as eleven. In the coble fishery boys had been introduced to the sea by working with old men in the catching of shell fish and the large luggers had usually carried at least one boy in the crew. Unlike Hull and Grimsby, where most incoming apprentices were outsiders from workhouses and the like and whose welfare had been woefully neglected, almost all the young lads employed on the Yorkshire coast were products of the local tight-knit fishing communities and worked on boats with neighbours and relations. Being thus subject to continued care and control their employment was not the cause of the same degree of controversy.<sup>6</sup>

1. First Report of the Inspector of Sea Fisheries, 1886, 1887 XXI, 129-131.
2. B.O.T. Report on Relations Between Masters and Men, 1882 XVII.
3. See J.Tunstall, The Fishermen (1962), 26-7.
4. First Report of the Inspector of Sea Fisheries, 1886, 1887 XXI, 129.
5. See Appendix XXXVI.
6. B.O.T. Report on Relations Between Masters and Men, 1882 XVII, 15-18.



In the short term, there was to be little abatement in the tide of complaints and fears concerning the operation of trawlers whose numbers and catching power continued to grow. Despite the findings of the two earlier royal commissions which had looked at this subject and the assertions of such eminent experts as Professor Huxley and Spencer Walpole as late as 1883 that trawlers could not really affect stock levels,<sup>1</sup> the feelings of many line fishermen were not to be soothed. In a further attempt to end the controversy another royal commission was instituted in 1884 specifically to look at the problem. The details of this are outlined in Chapter Eleven but unlike its predecessors specific scientific observations were made and indeed the Treasury made available £200 to allow Professor McIntosh of St Andrews to carry them out.<sup>2</sup>

The important point about this royal commission's findings, which were published in 1884, was that there was a perceptible shift in its attitude towards beam trawling. Its two predecessors had accepted that trawlers were sometimes guilty of disrupting the operations of drift and line fishermen and this point was echoed in 1885. However, for the first time, and with a degree of scientific backing, it conceded that trawling could have the effect of diminishing fish stocks, at least in inshore waters where there was considerable evidence of their falling off.<sup>3</sup>

The 1885 Report also recommended that a central authority be set up to supervise and regulate the fisheries of the whole nation. Meanwhile, it advised that the Scottish Fishery Board should be given extra powers that would enable it to pass bye laws regulating the fisheries in territorial waters. Presumably the Scottish Fishery Board's future seemed, in the Report's eyes, to be important for it was also suggested that a similar organisation should be set up to oversee the English fisheries<sup>4</sup> which, of course, had ceased to be covered by the former from 1850.

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1. S. Walpole, 'The British Fish Trade', Fisheries Exhibition Literature Vol.1 (1883), 65-9.
  2. R.C. on Trawling 1884-5, 1885 XVI, Report VII.
  3. R.C. on Trawling, 1884-5, 1885 XVI, Report XLIII.
  4. R.C. on Trawling, 1884-5, 1885 XVI, Report XLIII.

A survey of the bodies concerned with the fisheries in one way or another at this time in the United Kingdom reveals a complex and inconsistent picture. Both Scotland and Ireland had fishery boards though the latter's had more substantial powers with regard to the creation of regulatory byelaws etc.. The Scottish Board was based on Edinburgh and had, of course, undergone a somewhat complex process of evolution since it had been founded in 1808 to oversee white herring curing operations throughout Britain. Though in theory confined to Scotland, since 1850 it had continued to oversee herring curing operations along the north Northumberland coast. Since 1850 England and Wales had foregone the benefit of such a centralised authority. Indeed, no one Government department could be said to be charged with sole responsibility for their fisheries. In the early and mid eighties, for example, there was the small Salmon Fisheries Inspectorate belonging to the Home Office which figured in the estimates for only £1,048 per year.<sup>1</sup> As its name would suggest, its remit was limited and it was not usually, except in the case of the 1877/8 Royal Commission, concerned with the wider sea fisheries. Other departments handling fishery matters included the Board of Trade, where lighting, berthing and manning regulations came under the auspices of the Marine Department; the Foreign Office, which was expected to protect the fisheries interest on the international front; the Board of Customs who were responsible for vessel registration; and, lastly, there was a small office under a Mr. Giffen where railway fish traffic statistics were collected and collated.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, and in order to oversee the effective implementation of regulations, particularly with regard to the 1882 Convention, the 1883 Sea Fisheries Act classified a number of Government servants as Fishery Officers. These included every Board of Trade Officer, every Commissioned Officer of the Royal Navy, every Collector and Principal Officer of the Customs and many senior officials of the Coastguard Service. Despite their multifarious backgrounds and offices, there seems to have been no thorough attempt to coordinate

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1. Hansard 5th March, 1888.

2. Hansard 5th March, 1888.



their activities.<sup>1</sup>

In 1886, the Government took some of the advice proffered by the 1884/5 Royal Commission. The staff of the Salmon Fisheries Inspectorate were transferred from the Home Office to the Board of Trade and the name of their body changed to the Inspectorate of the Sea Fisheries of England and Wales. The range of activities it was expected to cover were quite considerably enlarged in a manner commensurate with its new title. Henceforward, an annual report on the condition of the English fishing industry was produced. Apart from a small full-time inspectorate, provision was made for the collection of quayside statistics and information from individual fishing stations by the appointment of part time officials known as collectors.

On the Yorkshire coast every fishing station from Redcar to Hornsea had a collector appointed to oversee its operations. Several of these individuals already had official positions as Coastguards, Customs Officers and the like but many of those appointed along the Yorkshire coast were from the local communities which they were to oversee and were often local shopkeepers or retired mariners.<sup>2</sup>

The main criticisms that could be levelled at these new arrangements were that they did not go anything like as far as the 1885 Royal Commission had recommended and that the Inspectorate was run by men without practical experience in the fisheries.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the small number of full-time inspectors - just three at first - meant that they could only make a limited impact. Indeed, it was claimed two years after the Inspectorate's creation that there were still groups of fishermen around the coast who did not know of its existence<sup>4</sup>. Further pressure was placed on the Government through criticisms of this nature by MPs from fishing constituencies and, increasingly during the latter years of the eighties, from the trawling interest. As noted below in Chapter Eleven, this sector of the industry had reversed its earlier views on the possibility

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1. Ibid., 5th March, 1888.

2. S.C. on Fishery Investigations, 1908 XIII, Appendix VIII, 476.

3. Hansard, 10th April, 1888.

4. Ibid., 10th April, 1888.

of damage being caused by unregulated trawling. In response to such pressures the Government took steps to bridge the distance between the Inspectorate and the fishing grounds by creating the framework for a totally new tier of administrative and regulatory machinery.

In the wake of their reorganisation of local government, the Government passed the Sea Fisheries Regulation Act in 1888.<sup>1</sup> This provided the machinery and means by which local sea fisheries committees could be set up. These bodies could have, within defined limits, a range of powers for the regulation of areas of English and Welsh coastal fisheries. Under the provisions of the Act the Board of Trade could, on application from one of the new county or borough councils, create a local sea fishery district and constitute a committee to oversee it. The finance for such an undertaking was to be provided by the local government bodies that were responsible for its creation and not the Treasury. Once the arrangement had been ratified by Parliament the sea fisheries committees would then possess the power to make bye laws regulating or prohibiting certain types of fishing or the usage of certain kinds of gear. They were also empowered to take steps for the conservation of shell fish and the control of noxious effluent.

All such bye laws had to be approved by the Board of Trade and in order to ensure that the policies of the various sea fisheries committees were co-ordinated, annual meetings of their representatives were to be arranged. Another important power possessed by such committees allowed them to appoint fishery officers to enforce their regulations and provide supervision. If, as was usually the case, more than one council cooperated in the formation of such a fisheries district then the committee which oversaw it had to include their representatives as well as at least an equal number of representatives from the various fishery interests covered.<sup>2</sup>

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1. 51 and 52 Vict. c54.

2. Third Report of the Inspectors of Sea Fisheries for 1888, 1889 XXIII, 203.



The North Eastern District Sea Fisheries Committee

One of the first to be formed was the North Eastern District Sea Fisheries Committee (N.E.D.S.F.C.). Its creation was due to the combined efforts of the local authorities covering the area from the Tyne to Lindsey. Quite naturally, the northern boundary was swiftly fixed as the River Tyne, but some difficulty arose as to whether the southern boundary should be at Donna Nook or Ingoldmells Point, somewhat further south. The uncertainty arose from the fact that the county council responsible for Lindsey were anxious to have as little of their coast as was compatible with the inclusion of the River Humber under its jurisdiction and thus chargeable to the rates. In contrast, the smackowners of Grimsby wished for as much as possible of the flat Lincolnshire coast to be included, for they considered it to be an important nursery for deep sea fish.<sup>1</sup>

In an attempt to resolve the issue an inquiry was held at Grimsby and this reported in favour of the more southerly boundary and the Board of Trade adopted this recommendation. However, the House of Commons was to reverse this decision and when the N.E.D.S.F.C. came into existence the area south of Donna Nook was not included - though it was included in the Eastern District Sea Fisheries area which was created a little later. By the end of October 1890, all questions of boundaries had been resolved and the N.E.D.S.F.C. was to hold its first meeting on the following 24th November.<sup>2</sup>

Initially, the N.E.D.S.F.C. had two full-time employees, a clerk based on Beverley and a fishery officer. The latter was originally required to reside at Scarborough but was later moved to Bridlington. Quarterly meetings were held, usually at Scarborough or York as these were perhaps the two most accessible centres. During the years down to the Great War the N.E.D.S.F.C. was to be mainly involved in the formulation and policing of its bye laws, in commissioning reports, as well as providing fishermen and Government alike with information on the fisheries.

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1. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., 24th November 1890.

2. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., 24th November 1890.

In March 1891, it took over responsibility for an order made by the Board of Trade in 1885 under the Fisheries (Oyster, Crab and Lobster) Act, 1877. This had been passed in response to overfishing of shellfish and prohibited the taking of crabs under certain conditions and size for purposes of bait on a portion of the Yorkshire coast between Filey, Flamborough and Bridlington.<sup>1</sup> In 1895, it introduced its own bye law in this field which created a close season for crab and lobsters from the beginning of September to the end of December.<sup>2</sup>

Its most immediate priority, however, was to bring about the cessation of trawling within the three mile limit. As early as April 1891 it proposed a bye law which would totally prohibit such practices but it at once ran into fierce opposition. This came not from the first class trawler owners and skippers, whose operations had been the original cause of great destruction, but from those men with open boats who practised varying forms of inshore trawling.<sup>3</sup> The most important focus of this opposition was based on Bridlington Quay, where trawling provided employment for about sixty such craft at certain times of the year. These were the only truly coastal fishermen who objected in any number and a local inquiry was held at Bridlington into the whole issue.

The other group of objectors were the Humber shrimp and prawn fishermen, who had long used a form of trawl during their operations in the estuary. Again, the N.E.D.S.F.C. held a local enquiry into the issue and the shrimp fishermen were able to air their grievances. The result of both disputes was that modifications were made to the proposed bye law. When it was finally approved by the Board of Trade it completely outlawed trawling inside the three mile limit with two major exceptions. In the Humber estuary, from an imaginary line drawn between St Andrews Dock and New Holland Pier to another from Spurn Point to Donna Nook, the shrimp fishermen could pursue their traditional activities from the beginning of April to the end of September.<sup>4</sup> In Bridlington Bay, sailing or row boats were allowed to trawl in an area enclosed by two straight lines

1. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., 25th March, 1891.

2. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Crab and Lobster Report, October 1895.

3. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., 28th April, 1891 and 24th June, 1891.

4. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., 15th August, 1891.



running south west from South Landing Flamborough and true south east of the North Pier at Bridlington Quay. The season though was restricted to the period between the beginning of February and the end of October and the trawl could not exceed twenty two feet in the beam or be kept on the sea bed for over half an hour.<sup>1</sup>

The N.E.D.S.F.C. showed little hesitation in making use of scientific observations, so far as its limited resources would allow, in order to assess the condition of certain fisheries. Investigations of this nature were undertaken in 1892 into shrimp fishing in the Humber. These provided further justification for the continuance of the existing practice by concluding that trawling was the only practicable means known of exploiting such a low value fishery.<sup>2</sup>

In order to improve the supply of bait which was a source of great problems for the inshore fishermen, Professor McIntosh - late of the 1885 Royal Commission on Trawling - was commissioned in 1892 to make a report on the mussel beds of the Tees, Esk and Humber. He concluded that the traditional beds - long a source of bait - had been greatly wasted through the want of an efficient system of regulation and the absence of a restocking programme. Without such he could see no prospect of their being improved.<sup>3</sup> As a direct result of these findings, the N.E.D.S.F.C. took charge of the Tees mussel beds and attempted to improve their condition through a planned programme of reseedling and organised shell fish collection. Such a programme caused the N.E.D.S.F.C. to recruit a further employee.

Yet another early policy of the N.E.D.S.F.C. lay in the field of education and enlightenment. Attempts were made to widen the horizons of the working fishermen and explain to them the significance of the conservation measures that were being undertaken. A scientific and technical lectures were instituted under his auspices at many communities along the Yorkshire coast. Such a venture, however, found little favour amongst the self education inshore fishermen and was soon abandoned through a lack of interest.<sup>4</sup>

1. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., 15th August 1891.

2. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Report to the Committee of Investigations made on Board the S.S. Vallotta on Prawn and Shrimp Trawling in the Humber, 11th January 1893.

3. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Report of Professor MacIntosh, 13th July 1892.

4. S.C. on Sea Fisheries, 1893 XV, Minutes of Evidence, 6710-6715.

In the main, the weight of existing policing regulations, with the exception of the Tees Mussel Beds, fell on the shoulders of the fishery officer. His effectiveness was impaired by the fact that he had neither assistant nor boat. From his base at Bridlington Quay he had to travel the coast under his jurisdiction by train. If he required to go to sea to check the activities of fishermen he had first to find a boat and crew that were willing to be hired. Although he often received the support and intelligence of local individuals, or Coastguard and Customs officials, his ability to carry out his duties effectively were still limited. Indeed, his early reports are scattered with references in particular to the incursions of first class steamers against which it was almost impossible for him to take effective action.<sup>1</sup>

Even when he supervised the operations of the inshoremen it was not easy to hire small boats and this was not always due to the natural reticence of fishermen to be associated closely with a figure of authority. On one occasion he persuaded some Flamborough fishermen to take him out so that he could check on the operations of the Bridlington Quay inshore trawlers who were suspected of infringing the bye laws. The expedition proved this to be the case and several Bridlington men were caught contravening the regulations. However, the next time the Fishery Officer tried to hire a boat for the same purpose at Flamborough, he was met by firm refusals even though the locals there detested trawling. Their reluctance, he claimed, was due to threats made by certain individuals from the Quay to damage the unguarded Flamborough cobbles at night should they ever assist him again.<sup>2</sup>

In order to provide more effective policing, the N.E.D.S.F.C. decided to equip their Fishery Officer with a suitable patrol vessel. During 1897 a steam launch was chartered, principally with a view to checking upon the incursions of steam trawlers. The following year it was decided to order a purpose-built vessel. Named the St Quintin, after the chairman of the N.E.D.S.F.C., she was

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1. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., 11th October 1893; 15th June 1894; and 31st December 1897.
  2. Departmental Committee on Inshore Fisheries, 1914 XXX, Minutes of Evidence, q.2584.



a sixty foot long screw steamer and was built at a cost of £2,875. The craft entered service in June 1899 and a crew of four were signed up for the patrols along the full length of the Fishery District.<sup>1</sup>

Despite this substantial capital outlay, the N.E.D.S.F.C., continued to have its work cut out trying to ensure that regulations were not infringed. In part, this was due to the continued incursions of rogue first class trawlers but increasingly it was due to a growing number of contraventions by inshore men, especially when trawling. Though the fishermen at most small Yorkshire coast communities had traditionally detested trawling and at first welcomed the regulations restricting it, opinions began to change. From about 1906, there were increasing calls from places such as Filey and Whitby,<sup>2</sup> as well as the inshore men of Scarborough<sup>3</sup> and Hartlepool,<sup>4</sup> to be allowed the same privileges as those enjoyed by Bridlington Quay fishermen. Furthermore, the fishermen of the latter port grew ever more vociferous in their demands for extensions of both trawling area and season.

As a result of this pressure, usually in the form of petitions or deputations, the Bridlington Quay boats were first allowed to keep their trawls in the water for an hour each haul rather than for a half. Then in 1904, they had their trawling area extended southward to a line from Skipsea Watchhouse.<sup>5</sup> However, all other requests for the right to trawl were firmly rejected by the N.E.D.S.F.C., who were still mindful of the damage done by all types of trawling insure during the 1880s. The inshore fishermen for their part, were often faced with shortages of bait which made line-fishing unprofitable and turned to trawling as a possible way of maintaining their income. Pressure to make ends meet also induced a number to attempt to evade the shell fish regulations, especially those that prohibited the landing of berried or undersized lobsters, as well as landing them out of season.

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1. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., 30th June 1899.
  2. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., 1st December 1906.
  3. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., 23rd January 1907.
  4. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., 24th July 1907.
  5. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., 26th October 1904.

Indeed, the late 1890s and early 1900s were often hard times for the inshore fishermen. The almost total preoccupation with surviving from day to day reduced their ability to consider the possible long term benefits that might accrue from rigid adherence to the N.E.D.S.F.C. regulations even though many had met with popular approval when originally introduced. The temptation to infringe the bye laws in search of short term gain was to remain a problem and was lamented by W.H. St Quintin, the committ's chairman, in 1914:

'I think there are a lot of fishermen who never look ahead of themselves, if they land a small crab, if they can get a penny for it today they never think that if they left it another year they could get 6d for it. As soon as they get a copper for it they land it.' 1

Thus there was a widespread tendency to evade the bye laws, just as from the 1860s to the 1880s, there had been widespread calls for greater regulation. To try and ensure that they were adhered to, called for a great deal of cunning on the part of the fishery officer and his crew. It also brought out a similar range of talent amongst the fishermen. In short, a sophisticated game of cat and mouse developed. The fishermen watched the movements of the patrol vessel most closely. It was known that the craft had to come into harbour every twelve hours in order to rest her crew. The N.E.D.S.F.C. became convinced that wires were sent along the coast informing other fishermen that she was in. Once these were received it was known that she would not be out on patrol again for twelve hours when her crew returned to duty and so she could not keep watch on the fishermen. To break themselves free of such constant monitoring the fishery officer would often leave the St Quintin in the charge of the mate and proceed up or down the coast by rail in order to check on the fishermen.<sup>2</sup> The greatest source of friction throughout the first decade of the twentieth century was to remain the inshore trawling in Bridlington Quay. Indeed, the fishery officer considered the Bridlington Quay men gave him more trouble than all the others put together. Furthermore, when men were caught they often received a great deal of sympathy from the Bench who were aware of local conditions. The N.E.D.S.F.C. lamented the fact that such prosecutions often met

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1. Report of Departmental Committee on Fishery Investigations, 1914, XXX, Minutes of Evidence,q2580.
  2. Report of Departmental Committee on Fishery Investigations, 1914, XXX, Minutes of Evidence,q2590.



with only the lightest of fines which they considered to be no deterrent.<sup>1</sup>

The position of the N.E.D.S.F.C. was far from easy. On the one side they were concerned to maintain the long term viability of the inshore fisheries by imposing conservationist regulations that restricted the freedom of the fishermen to make their living as best they pleased. On the other hand they had to consider and contend with the poor economic position of the inshore fisherman which in itself was an inducement to ignore such measures. The 1888 Sea Fisheries Regulation Act which had created the machinery for it and other similar district sea fisheries committees had in many ways been an enlightened piece of legislation. It is obvious from the early work of the N.E.D.S.F.C. that it was in a better position to judge the situation of the local fisheries along the Yorkshire coast than was the remote London based Sea Fisheries Inspectorate. However, in other respects the N.E.D.S.F.C.'s effectiveness was hamstrung by several aspects of the very legislation which had created it. For example, it relied for financial support on the local authorities that were responsible for its creation.<sup>2</sup> Inland counties, whose populations benefited from abundant supplies of cheap and nutritious fish, made no contribution towards its cost.

In the ten or so years preceding the Great War there were several calls for the Treasury to take over financial responsibility but these met with no success. Because income continued to depend on local authority rates there was a constant emphasis on economy which contrived in this case to restrict the effectiveness of the N.E.D.S.F.C. When it was decided, for example, in 1897 to invest in the patrol vessel the N.E.D.S.F.C. became involved in a drawn out legal battle with North Riding County Council, who refused to make their obligatory contribution until the case went against them at the Court of Kings Bench.<sup>3</sup> Even though the fishing industry was important to the North Yorkshire coast's economy, it appears that it did not carry much influence in local government circles.

1. Report of Departmental Committee on Inshore Fisheries, 1914 XXX, Minutes of Evidence, q.2918.

2. Report of Departmental Committee on Inshore Fisheries, 1914 XXX, Minutes of Evidence, q.2937.

3. S.C. on Fishery Investigations, 1908 XIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 1304-5; also Report of Departmental Committee on Fishery Investigation, 1914 XXX Minutes of Evidence, 2615.

Because of financial limitations, for many years members of the committee did not receive reimbursement for the cost of attending meetings, even though these were often held at a considerable distance from home. This was damaging because it subsequently proved hard to recruit working fishermen from the smaller communities and thus achieve a fair cross section of interested parties. Had they been recruited more easily then the difficulties which the N.E.D.S.F.C. often faced with them might have been lessened. Sometimes they were persuaded to join but even then the demands of earning their families' daily bread meant it was usually impossible to secure their regular attendance.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the original aim of the legislation which was to form an effective forum of interested parties was to some degree impaired. To many fishermen on the coast, the N.E.D.S.F.C. appeared remote and unrepresentative for many years to come - even though it was more accessible than any London based organisation. Furthermore, the lack of financial resources also prevented any long term programme of scientific investigation. A couple of other similar bodies, the Northumbrian and the Lancashire, did manage such a step but this was largely due to the contribution of wealthy and interested gentlemen.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps another barrier to total effectiveness was that the N.E.D.S.F.C.'s outer barrier of jurisdiction was the internationally agreed three mile limit. This was, of course, an artificial creation which bore no direct relationship to the normal activities of the inshore fishermen and their grounds. For their activities to have been more fully encompassed would have necessitated the acceptance of a much more flexible and wider definition of territorial waters but this would have been contrary to the internationally agreed conception of international waters.

Yet a further barrier to the early effectiveness of the N.E.D.S.F.C. was that several of its early ventures were rewarded with less than complete success. For example, the attempt to resurrect the ailing Tees mussel beds by instituting the programme of conservation proved a failure despite an annual outlay of £300.<sup>3</sup>

1. Report of Departmental Committee on Fishery Investigations, 1914 XXX, Minutes of Evidence, q2565-7.
2. J. Johnstone, The British Fisheries (1905) 106-9.
3. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., 15th January 1907.



This project was hamstrung from the start by the opposition of local fishermen and the rising pollution of the Tees. Abandonment of the scheme came in 1907. As we have noted, several other of its bye laws were also subject to attack. Although the original regulations that restricted the seasons for crab and lobster fishing had met initially with approval, they were later to arouse much criticism because such measures had not been taken by the two neighbouring sea fisheries committees. Bowing to pressure from communities such as Flamborough on the subject, an inquiry was held on their usefulness by Mr Tosh in 1905. Because he found against their continuance they were abandoned.<sup>1</sup>

The N.E.D.S.F.C. was to remain much more resolute in its defence of inshore trawling restrictions and throughout the years down to the Great War refused to contemplate any further extension of the practice within the waters under its jurisdiction. However, after hostilities had started it was obliged to open much of its waters to inshore trawling because of the national dearth of food caused by the U boat campaign.<sup>2</sup>

Another costly problem was the St Quintin. Though purpose-built, the craft was far from an outright success. She was found to be somewhat top heavy and thus not able to operate in rough weather, even after expensive modification in the early 1900s. Further, her top speed was only eight knots and by the opening of the second decade of the twentieth century the latest trawlers were capable of eleven knots and could leave her behind in any pursuit.<sup>3</sup> In 1913 she was sold off and not replaced. The N.E.D.S.F.C. decided to appoint three assistant fishery officers to ensure more thorough land based policing instead.<sup>4</sup>

Despite these early setbacks, the N.E.D.S.F.C.'s long term worth for the protection and administration of the inshore fisheries was gradually recognised. It has developed into a valuable forum for the discussion and dissemination of information on the inshore fisheries as well as providing a valuable link with Whitehall. The removal of the more unpopular restrictions on close season shell fishing and open boat trawling eased the strained relationship which it had en-

1. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Mr. Tosh's Report on the Crab and Lobster Fisheries, 6th November 1905.

2. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., 10 November 1915, and 12 November 1919.

3. Report of Departmental Committee on Fishery Investigations 1914 XXX, Minutes of Evidence, q2615.

4. Report of Departmental Committee on Fishery Investigations 1914 XXX, Minutes of Evidence, q2567.

joyed with certain sections of the fishing communities. Despite the recommendation of the 1914 Committee on the Inshore Fisheries that all such bodies should be abolished,<sup>1</sup> it survives to this day (1984) and its activities are designed to conserve the viability of the inshore fisheries on the Yorkshire and Durham coasts.

#### The Board of Agriculture and Fisheries

In 1903 a further reorganisation of the administrative structure was undertaken and responsibility for the English and Welsh sea fisheries passed from the Board of Trade to the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries. In effect this meant that the responsibilities of the body were taken over directly by a Department of State. At the same time changes were instituted in the mode and collection of fishery statistics with a view to making them more effective.

The cause of this latter alteration originated largely because of the recommendations of the Select Committee on the Sea Fisheries 1893 and the Stockholm International Conference of 1899. The latter concluded that it was desirable to collect internationally uniform data regarding the number, weight and value of fish landed, in addition to recording the method of capture and size of the crew. At first, the new Board of Agriculture and Fisheries had less effective power than the Scottish and Irish fishery boards. Indeed, initially it was primarily concerned with the collection of statistical and in coordinating the work of the sea fishery committees. However, its scope was increased from 1910 when it became responsible for the conduct of England's share of the international scientific investigations into the sea fisheries that had previously been the responsibility of the Marine Biological Association. At first a sum of £8,240 was provided for this purpose.<sup>2</sup>

A survey of the relationship between fishing industry and State shows that by 1914 the tide of laissez faire, which had reached high water with the 1868 Sea Fisheries Act was on the ebb. The creation of sea fishery committees and the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries had produced administrative machinery

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1. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., 14th May 1914.

2. J.T.Jenkins, The Sea Fisheries (1920) 246-7.



of a complexity that would scarcely have been approved of by Professor Huxley and his colleagues. State intervention in the affairs of English territorial waters had grown considerably and many of the bye laws passed in the interests of conservation circumscribed the fishermen's freedom of action. Although these were primarily concerned, in the case of England, with inshore fisheries, it is doubtful whether they would accord with even the loosest definition of Professor Huxley's dictum that fishermen should be left to pursue their calling how they liked and where they like.<sup>1</sup> The principal factor in the rolling back of laissez faire in this area was the realisation that man could affect the size and vitality of fish stocks by his own efforts and therefore his actions required some degree of control if the industry was to remain viable.

On a wider front, the Scottish Fishery Board had overcome the free traders' attempts to abolish it and subsequently it had expanded its role and power. It was widely accepted that it had an important part to play in the conservation and improvement of the fisheries and it had even taken the controversial step of closing a section of international waters in the Moray Firth to British vessels. Abroad, certain countries had, by 1914, already taken steps to impose minimum landing sizes for many kinds of fish and in other ways anticipated similar British legislation passed in the 1930s. However, international cooperation on conservationist issues remained marred by short term national self interest which often put great pressure on fish stocks and stored up problems for the future.

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1. S.Walpole, 'The British Fish Trade', Fisheries Exhibition Literature, 1883 vol.1, 68-9.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: A BACKGROUND TO ECONOMIC PROBLEMS 1877-1890

The years under consideration represent something of a watershed in the development of the North Sea fishing industry. In many respects, they seem to have witnessed a succession of crises. North of the border, Gray has shown us that the herring industry suffered a dramatic reversal of fortune with the abrupt termination in 1884 of decades of almost unbroken growth.<sup>1</sup> In England controversy was rarely far from the surface with two royal commissions<sup>2</sup> looking particularly into questions of overfishing and damage to white fish stocks. These issues were to remain sources of intense argument into the nineties and beyond. In the field of industrial relations there was conflict on a hitherto unprecedented scale with several notable strikes taking place at Hull, Grimsby and Scarborough.<sup>3</sup>

During this time, the Government was also moved to examine the terms of employment and recruitment of labour after several notorious cases of ill treatment and death came to life, for prevailing practices were believed by some to be a contributory factor.<sup>4</sup> Westminster had further cause for concern because relations between British and foreign fishermen - often tense - degenerated into a state approaching, at times, open warfare.<sup>5</sup>

Such a relentless series of afflictions combined to keep the industry in a state of turmoil. They also obliged the Government to intervene in the activities of the English fishing industry on a hitherto unparalleled scale. By the close of the 1880s Westminster, in conjunction with the legislatures several other North Sea nations had not only made moves towards establishing an international system of law and order for extra-territorial waters, but it had also set up a Government inspectorate to oversee the English and Welsh fishing industries.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, machinery had been created whereby local government bodies could be set up to control fishing operations in inshore waters. Additionally, the State had finally accepted responsibility for the

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1. M.Gray, op.cit., 146-7.

2. R.C.English and Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1878/9, 1879 XVI and R.C. on Trawling 1883-5, 1885 XVI.

3. R.Brown, Waterfront Organisation in Hull, 1870-1890 (Hull 1972) 25 and 34. and also see Chapter Thirteen.

4. J.Tunstall, The Fishermen (1962) 25-8.

5. See Chapter Ten.

6. See Chapter Ten.



national collation of reliable statistics: a role it still fulfills today.

One other fundamentally important change that came about during these years was the first commercially successful direct application of the marine steam engine to the actual process of catching fish. By the end of the eighties, the construction of sailing smacks had ceased at all but a handful of fishing centres and purpose-built steam trawlers were rapidly taking their place.<sup>1</sup>

In attempting to understand the nature and causes of these events, it is necessary to examine the economic forces that were acting upon the industry at this time. These years, of course, fall within that part of the nineteenth century that is sometimes called the 'Great Depression'. It does seem likely that many of the problems facing the fishing industry were a direct result of changes that were afflicting the economy as a whole.

One major feature of the 'Great Depression' was its effect upon agricultural food prices. Indeed that area of the economy was once considered to be its main victim. However, some sectors of agriculture suffered much more seriously than did others. Cereals were badly affected and this led to a dramatic cutback in the acreage and consequently the production of wheat.<sup>2</sup> Though farmers continued to grow oats and barley on a considerable scale, such crops were increasingly destined to provide fodder and essential straw for livestock rather than for human consumption.<sup>3</sup>

The livestock sector was able to ride out these troubles somewhat more easily. This was because the rise in real incomes, that were another feature of the depression, increased demand for animal products. The buoyant demand for milk, for example, helped to overcome problems caused by a great inflow of foreign butter and cheese. Though there were also considerable imports of both live and frozen meat, these tended to compete only with lower quality home meat. Indeed, imported meat seems to have been clearly destined for a different market to better quality English beef and lamb. This can be seen from the fact that

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1. See Chapter Twelve.

2. S.B.Saul, The Myth of the Great Depression (1969), 34-5.

3. Ibid., 34-5.

FIGURE LV: Price Indices for Mutton and Beef 1876-1889  
 (Average of 1876-8 = 100)

	Mutton		Beef	
	Prime	Middling	Prime	Middling
1876	104	105	103	104
1877	99	97	101	98
1878	97	99	108	98
1879	92	94	91	89
1880	95	97	96	98
1881	99	102	93	96
1882	104	108	99	102
1883	105	110	101	102
1884	92	96	96	98
1885	81	85	86	87
1886	89	90	81	80
1887	75	76	71	72
1888	83	85	79	77
1889	90	90	78	77

Source:

Taken from Saurbeck's meat prices from the London market published in the Journal of the Royal Statistical Society and converted to the base of 1876-9.



though imports of beef and lamb fell in price by 23% and 30% respectively between the late 1860s and mid 1890s the home produced varieties fell by only 11% and 8% respectively.<sup>1</sup>

The period covered by this chapter does not correspond exactly with that of the Great Depression. Nevertheless, it is obvious that during these years a fall-off was experienced throughout most of the agrarian sector, whichever price series are consulted. Indeed, Figure LV shows another series of statistics taken from Saurbeck's work on British meat prices and modified to a base of 1876-9 = 100. They show that there was a marked decline in prices during the 1880s alone.<sup>2</sup> These once more indicate that the overall trend appears to be downward during this decade.

Though English meat prices fell less than imported meat in general and though we are told that their decline did not commence until the mid 1880s, the fact remains that they did fall. It is obvious that with real incomes rising then meat would be available to a larger section of the community, particularly as we know that other basic foodstuffs were falling faster.

In view of this evidence, it seems logical to suppose that white fish prices were falling also. Furthermore, given that the traditional view in this country is that fish is less favoured than meat, then we might expect fish prices to fall more steeply than those of meat. If this was the case then we may have gone a long way towards explaining why these years proved so difficult for the fishing industry as a whole.

Unfortunately, any historian seeking to make such a comparison between fish and other foodstuffs runs into one immediate problem. This is the apparent lack of long run price series relating to English fish prices. The immediate absence of such information was bewailed by successive royal commissions from 1866 to 1885. Their complaints on this score were one reason why the Government agreed to organise directly the collation of price statistics amongst others from 1886.<sup>3</sup> Before this time along the Yorkshire coast, such statistics

1. S.B.Saul, op.cit., 34-5.

2. See Figure LV.

3. 47 and 48 Vict. c27.

are to be found only sporadically and no record books of individual merchants seem to have survived. It has, therefore, been necessary to spread the net further afield. However, even market reports from Hull are absent until well into the 1880s. We are fortunate, though, that the situation at Grimsby is markedly more clear for research has uncovered certain price series.<sup>1</sup>

Though Grimsby lies outside of Yorkshire and therefore, to some extent, this thesis, it should still be possible to use these statistics as a guide to what was happening to prices both nationally and on the Yorkshire coast. By this period, Grimsby was one of England's premier fishing ports and its fleets not only worked on the same grounds as those of Scarborough but its fish were sold in the same markets. Therefore, the Grimsby fishing industry must have been subject to similar fluctuations in supply and demand.

The initial material examined contained not only prices but also data on the catches and performance of four Grimsby smacks between the years 1875 and 1893. In addition, the same figures for the year 1867 have also been recorded. They were collated by James Alward, a prominent Grimsby smackowner and used as evidence given to the S.C. on Sea Fisheries in 1893. Though these details were not printed with the publication of this committee's report, Alward later passed them on to Walter Garstang, who used them in an article he wrote on the North Sea fishing industry in 1901.<sup>2</sup>

The evidence they reveal is most interesting. Surprisingly, they show that the average price each smack received per cwt of its catch was on an upward trend to 1890. Indeed, out of the principal varieties caught, only haddock exhibited a downward tendency.<sup>3</sup> Such a trend, of course, is quite the opposite of that experienced by most other sectors of food production.

It is not possible, however, to draw from this evidence alone the conclusion that all fish prices were moving in this fashion. They merely indicate that this could be the overall tendency. There could be several reasons why

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1. See Figure LVIII.

2. W.Garstang, 'The Impoverishment of the Sea', Journal of the Marine Biological Association VI, July, 1900, 1.

3. See Figures LVI, LVII and LVIII.



FIGURE LVI: Average Price of Fish Caught by Four Grimsby Smacks  
 (Average of 1876-8 = 100)

	Haddock	Plaice	Per cwt. Prime	Rough	Total
1875	116	107	100	97	96
1876	104	98	99	100	88
1877	106	100	100	101	103
1878	92	100	100	99	109
1879	78	106	99	96	109
1880	78	109	108	99	107
1881	86	117	89	97	133
1882	71	122	117	99	100
1883	80	133	116	94	110
1884	69	117	114	90	109
1885	59	115	137	88	116
1886	68	148	120	84	116
1887	60	143	141	98	112
1888	59	176	178	95	123
1889	52	176	137	92	126

Source: W.Garstang, The Impoverishment of the Sea.

FIGURE LVII: Percentages of Catch Per Species for Four Grimsby Smacks

	Plaice	Haddock	Prime	Rough	Total
1867	50	41	7	2	100
1875	35	60	3	2	100
1876	38	57	3	2	100
1877	35	56	7	2	100
1878	30	57	9	4	100
1879	32	53	11	5	100
1880	38	48	9	5	100
1881	36	41	12	11	100
1882	30	56	7	7	100
1883	29	56	8	7	100
1884	32	51	9	9	100
1885	30	51	10	9	100
1886	27	55	8	10	100
1887	26	56	7	11	100
1888	29	56	6	9	100
1889	27	52	10	11	100
1890	26	59	6	9	100
1891	22	64	5	9	100
1892	25	64	4	7	100

Source: W.Garstang, The Impoverishment of the Sea.



FIGURE LVIII: Grimsby Fishmarket Prices 1876-1889

(Average 1876-8 = 100)

	Soles*	White Fish Plaice*	Haddock*	Cod	Herrings Fresh <sup>+</sup>	Salt <sup>+</sup>
1876	90	86	141	71	111	126
1877	92	75	57	71	100	68
1878	117	138	103	158	85	100
1879	99	95	103	55	70	63
1880	N.Q.	N.Q.	N.Q.	N.Q.	70	N.Q.
1881	122	83	127	85	89	121
1882	114	95	109	N.Q.	85	53
1883	137	139	36	353	81	N.Q.
1884	104	70	36	141	30	26
1885	118	92	41	85	56	47
1886	112	113	36	113	30	16
1887	133	137	28	169	26	26
1888	170	148	45	155	62	N.Q.
1889	184	157	37	226	70	53

\* Five week period commencing first week of October

+ Five week period commencing first week of September

N.Q. Not Quoted

Source: Grimsby News

these craft were able to sell their fish for ever higher prices. It could be that over time they brought in an ever better quality of fish as their skippers became more knowledgeable about where to catch the best fish, though this seems most unlikely. Alternatively, the fish buyers who acted for these craft might have been able, through their contacts and sales expertise, to obtain ever higher prices for these smacks. In short, though the evidence does suggest an upward trend in fish prices, the sample is too small to be taken as representative of the industry as a whole.

However, another price series has been obtained from Grimsby that is much wider in scope. This shows the prevailing fish market prices as quoted in the local press. Such transactions began to be quoted in detail from 1876 and, as a result, it has been possible to obtain a through run on a few species of fish to 1889.<sup>1</sup> The picture they reveal is remarkable in the degree of conformity it exhibits with those of the four smacks. Once more, we can see that the trend over the whole period covered is for white fish prices to rise, with the exception of haddock.

Though a national picture will not emerge until more price series have been located and analysed, this evidence is sufficient to suggest most strongly that the experience of the English white fishing industry differed markedly with regard to prices from that of other food producing sectors of the economy. This thesis gains further backing from the records of the Sea Fisheries Inspectorate of England and Wales. Though its data on prices was collected from only 1887, the short three year run to 1889 does nothing to indicate that fish prices were falling. Indeed, quite the reverse seems to have been the case; with this time haddock included in the trend.<sup>2</sup>

In an era of falling prices, it seems at first sight most unusual that white fish prices moved contrary to this trend. This fact, if it indeed be a national phenomenon, would tend to rule out any question that the industry's problems were linked to the falling value of fish caught. Indeed, given that neither the 1879 or the 1885 Royal Commissions came to the conclusion that

1. See Figure LVIII

2. See Figure LIX



FIGURE LIX: Value of Fish in England and Wales

	Turbot p	Sole p	Cod p	Haddock p
1887	292	456	0.68	0.35
1888	312	523	0.67	0.38
1889	337	581	0.66	0.41

Source: Sea Fisheries Returns

FIGURE LX: Total Quantities of Fish Conveyed Inland by Railway from Principal  
Ports in England 1879-1889

	Tons
1880	207,661
1881	208,213
1882	208,019
1883	218,787
1884	263,280
1885	250,379
1886	252,529
1887	257,626
1888	257,109
1889	276,791

Source: Board of Trade Returns



there was any fall off in the stocks of most species of fish in offshore waters, then one would have expected these to be prosperous years for the English white fishing fleet. It is clear, from the following chapters that this was not the case and that the industry faced many problems.

One possible answer, which would explain not only why the industry was beset with crises but also why fish prices were rising, could be that supply was increasingly out of equilibrium with demand. In the case of white fish, the convenient answer would be that supplies were falling off. Given that many other food producing sectors of the economy were experiencing problems that basically emanated from increases in supply resulting from the opening up of new producing areas,<sup>1</sup> then it is unlikely that demand for white fish grew considerably. If supplies had been maintained or increased then the greater availability of alternative or rival foodstuffs would surely have tended to at least damp off any inclination for prices to rise. This was certainly the experience in other sectors of food production and actually the case, as we shall see later, with herring.<sup>2</sup>

A survey of national statistical evidence would, at first sight, tend to refute this line of argument. National returns of fish carried inland from the major ports by railway companies were compiled annually from 1879. They show no evidence of a decrease in supplies, in fact they apparently indicate the reverse. During the eighties there was in fact a substantial increase in traffic with around 69,000 more tons being transported in this way in 1889 than in 1880.<sup>3</sup> Such statistics, however, need treating with a great deal of caution for they can be quite misleading. In the first place, they take no notice of changes in the usage of other methods of transport. For example, the biggest market was London and that had always been supplied, to varying degrees, by sea with many types of fish from unspecified origins both at home and abroad. By the latter end of the eighties this seaborne trade was most obviously on the decline. Indeed, between 1886 and 1889 it fell by over twelve thousand

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1. S.B. Saul, op.cit.  
 2. See Chapter Thirteen.  
 3. See Figure LX.

FIGURE LXI: Total Quantities of Fish Conveyed to London by Coasting Vessels1886-1890

	Tons
1886	65,182
1887	65,893
1888	61,827
1889	53,154
1890	52,436

Source: Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables



tons.<sup>1</sup> Much of the national traffic must have gone over to the railways and this would account for a small proportion of the increased traffic. Nevertheless, the bulk of the tonnage increase still remains to be accounted for.

Another major problem with the rail based statistics is that they give absolutely no information about the differing varieties of fish conveyed. Herring and white fish, all are lumped together with no clue as to their relative proportions at this time. As we shall see later, it seems that much of the increase in tonnage carried inland was probably due to a marked rise in the landings of herrings. This can be attributed to the fact that many more Scottish drifters were turning their attention to the English markets, especially after the price collapse in Scotland from 1884.<sup>2</sup>

The collapse in herring prices north of the border was not directly a result of the effect that the 'Great Depression' had on the British economy. It was rooted in overproduction for the Continental salt cured markets. The increased number of English landings that resulted caused herring prices to move spectacularly downwards for the rest of the decade.<sup>3</sup> The steepest rise in rail traffic from many ports dates from the years after 1884 and it seems likely that much of this increase can be attributed to landings of herring. Thus it seems that there was little likelihood that English white fish landings rose and possibly they fell.

Yet another factor to be considered was the importation of fish. Over the eighties there was a considerable increase in the tonnage imported, particularly of Norwegian herrings. Though many were shipped directly to London and no doubt consumed there, Hull rose to become the premier importing centre with over 17,000 tons more passing through the port in 1889 than did in 1880.<sup>4</sup> Obviously much of this traffic would be transported to its ultimate destination by rail.

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1. See Figure LXI  
 2. See Chapter Thirteen  
 3. See Chapter Thirteen  
 4. See Figure LXII

The thesis that white fish landings in England were at best stagnating over much of this period is further backed by the performance of James Alward's four Grimsby smacks. In each case a downward trend in landings can be discerned. The average landing per vessel for the five years 1875-9 were over thirty three per cent higher than those for the years 1885-9.<sup>1</sup> The decline was more pronounced amongst varieties of flat fish, and haddock formed an increasingly large proportion of the catch. The overall diminution in catch levels was more than sufficient to offset the price rises for many species as the annual earnings of each smack fell over the period by some considerable amount.

The suggestions that white fish catches per smack were falling and that total landings were at best stagnating runs counter to the view of some eminent contemporaries. Neither the Royal Commission of 1878-9 or that of 1883-5 concluded that there was any decrease in the total take of fish from the North Sea.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Thomas Henry Huxley, probably the most distinguished scientific expert on the fisheries still felt able to state as late as 1883 that no method of fish capture could have any real effect on sea fish stocks. Huxley's views were largely based on a belief that fish stocks were too large to be affected by the efforts of man who, in comparison with natural forces, was a minor predator. There seems no evidence that he changed his views markedly up to his death in 1895 and his views carried great influence with successive governments.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, despite such beliefs, there is other evidence available to back up the diminution/stagnation theories on many of the traditional North Sea grounds. Even the Royal Commission of 1883-5, from which Huxley had to withdraw through ill health, conceded that stocks of certain fish were falling off in inshore waters between the Moray Firth and Grimsby.<sup>4</sup> The implication

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1. See Figure LXIII.

2. R.C. English and Welsh Sea Fisheries 1878-9, 1879 XVII, Report XXXVIII. and R.C. on Trawling, 1885 XVI, Report XIII (except in the case of soles).

3. T.H.Huxley, Sea Fisheries Exhibition Literature (1883) Vol.IV, 14.

4. R.C. on Trawling 1883-5, 1885 XVI, Report pp.XIX.



**FIGURE LXII: Imports of Fish Into the United Kingdom 1875-1890**  
(In Tons)

	Hull	Grimsby	London	Total
1875	5039	1114	12,235	42,004
1876	4343	1299	13,639	48,306
1877	4822	881	15,202	53,590
1878	5039	854	16,197	49,796
1879	8598	1382	17,508	58,007
1880	12,021	1277	18,245	67,172
1881	12,623	1576	21,030	76,511
1882	9,334	1375	16,070	61,961
1883	8,777	996	19,706	64,788
1884	10,396	895	21,662	66,821
1885	13,048	2198	23,199	76,029
1886	16,885	3251	26,040	83,960
1887	21,831	2213	20,681	80,233
1888	29,717	3201	24,999	95,382
1889	29,157	1242	25,145	99,401
1890	39,172	1682	28,121	114,799

Source: Trade and Navigation Returns

FIGURE LXIII: The Average Annual Catch (in cwts.) of four Grimsby trawling smacks, 1875 to 1892

	Plaice	Haddock	Prime	Rough	Total
1867	998	831	63	46	2012
1875	549	937	63	30	1565
1876	601	891	50	33	1576
1877	421	668	88	21	1198
1878	254	481	76	31	843
1879	298	488	98	44	928
1880	291	359	65	39	754
1881	242	280	84	70	765
1882	385	717	84	86	1273
1883	340	665	97	74	1177
1884	325	526	96	79	1025
1885	280	477	90	89	936
1886	250	510	77	87	925
1887	221	475	62	87	846
1888	195	372	42	57	667
1889	177	342	64	69	652
1890	205	465	47	65	783
1891	203	590	47	79	920
1892	168	436	29	49	683

The following summary shows the average annual catch during successive periods of five years' duration.

A Quinquennial Summary of the preceding Figure

	Plaice	Haddock	Prime	Rough	Total
1875-9	425	693	75	32	1222
1880-4	317	509	85	70	981
1885-9	225	435	67	78	805
1890-2	192	497	41	64	795

Source: W.Garstang, The Impoverishment of the Sea



behind this conclusion was that at least part of the blame lay with trawling - in this case by steam - for discussion had centred around this activity.

The Commissioners were greatly influenced in their conclusions by Professor McIntosh, whose opinions they echoed. They were also confronted with a great deal of verbal evidence from steam trawlermen themselves which backed up McIntosh's findings. Amongst the latter was William Appleby, who back in 1878 had been the first Scarborough steam trawler skipper. By 1885 he was convinced that the method of fishing he had pioneered was greatly damaging to fish stocks.<sup>1</sup>

The discussion on this point refers particularly to the activities of steam trawlers which worked on grounds not usually frequented by smacks. The Report did go a little further, and concludes that trawling on narrow grounds could also affect stocks.<sup>2</sup> The implication behind this finding being that there were conditions on the open sea in which the activities of man could actually affect the fish population. In these two conclusions at least, the 1885 Commission had moved a little more towards conceding that man's fishing operations could affect the normal balances of nature. Though this was further than either the Royal Commission of 1863-6 or 1878-9 had been prepared to go it was still a long way from accepting that man could be damaging the industry's entire resource base in the North Sea.

However, the views amongst the trawling interest in England at least, seemed to have moved further in this latter direction than those of the Commissioners. For example, the leading Scarborough owner, James Sellers, had told the 1878-9 Commission that he felt the supply of fish was as good as it had been for twenty years and that his boats' catches were as good as formerly.<sup>3</sup> However, by 1885 his views had changed as he expressed a belief that there had been a gradual falling off in the amount of fish brought in by his fishermen.<sup>4</sup>

1. R.C. on Trawling, 1885 XVI, Minutes of Evidence, qq 9676 and 9603-4.

2. R.C. on Trawling, 1885 XVI, Report, xliii.

3. R.C. English and Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1878-9, 1879 XVII, Minutes of Evidence p.103.

4. R.C. on Trawling, 1883-5, 1885 XVI, Minutes of Evidence, qq.10752-10760.

A similar shift of opinion is discernible at Hull. In 1878 John Sims, a leading smackowner and president of the local owners' insurance association, spoke for most of his associates when he dismissed the idea that catches were falling off by stating that the supply of fish was double what it had been some twenty or thirty years before.<sup>1</sup> Such views were largely echoed by another leading Hull smackowner, Alfred Wheatley Ansell.<sup>2</sup> When Ansell went before the 1883-5 royal commission he was prepared to admit that catches had been falling off on traditional grounds and this forced trawlers further afield.<sup>3</sup> Two years later the same point was being expressed even more strongly. Mr. Ashford, manager of the Hull Trawl Fishermen's Protection Society, publicly criticised the views of Huxley and alleged that the grounds were being fished out in consequence of the reckless manner in which they were being worked.<sup>4</sup>

The belief that traditional grounds were being exhausted became widely held by leading figures in the trawling trade. In 1888 a conference of their representatives was held in London and carried a resolution which called for the fishery authorities to be given power to suspend or regulate trawling and other modes of fishing when it was expedient to do so.<sup>5</sup> The following year the trade's leaders held a further conference at which they complained about a large and distressing diminution in the North Sea of soles, turbot, plaice and other flat fish. This time they went a stage further and suggested negotiations with continental countries aimed at gaining some international regulations of the fishing grounds.<sup>6</sup>

Two further conferences held at Hull and London in 1890, tackled the same issues. The former of these took place on the 30th April and included delegates from the North Sea trawling ports of Scarborough, Hull, Grimsby, Yarmouth, Lowestoft and Boston. A principal aim was to try and foster some form of self

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1. R.C.English and Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1878/9, 1879 XVII, Minutes of Evidence 111-2. Though, of course, this takes no account of the increase in catching power.

2. R.C.English and Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1879/9, 1879 XVII, Minutes of Evidence p.113.

3. R.C. on Trawling, 1883-5, 1885 XVI, Minutes of Evidence, q.8651.

4. Scarborough Gazette, 7th April 1887.

5. J.T.Jenkins, The Sea Fisheries (1920) 151-5.

6. Ibid., 151-5.



regulation to prevent fishing in the summer on grounds where it was likely that a large proportion of immature fish would be trawled up. The motion calling for such self regulation was unanimously passed. They passed a further resolution calling on Parliament to be asked to impose restrictions upon the sale and purchase of immature fish. This same resolution mandated their delegates to the London Conference, held during the summer, to press for 'legislative interference of a national and international character'.<sup>1</sup>

Such clamour was to lessen in later years when new deep sea grounds off Iceland were opened up. However at this time, though there were a few views to the opposite, the interesting point is that before the eighties the trawling interest, almost to a man, had stuck to the belief that their mode of fishing was not harmful to stocks.<sup>2</sup> Yet, the ranks of those who believed by the later eighties that this was no longer the case included all the most eminent and influential smackowners in English North Sea ports. Another interesting point about individuals such as Sellers, Ansell and Ashford, is that they were predominantly concerned with the exploitation of the offshore grounds. These were still, at least almost to the end of the decade, the preserve of the sailing smack, for the number of deep water steam trawlers was quite small. Though they were concerned with inshore steam trawling, and its potential effects on what they took to be important nurseries, they were also trying very hard to prevent the over exploitation of their traditional offshore grounds. If fish stocks on such grounds were falling and if the cause was not natural, then it would seem that this was possibly due to the continued and concentrated exploitation by sailing smacks. By this time not only Britain but also Belgium, Holland and France had large fleets of sailing trawlers whose sheer numbers were the cause of numerous incidents and conflict.<sup>3</sup>

Yet another factor that gives greater credence to the view that fish stocks were becoming more difficult to locate during these years was the gradual extension of smack voyages. When trawling had first commenced off the Yorkshire

1. H.P.L., Report of Conference of Hull and Grimsby Smackowners' Associations, April 30th, 1890, 5-12.
2. See, for example, R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVV-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence qq 4828-35; 7060-6; 7304; 7739; 7763; 60,783-4.
3. See Chapter Ten.

coast the smacks had worked on grounds only as far out as the Dogger Bank. By the late seventies they were ranging right across the North Sea to the coasts of Denmark and Heligoland as well as into more northerly latitudes than ever before. Indeed, the increase in trawling activity off Scotland was one reason why Aberdeen developed rapidly as a trawling port during the 1880s. One predictable result was that, for vessels based on English North Sea ports, more and more time was spent sailing to and from grounds and less and less actually fishing. As early as 1878 it was estimated that a smack was able to spend only one-sixth of its time fishing.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, such journeys were accompanied by increased expenditure. The yearly ice bill for a smack had by this time risen to some £100<sup>2</sup> or about nine per cent of the average earnings of Alward's most profitable smack in 1878.

To overcome this problem during the following few years there was a considerable extension of fleetings. This was a system whereby a fleet of smacks sailed together for the same ground. Instead of returning when they had filled their holds or within the week, as was normally the case when craft operated on their own, they remained at sea for upwards of eight weeks. Every day their catches were transferred to fast cutters by open boat and the fish conveyed swiftly to shore.<sup>3</sup> This system had three main advantages over single boat operations. Firstly, because there was no longer any need for each smack to transport its catch to shore, the time it could spend fishing was considerably increased. Indeed, it was estimated that under this system a smack could spend up to two-thirds of its time actually fishing. Secondly, because fish were ferried in each day the catch was likely to be in better condition and thus more attractive to the buyer than if it had lain in the hold of a smack for several days. Lastly, with fleetings there was no need to carry large quantities of expensive ice to sea.

Despite such advantages, the smackowners faced a number of formidable problems when they tried to develop the fleetings system. Firstly, the fleet

1. Grimsby News, 30th October 1878.

2. Grimsby News, 30th October 1878.

3. See Chapter Thirteen.



had to be provided with fast steam cutters and this alone represented a considerable capital outlay for the owners. Provisioning was another difficulty but the most intractable obstacle was the hostility of the crews who did everything to prevent its extension during the late 1870s and early 1880s.<sup>1</sup>

The resolute opposition of the crews was rooted in the conditions which fleeting forced upon them. Actual fishing operations keep fishing crews occupied for a considerable period of time - the last sidewinder trawlers to fish out of Hull might have required their crews to work eighteen hours out of the day when on the grounds and conditions were most certainly not easier in the 1880s. Thus the men were expected to work harder if fishing was all the more continuous. Part of the crew would benefit from an increased income from their share of the catch but for the others, on weekly wages, there would be no additional income. Furthermore, the whole crew were obliged to live continuously for eight weeks on a cramped smack that lacked many basic facilities. Food and water were sometimes far from fresh and the ever-present dampness left little opportunity for drying either clothes or bedding.<sup>2</sup> The transport of the catch by open boat to the cutter in the middle of the North Sea was a most hazardous business and many lives were lost through capsizes. When to all this is added the disruption that the system wreaked on what passed for a fisherman's ordinary family life, it is not surprising that most of them disliked fleeting intensely. Indeed, as we have noted, it took costly and bitter strikes at both Hull and Grimsby before the owners were able to establish full systems of fleeting at both ports and Scarborough.<sup>3</sup>

Smackowners had not faced such problems in earlier decades. When they had first exploited grounds from North Sea ports they had kept the journeying to and fro to a minimum. Because the grounds worked were relatively close to the point of landing the widespread application of fleeting from many ports was not

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1. R.Brown, op.cit., 25 and 34.

2. Verbal conversation with W.Wells, retired fisherman, whose first years at sea before the Great War were spent partly fleeting.

3. See Chapter Thirteen.

worthwhile. The development of the system occurred mainly because smacks were travelling ever greater distances to fish. It was primarily an attempt to make such long distance operations more economic.

The practice of travelling ever further to fish is difficult to explain if one accepts the view that trawling grounds could not be worked out by sailing smacks. It surely did not make rational economic sense for such craft to be sent ever further to catch their fish unless there was pressure to force them. That pressure must undoubtedly have been falling stocks on traditional grounds as claimed by many eminent smackowners. The cause seems to be human rather than biological because the grounds most afflicted were coincidentally those with the longest continuous history of intensive working. Catches probably declined throughout the period of this chapter apart from a slight rise in 1882/3 when fleeting was extended.<sup>1</sup> This latter point also indicates that this more continuous form of fishing probably contributed to the problem.

In conclusion then, it would seem most likely that many of the problems faced by the white fishing industry were a product of its own practices. The unregulated and intensive exploitation of the North Sea grounds not only created conflict between fishermen of all nationalities but also appear to have had an adverse effect on fish stocks. This was primarily the fault of the sailing smacks for the number of purpose-built steam trawlers operating out of English ports during this period can have been insufficient to have made much of an impact. Though the price of many varieties of white fish rose, this upward trend was not enough to make up for the fall-off in catches and smacks became less profitable to operate. This in turn put pressure on the owners and their response was to extend the use of fleeting, in other words to fish more intensively, and the problem was exacerbated. Furthermore, this system brought them into conflict with their own labour force and the harsh conditions it engendered were a contributory factor in the notorious cases of ill treatment and murder of fishing apprentices that came to light.

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1. See Figure LXIII.



CHAPTER TWELVE: THE DEVELOPMENT OF STEAM FISHING TO 1889

The latter part of the 1870s mark something of a watershed in the history of the North Sea fishing industry. During 1878 another Royal Commission, this time headed by Frank Buckland and Spencer Walpole, was set up largely to examine its condition. Thanks to their recommendations, a national system of data collection for fish supplies was set up. This simple and albeit imperfect foundation-based only on the returns made by railway companies of fish carried over their metals - marked a new commitment by the Government to monitor the performance of the fisheries south of the border that has been maintained, refined and improved upon to the present day.<sup>1</sup> For the catching sector, however, one development that occurred during these years was to prove more dramatic in nature and equally far reaching in its consequences: this was the first successful direct application of steam power to the capture of fish.

The transition from sail commenced amongst the white fishing fleet. Its progress, once underway, was rapid. In 1876 there were no commercial steam fishing vessels but during the following five years a large number of paddle tugs were adapted for fishing and soon afterwards purpose-built steam trawlers began to appear. By the close of the 1880s ports such as Hull and Grimsby, had already embarked upon the rapid replacement of their smacks with steam trawlers, whilst the emergent centres of North Shields and Aberdeen based their expansion almost wholly on steam power. In 1900 Hull became the first English port to completely dispense with white fish sailing vessels.<sup>2</sup> The herring fishery was somewhat later in following suit, as the first commercially viable English steam drifter did not come off the stocks until 1897.<sup>3</sup> Yet within a few years, a large proportion of the Scottish and East Anglian fleets were powered in this way.

One criticism levelled at the Victorian fishing industry by Tunstall<sup>4</sup> and Moray<sup>5</sup> amongst others is that, unlike certain other areas of the economy, it

1. See Chapter Ten.

2. Sea Fisheries (England and Wales) 15th Annual Report 1900, 1901 vol.xi p.8.

3. D.Butcher, The Drifters (Reading 1879) 144.

4. J Tunstall, The Fishermen (1962) 17-18.

5. G.Morey, The North Sea (1968) 130.

was slow to avail itself of the benefits to be derived from the application of steam power to its operations. More recent research by Von Tunzelman and others though would suggest that the importance of steam power in the emergence of industrial Britain has been overstressed.<sup>1</sup> Apparently, many areas of the economy continued, for rational economic reasons, to remain reliant on more traditional sources of power until well into the second half of the nineteenth century. Such questions will be discussed more fully below.

As far as the fishing industry itself was concerned, a cursory glance at its history might encourage the view that the widespread application of steam power to its operations did not occur at an earlier time because of an innate conservatism deeply ingrained in the structure of the industry. In other words, emphasis on both caution and tradition, combined with a mistrust of change, led the fishing industry to disregard developments that were taking place on both land and sea with the steam engine.

However, the evidence considered in previous chapters would tend to undermine the basis of such a charge. Although there were certainly communities hidebound by traditional custom and practice, there were numerous others, including Scarborough, Hull and Grimsby that contained progressive elements prepared to adapt and exploit the potential of any number of successful innovations. The spread of beam trawling, the introduction of ice, the constant improvement of the wind powered sailing vessel and the development of lighter cured consumer products bear eloquent testimony. Furthermore, as we shall see below, closer examination reveals that attempts to apply the steam engine to the exploitation of the fishing grounds certainly predate the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

It is evident that there were several earlier and unsuccessful attempts to secure the introduction of steam and these are liable to be either overlooked or underestimated. Maritime steam power had been proved a commercial propos-

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1. G.N.Von Tunzelman, Steam Power and British Industrialisation to 1860 (Oxford 1978) 292.



ition for some activities during the three decades that followed the introduction of steam boats to the Clyde in 1812<sup>1</sup> and the Humber about 1814.<sup>2</sup> Experimentation with steam fishing boats was certainly underway soon after mid century. In 1853, for example, an organisation known as the Deep Sea Fishing Association of Scotland launched a fishing steamer.<sup>3</sup> The craft was apparently capable of carrying four smaller boats to the fishing grounds where they would be lowered into the sea. Whilst these were working on their own the parent steamer would also carry out similar operations. We are not told whether herring or white fish were the target but from the brief description uncovered the former seems more likely. Few details are available about the craft's construction, though its form of propulsion was apparently quite novel in that it was reported to have neither paddles nor screw but could be 'stopped, turned, backed almost instantaneously without stopping the machinery or letting the steam off.'<sup>4</sup> This ambitious venture cannot have met with much success as no further mention can be found.

Another early attempt was centred on Grimsby for in 1856 two steam driven vessels were operating out of the port. Their careers in this form were to be short lived as both were unable to cover their operating expenses. Their engines were soon removed which allowed them to work under a conventional sail rig.<sup>5</sup> Grimsby's fishing interest made a further effort to establish steam fishing in 1870<sup>6</sup> when engines were fitted to an iron hulled smack. Once more the venture was rewarded only by failure.

Evidence of other early steam fishing experiments had been noted by the Huxley Commissioners. During 1864 they were given information on two entirely unconnected steam trawling operations. One of these took place in the Firth of Forth from the port of Leith whilst the other was off the coast of Ireland in

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1. J.Nicholson, Food from the Sea (1979) 68.
  2. J.M.Bellamy, The Trade and Shipping of Nineteenth Century Hull (1971) 12-13.
  3. Hull Advertiser, 18th November 1853.
  4. Hull Advertiser, 18th November, 1853.
  5. G.S.Clarke, 'The Location and Development of the Hull Fishing Industry' (Hull M.Sc., 1957) 39.
  6. G.S.Clarke, 'The Location and Development of the Hull Fishing Industry' (Hull M.Sc., 1957) 39.







Waterford Bay.<sup>1</sup> Both had two further similarities: in each case a paddle steamer was utilised and in neither instance did the venture prove a long term success.

Though Cutting suggests that the French were the first to successfully fish by steam after early experiments with a converted sailing trawler at Bordeaux, there is little evidence that the practice was securely established at this time. This was despite the construction of a number of iron built vessels for the French on Scotland's east coast.<sup>2</sup> It seems likely that these proved unsuccessful or else were destined to be used as cutters. Certainly, amongst the many and vigorous complaints and reports on French fishing activities during the sixties and seventies there is no mention of these craft on any grounds frequented by British fishermen.

Thus there were obviously several attempts by sections of the fishing industry to tackle the problem of applying steam to fishing quite soon after the marine engine demonstrated it had commercial possibilities. Though these proved unsuccessful they still have a degree of importance. They show quite clearly that the reason steam was not successfully applied before the last quarter of the century was not due to any conservatism or caution inherent in the industry.

Moreover, despite these early failures in the catching sector, steam power soon established itself as an integral part of the industry's structure, even though in a less direct fashion.

The distributive sector of the fishing industry was certainly to be affected by the application of the steam engine to transportation systems relatively quickly. We have noted, for example, that steam packet services on the Humber waterway system and along the coast were utilised as a means of forwarding fish to markets from the early 1830s onwards.<sup>3</sup> During the following two decades the steam powered railways were to establish themselves as the most important means of transporting fish from sea port to urban centre in England

1. Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq.27,314-16, 39175-210, 29,764-70, 39,886-7.

2. J.Nicholson, op.cit., 68.

3. See Chapter Three.

and Wales,<sup>1</sup>

Yet even in the catching sector, the steam engine was soon to be effectively applied to certain operations. In Chapter Five, for example, we noted that during the first large scale exploitation of the Silver Pits in early 1845 fishing smacks sometimes offloaded their catches into passing steam packets so that they had no need to make the journey to port themselves.<sup>2</sup> During the 1860s steam vessels were being employed by Hewitts of Yarmouth to carry cargoes of fish from fleets of fishing craft operating well out in the North Sea.<sup>3</sup> During the next decade the use of such steam carriers gradually spread. Indeed these vessels proved capable of reaching port without cargoes of fresh fish in weather conditions that would have delayed the sailing cutters. Initially, it was necessary to overcome the misapprehension that would be impossible to stop the boiler heat from spoiling the fish. Such fears proved groundless. Other earlier users of steam for similar purposes were the herring fleets working off the north east coast. By the mid 1870s they had established the practice of using paddle tugs to take their catches into the Tyne and Wear whilst they remained on the grounds.<sup>4</sup>

Fishing vessels also employed tugs in a different fashion. By 1860 they were used to tow smacks and yawls to and from grounds when weather conditions were unhelpful for sail.<sup>5</sup> The presence of such a tug boat soon became an important asset to any harbour seeking to attract fishing craft, especially during the herring season. Soon no self respecting fishing port could really afford to be without one. Scarborough acquired its first in 1865, and continued to operate such a craft until after the turn of the century.<sup>6</sup> The principal motive of the port's harbour commissioners was the prospect of the additional revenue it would both earn and attract in the form of fishing vessels requiring towing services.<sup>7</sup> A similar motive lay behind the acquisition of a steam tug at Whitby in 1879.<sup>8</sup>

1. See Chapter Four.

2. Leeds Mercury, 20th January 1845.

3. J.Nicholson, op.cit., 68.

4. Whitby Gazette, 30th August 1876.

5. S.P.L.Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Minutes, 12th January 1865.

6. S.P.L., Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Minutes, 12th January 1865.

7. It was estimated that fifty or sixty tons a day would be likely: Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Minutes 12th January 1865.

8. Whitby Gazette, 24th May 1873.



Another innovation which was rapidly adopted by the fishing industry soon after its inception was the steam capstan.<sup>1</sup> In reality this was a small engine and boiler which took away the back-breaking working of hauling up the trawl by hand. Its introduction in 1876 was preceded by the replacement of rope with much stronger steel warps<sup>2</sup> and within a few years the majority of smacks at Hull, Grimsby and Scarborough had been converted. This was perhaps the first successful innovation that directly applied steam power to the actual capture of fish.

Though the fishing fleets continued to rely on the wind for propulsion throughout the third quarter of the nineteenth century, it is evident that the industry as a whole had found several ways of commercially exploiting the availability of steam power in both land and marine contexts. Further, where commercial viability was proven it is obvious that it had begun to supplement or replace more traditional sources of power. In some respects the role of the steam engine in the fishing industry of the 1860s and 1870s can be likened to that of the main frame computer in the British economy of some ninety to one hundred years later. The latter, of course, was not only cumbersome but expensive, both to purchase and operate. Such factors often precluded its general use for small scale activities. Indeed, it often proved commercially viable only where work and activity could be organised on a relatively large scale, allowing the maximum use to be made of the capital it embodied. If small scale enterprises wished to make use of the main frame computers then they had often to rent or buy processing time. Similarly, the steam engine of the former period does not seem to have been commercially viable for the small scale enterprise of single boat fishing. However, it could be profitably hired for towing fleets out to sea when needed or, in the shape of a steam cutter, be utilised for ferrying fish to port and then, as a steam locomotive to carry the catch to market.

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1. G. Morey, The North Sea, (1968) 130-1.

2. Ibid., 130-1.

However, when one looks at the steam boat it is obvious that there were a number of factors which mitigated against its actual adaptation to providing the means of propulsion in fishery operations. First and foremost was the cost: even a relatively unsophisticated steam tug would be valued at over £3,000 brand new in the 1860s<sup>1</sup> and this was over three times as much as the most advanced - and much more seaworthy - fishing smack.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, the sailing vessel did not have a fuel bill to pay at the end of the trip. When steam fishing craft were first introduced they proved to have a voracious appetite for coal, consuming between twenty and twenty five tons per week.<sup>3</sup> Figure LXIV gives a crude estimate of certain working expenses that a fishing boat would have had to contend with in the mid sixties based on contemporary prices and wages. As can be seen, the fuel bill alone would have eaten up a considerable portion of the vessels earnings. In addition, she would need to carry a larger crew who - if 1880s practice was adopted - would have had to be paid by a wage rather than a share. It is clear that for a steam vessel to be economical at this time it would have had to at least double the average take and earnings of a sailing vessel.

In the latter half of the seventies, however, steampower was to be successfully applied to the direct capture of fish. An early indication of the growing interest in such possibilities was the visit of the steam launch Dewdrop to Scarborough in August 1873.<sup>4</sup> This craft attracted a deal of attention because of the demonstrations it gave to the fishing fleets whilst they were at work on the grounds. Though she did not fish herself she showed her manoeuvrability and her freedom from the vagaries of the wind. The latter was proved admirably when she was able to return to port one evening after a change in the wind prevented any sailing craft in similar circumstances from making harbour before the tide fell.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Scarborough Gazette, 5th January 1882.
  2. R.C.Sea Fisheries England and Wales 1879 XVII, Minutes of Evidence, p.152.
  3. R.C. on Trawling 1884-5, 1885 XVI, Minutes of Evidence, qq 8140-8147.
  4. Scarborough Gazette, 28th August 1873.
  5. Ibid., 28th August 1873.



FIGURE LXIV: Average Price of Best Coals at Ships Side in the Port of London

		<u>per ton</u>		
1832	24/10	1864	19/2	
3	17/2	5	19/3	
4	19/2	6	19/-	
5	20/10	7	19/9	
6	21/10	8	18/7	
7	22/10	9	18/9	
8	23/6	1870	18/4	
9	23/-	1	19/2	
1840	22/9	2	23/10	
1	21/8	3	30/5	
2	20/2	4	23/-	
3	19/2	5	22/10	
4	22/-	6	20/3	
5	18/4	7	18/9	
6	16/8	8	16/10	
7	19/10	9	17/-	
8	17/2	1880	14/10	
9	17/-	1	16/3	
1850	16/8	2	10/3	
1	15/2	3	27/4	
2	15/8	4	15/-	
3	20/2	5	15/-	
4	22/7			
5	20/10			
6	27/8			
7	17/7			
8	17/6			
9	17/8			
1860	17/9			
1	18/2			
2	19/-			
3	18/6			

Average 1861-5 = 18/9  
 Average 1871-4 = 23/10  
 Average 1877-82 = 16/8

One year's coal bill 1861-5 = £1055  
 One year's coal bill 1871-4 = £1339  
 One year's coal bill 1877-82 = £939  
 Assuming 20 tons of coal consumed per week

Those who became involved in further attempts to apply steam power to catching operations in the later seventies came from two somewhat different backgrounds. One group appears to have been relatively wealthy and to have had time as well as capital to indulge in maritime activities. Certainly the owner of the first steam craft to be registered for fishing on the Yorkshire coast would fit into this category. In June 1877 a small steam launch some twenty five feet long was registered for various types of fishery operations from Bridlington. The owner was one Kate Wakefield and the craft was skippered for her by William Wakefield, described as a gentleman. This screw driven launch must have been restricted to inshore waters and have caught fish on a very small scale.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, it has the distinction of being the very first steam vessel to be registered for fishing on the Yorkshire coast.

However, those from the second background proved initially the more important. They were the tug boat interest. Because they often towed smacks and yawls to sea the relationship between tug boats and the fishing industry was often quite close at many of the ports along the north east coast. Indeed, legend has it that some sailing smacks dropped their trawls whilst under tow.<sup>2</sup> If this is true, then it was only a short step to the position whereby a tug boat skipper would try fishing from his own craft. All that was needed was the incentive.

Such a spur came with the onset of a trade depression at the north eastern ports during 1877.<sup>3</sup> One principal early casualty were the steam paddle tugs. Their principal source of employment over the whole year involved the towing of sailing ships in and out of such rivers as the Tyne, Tees and Wear. This business was already being threatened from two directions. Firstly, the railways were improving their ability to compete successfully in the long distance bulk freight market and were beginning to take coal traffic away from coastal craft. Secondly, the number of steam merchant ships was increasing and less of these required the assistance of a tug.<sup>4</sup>

1. Hull Custom House Fishing Vessel Register, 27th June 1877.
2. A. Godfrey, Yorkshire Fishing Fleets (Dalesman 1974) 23.
3. R.C. English and Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1878-9, 1879 XVII, Report, XXVII.
4. R.C. English and Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1878-9, 1879 XVII, Minutes of Evidence, p.129.



FIGURE LXV: Number and Tonnage of Vessels Outward From the Tyne 1863-1882

Year	Number of Vessels	Register Tonnage
1863	18,858	3,212,275
1864	18,410	3,491,948
1865	19,663	4,037,422
1866	19,416	4,171,538
1867	18,949	4,221,852
1868	18,910	4,076,084
1869	18,428	4,166,922
1870	19,102	4,574,565
1871	18,956	4,897,878
1872	17,667	4,716,207
1873	16,799	4,611,358
1874	16,737	4,762,379
1875	17,069	5,205,146
1876	16,581	5,297,029
1877	15,327	4,907,797
1878	14,491	4,790,100
1879	15,118	5,282,177
1880	16,301	5,855,171
1881	15,660	5,908,886
1882	15,523	6,003,452

Source: Return from Harbour Authorities 1883.

The downturn in trade only aggravated these existing problems still further. As can be seen from Figure LXV, the tonnage of all shipping entering the Tyne, which was the principal maritime artery of the north east, fell away considerably in the later 1870s. The end result was that scores of tug boats were laid up and left unemployed at their moorings.<sup>1</sup>

In an attempt to keep his craft operational, William Purdy, a tug master resident in North Shields, decided to try his hand as a trawlerman. He had little spare capital available and acquired much of the equipment he needed by adapting what gear was available around the port, but had to send down to Grimsby for second-hand beam trawl parts. His first trip was undertaken in November 1877 and though only modestly profitable - earning £7.50p his gamble soon began to pay off. Purdy proved that steam fishing was a commercial proposition and he was later to be rewarded with a medal by his grateful North Shields colleagues.<sup>2</sup> As a result, his lead was followed by others and there were soon many tug masters working with beam trawls.

At first, many of these steam trawlers opted for a dual-purpose existence: fishing only in the winter, when towing work was short, and returning to their traditional occupations during the summer months. Because they lacked the skills of the fisherman they needed to employ an experienced deck crew. In some cases, these early craft had two masters: the tug skipper, who had overall charge of navigation, and a leading fisherman responsible for trawling operations.<sup>3</sup> Gradually the fishing interest began to buy their way into the fleet and men began to develop skills enabling them to both fish and operate a steam tug. During the period that this began to take place, some operators found steam fishing to be so remunerative as to be worth pursuing all year round. This latter development was gradual but the trend is evident even from the first couple of years. During the first winter of 1877/8 forty three steam

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1. R.C. English and Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1878-9, 1879 XVII, Report, pXXVII.

2. Anon., The origin of the Tyne Lifeboat Service and of the Tynemouth Volunteer Life Brigade, (North Shields 1928) 5-11.

3. Board of Trade Report on Relations Between Masters & Men, 1882 XVII, Minutes of Evidence q.2588 also R.C. on Trawling, 1884-5, 1885 XVI, Minutes of Evidence q.8137



tugs fished out of the Tyne but only eighteen continued throughout the following summer. The following winter saw the number rise to fifty three and the next summer found twenty four such craft continuing to specialise in fishing.<sup>1</sup>

The concept, once proven, soon spread to other ports. By late 1878 six or seven were fishing out of the Wear and other examples could be found at Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, and Whitby.<sup>2</sup> Not all of these had turned to trawling. For example, the pioneer Yorkshire steam fishing tug went long-lining. She was the Emu and was first registered as a fishing vessel in April 1878. The reason why her owners, the Whitby Steamboat Company, decided to embark upon this novel venture was typical of that of their counterparts further up the coast: namely that the tug was finding towing work hard to come by, except during the herring season.<sup>3</sup> This new activity was started too late to prevent the company - already in financial difficulties - going into liquidation later in the year. However, a new company was soon set up to operate her and the fishing registration was retained for several years to come.<sup>4</sup>

These early steam fishing vessels did not limit their activities to their home ports but began wandering quite far afield. Some tried their luck off the Scottish coast and others soon became the object of numerous complaints by Yorkshire line and drift fishermen during 1878.<sup>5</sup> Before the end of that year their landings had become an occasional feature at Scarborough.<sup>6</sup> As more craft turned over to fishing larger numbers of them were attracted to the grounds off the Yorkshire coast and within two years it was by no means an uncommon sight to see between twelve and twenty north eastern steam trawlers in Scarborough harbour and bay at the same time.<sup>7</sup>

Taken as a whole, the Scarborough fishing industry was somewhat reticent in following Shields and Sunderland on to the steam fishing bandwagon. Nevertheless, its first steam trawler commenced operations in 1878. She was the

1. R.C.English and Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1878/9, XVII, 1879, Minutes of Evidence, p.128

2. For example see R.C.Sea Fisheries, England and Wales, 1879 XVII, Minutes of Evidence, p.128.

3. Whitby Gazette, 13th April 1878.

4. Whitby Gazette, 17th July 1880 and 21st August 1880.

5. See for example, R.C.Sea Fisheries, England and Wales, 1879 XVII, Minutes of Evidence, pp.133-5 and Report, xxvi.

6. R.C.Sea Fisheries England and Wales, 1879 XVII, Minutes of Evidence.pp.103-4

7. Whitby Gazette, 24th December 1880.

Cormorant and, unlike her Tyneside contemporaries, was not only screw driven but was primarily a pleasure yacht. Over sixty two feet in length, the Cormorant had been constructed by Messrs Richard Smith of Preston, who had fitted their own vertically mounted direct acting compound steam engines.<sup>1</sup>

The craft was owned by a wealthy Scarborough gentleman, Henry Hird Foster, who was obviously prepared to take more than a passing interest in the fisheries. He employed an experienced local yawl skipper, William Appleby, to carry out operations. Appleby used a beam trawl some thirty three and a half feet wide and forty six feet in length. Cormorant worked on grounds close to the shore<sup>2</sup> and although the craft's fishing activities were confined to the summer months they went on for a number of years.

There were several reasons why the rest of the Scarborough fishing interest did not immediately follow the example of either Foster or the Tyneside tug fishermen. One factor was that between 1879 and 1881 Scarborough harbour was in the throes of reconstruction and, in the first year at least, conditions seem to have been somewhat chaotic. The West Pier, traditionally the main base of the industry, was out of use, being both widened and lengthened. In addition, the remnants of the old Island Pier were being totally removed. Whilst this was in process, most of the fishing fleet were confined to the outer harbour, until at least the middle of 1880.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, permanent accommodation for the existing fleet - let alone large steam vessels - was at a premium.

Secondly, the herring season was still of crucial importance to the economy of the port and, as we have seen, many of the fishing vessels in its fleet were either dual or triple purpose craft that alternated between drifting, during the herring season, and trawling or lining throughout the rest of the year. To replace these craft with former steam tugs would have meant concentrating solely on the capture of white fish, as the latter appear to have been

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1. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 3rd August 1878.  
 2. R.C.Sea Fisheries, England and Wales 1879, XVII, Minutes of Evidence, p.105.  
 3. See Chapter Sixteen.



unsuitable for drifting.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, as heavy commercial traffic was almost non-existent at Scarborough by this time, there was no accompanying fleet of tug boats that could readily be turned over to fishing during the slack seasons of the year. It is true that such craft were attracted by the business of towing the newly arrived herring fleets but these were only seasonal visitors. The port, of course, possessed only one steam tug of its own.

Finally, there was the relative novelty of the innovation. Sailing vessels had been tried and trusted whilst all earlier attempts at steam fishing had ultimately ended in failure. Moreover, in the twenty years or so prior to 1878, the fishing interest at Scarborough had invested large sums of money in building up a large sailing fleet. Many of these boats were comparatively new, being under five years of age, and as they were usually profitable, there was no immediate incentive to replace them.<sup>2</sup> Sailing smacks and yawls could operate with smaller crews which did not need to include those with engineering skills. Such skills were lacking amongst such a sail based fishing community, as also were the necessary servicing facilities.

It is often stated that the early steam paddle trawlers were not in competition with the sailing smacks. However, this is really only true in one sense only. By this time the first class sailing fleets of ports such as Scarborough, Hull, and Grimsby concentrated their efforts on the offshore grounds, whilst the converted tugs usually worked within only ten or twelve miles of the shore. The reason why paddlers clung so closely to the shore was less out of choice than necessity. Being designed primarily for towing work in the vicinity of estuaries or harbours, there had been little need to give great attention to their seakeeping capacities. This shortcoming was most evident on the open sea and they proved particularly susceptible to any deterioration in the weather which usually obliged them to run for shelter.<sup>3</sup>

As we have noted, steam tugs were heavy on fuel. Not only had coal costs

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1. R.C.English and Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1878-9, 1879 XVII, Report, pp.152-3.  
 2. See Chapter Five.  
 3. R.C.Trawling, 1884-5, 1885 XVI, Minutes of Evidence, q 10,317.

to be considered but there was always the question of space. Being designed for towing rather than carrying, cargo space was at a premium. What space was available had to be shared between carrying coal and the catch. Quite often the latter could only be carried by reducing the vessel's capacity for the former.<sup>1</sup> Such a constraint inevitably reduced their already limited range still further.

Given these shortcomings, the most profitable mode of operation was for the paddlers to go to sea for a period not exceeding twenty four hours and to fish as intensively and as near continuously as possible.<sup>2</sup> This meant that coal was not wasted in steaming to and from distant grounds and shelter was never too far away. By having their trawl down as often as possible they were able to make up for the periods of inactivity which often confined them to port. Their activities were thus concentrated upon the inshore grounds and in this sense they were in direct competition with inshore fishermen who bitterly resented their incursions.<sup>3</sup>

Despite exploiting different grounds, it soon became apparent to contemporaries that steam tugs and first class sailing vessels were in fact rivals at the market. Each paddler usually pulled a large beam trawl and within two years of their introduction there must have been at least fifty five of them on the Yorkshire and north east coasts alone.<sup>4</sup> Such a dramatic increase in catching power must have tilted the scales of supply and demand to the detriment of the catcher, particularly when they chose to concentrate their attentions on a port such as Scarborough.

Furthermore, because the paddle trawlers were not reliant upon the vagaries of the wind when sailing to and from harbour, they could usually ensure that they landed their catches first and thus secured the best prices of the day.<sup>5</sup> Their fish was generally fresher for they returned to port each day, whereas the smacks when working alone, stayed out for several days and stowed their catch aboard.<sup>6</sup>

1. R.C.Trawling 1884-5, 1885 XVI, Minutes of Evidence, q .8018.

2. R.C.English & Welsh Sea Fisheries 1878/9, 1879 XVI, Minutes of Evidence, p.125

3. R.C.Sea Fisheries, England and Wales, 1879 XVII, Minutes of Evidence, pp 133-5

4. Based on evidence given to R.C.English & Welsh Sea Fisheries 1879, Minutes of Evidence, p.128; also Whitby Gazette, 3rd March 1878 and 13th April 1878.

5. Whitby Gazette, 24th December 1880.

6. R.C.Sea Fisheries, England & Wales, 1879 XVII, Minutes of Evidence, p.105.



FIGURE LXVI: Fishing Vessels Newly Entered in the Scarborough Custom House  
Register 1876-1889

	Sail			Steam		
	New	Second Hand	Total	New	Second Hand	Total
1876	5	5	10	nil	nil	nil
1877	13	nil	13	nil	nil	nil
1878	4	10	14	1	nil	nil
1879	1	1	2	nil	nil	nil
1880	nil	2	2	nil	1	nil
1881	nil	2	2	2	8	10
1882	nil	nil	nil	1	8	9
1883	nil	1	1	5	1	6
1884	nil	1	1	1	nil	1
1885	1	nil	1	nil	nil	nil
1886	1	1	2	nil	nil	nil
1887	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil
1888	1	nil	2	2	1	4
1889	nil	2	2	nil	1	1

Source: Scarborough Custom House Vessel Registers.

The rivalry between paddle trawler and smack was certainly apparent at Scarborough where registrations of new sailing craft were reduced from a flow to a trickle in the years immediately following the introduction of Purdy's vessel.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it was noted there towards the end of 1880 that the steamers from the north east ports 'bid fair to obtain a monopoly of the trade.'<sup>2</sup> Upwards of a score were landing their catches at the port when either weather or harbour reconstruction allowed. The scale of landings by these strangers was such that they were overwhelming what existing accommodation there was during the harbour reconstruction and forcing the labour of packing to be carried out on the Foreshore Road. Their activities left no doubt of their profitability and at least two such craft managed to earn in excess of £70 from just twenty four hours fishing.<sup>3</sup> For local fishermen it must have proved galling to see so much profit going to outsiders at their expense.

The consequence was that the Scarborough fishing interest came to view steam trawling with considerable favour. It is not surprising that, with the completion of harbour improvements in sight, many individuals began to invest in this new form of fishing vessel. In fact, the first paddle steamer to be acquired arrived before the end of that December. She was called Dandy. At 106 feet in length she had been built on the Tyne at Willington Quay in 1863. With over seventeen years of active service behind her, she had seen duty as a tug at several ports including Dublin and Liverpool. Five individuals took an interest in the venture and arranged for her purchase. All partners were intimately connected with the local industry. George McBean and Henry Wyrill were already important smackowners at the port. Henry Lamble Woodger was a member of the famous family that was reputed to have invented the kipper. J. Leggat, the fourth, was a local fisherman, whilst the fifth, James Wyrill, was both a fisherman and merchant, as well as the brother of Henry.<sup>4</sup>

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1. See Figure LXVI.

2. Whitby Gazette, 24th December 1880.

3. Whitby Gazette, 24th December 1880.

4. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 29th December 1880.



During January 1881 there were three more quite similar arrivals at the port. They were known respectively as Tusker, Spurn, and Star O Tay.<sup>1</sup> The first two were purchased outright by George McBean, who must have possessed quite considerable capital resources to sustain such an outlay. However, a public company was floated to purchase the latter and was known as the Star O Tay Steam Trawling and Fishing Company Limited. As its name might suggest, this enterprise was confined to the one vessel. Total share capital raised was just over £1,600 and there were never more than ten shareholders, who appointed Henry Lambie Woodger as the managing director.<sup>2</sup> This form of joint stock limited liability company was something quite new to the Yorkshire coast fishing industry.

These first Scarborough paddlers must have proved quite profitable during 1881 and 1882 for by the end of the first of these years the fleet had been built up to twelve. At the close of the latter there were twenty two on the register and the fleet reached its zenith during 1883 when twenty seven steam trawlers could be mustered. Most of these were similar in many respect to the first three arrivals and had generally led long lives as tugs around various ports in the British Isles.<sup>3</sup> A few, however, were purpose built screw driven craft which will be discussed in more detail below. Despite McBean's initial acquisitions, it was quite rare for their purchase to be undertaken by just one or two individuals. It was much more common for limited liability concerns to be floated to both acquire and operate them. These also will be discussed in much more detail below and in chapter fourteen.

It is not hard to understand just why the Scarborough industry adopted the steam fishing vessel in the early eighties. Such action was a direct and positive response to the competition that its fleet faced from similar craft owned by ports further north that had taken to landing on the local fish market. What is more difficult to ascertain is just why steam craft should have proved them-

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1. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 5th January 1881; 14th January 1881 and 25th January 1881.
  2. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 25th January 1881.
  3. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 1881-1883.

selves such viable catching units at this point in time when so often in the past they had proved commercial failures. One possible explanation might be that by this date more advanced or rather efficient steam engines were available which, through reducing operating costs, at last made such operations profitable.

The development of the marine steam engine during the nineteenth century has already been well sketched. As Graham tells us, the simple single cylinder engine working in conjunction with a low pressure boiler began to give way in the 1860s to a power unit consisting of a high pressure boiler and engine with compound cylinders in which the steam could be re-used. Though double the amount of power was not obtained, the result was a reduction of almost 60% in fuel consumption and, as Harley adds, further marginal improvements were being continuously introduced by the marine engineers. The next major step forward occurred in 1884 with the introduction of the triple expansion engine operating in conjunction with greatly improved boilers that worked at between 130 and 150 lb pressure. By the end of 1887 the 150 lb boiler pressure was passed and soon after the 200 lb barrier, a pressure which meant that only a fraction more than a pound of coal per horsepower per hour was used where the old low pressure engine had required ten.<sup>1</sup>

Such developments had a twofold effect. In the first place, they dramatically reduced fuel consumption thereby greatly lowering the costs of operation. Secondly, they greatly reduced the amount of the ship that was devoted to the transportation of the bunker fuel. In short, the period between 1860 and 1890 was one of revolutionary importance to the shipping industry in which the supremacy of steam over sail was finally assured.<sup>2</sup>

A close examination of the paddle steamer fleet registered at Scarborough reveals (and would no doubt be supported by similar analysis at other north eastern ports)<sup>3</sup> that technological development cannot have been the cause of their apparent success. This is because the bulk of these craft, when acquired

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1. G.S.Graham, 'The Ascendancy of the Sailing Ship 1850-1885,' Economic History Review Ser 2, 9, pp.80-8.
  2. C.K.Harley, 'The Shift from Sailing Ships to Steam Ships 1850-1890', Essay on a Mature Economy: Britain after 1840, Ed.D.M.McCloskey, 219-20.
  3. Purdy's original trawling vessel had been built in 1843.



for fishing, were not only second hand but often of a considerable age. The Dandy, as we have noted, was already eighteen years old yet she was to prove sufficiently successful in her new career to last until after the turn of the century. Her background was, of course, far from untypical: indeed the average age of the paddle steamers on registry at Scarborough between 1880 and 1882 was over thirteen years. Moreover, not one could boast the more advanced compound engines. The Custom House Register gives details of their engines and shows that everyone retained their original simple single cylinder side lever engines.<sup>1</sup> Though cheaper to construct they were relatively heavy on coal. Thus many of these steam boats cannot have been powered by engines any more advanced than those which had found fishing an uneconomic activity.

The answer therefore appears to lie elsewhere. Indeed, it seems most likely that a dramatic fall in the price of coal - caused in part by the trade depression - provided much impetus. As figure LXVII shows, the price of coal had climbed considerably during the early 1870s and then fallen away with more than equal swiftness. Between 1877 and 1882 it remained at a lower level than had been known during the previous forty or so years. These trough years were, of course, precisely the period when steam trawling was establishing itself as a viable proposition.<sup>2</sup>

Such statistical evidence would suggest that a marked reduction in operating costs must have taken place. Bearing in mind that the typical paddler consumed up to twenty five tons of coal per week when fishing then we can make a crude estimate of its annual fuel bill. If we assume that the craft was operational for about forty five weeks of the year then the average annual fuel bill would have been in the region of £956 in 1879. Yet if the same craft had been turned over to fishing during the early sixties when 19 shillings(95p) per ton was the average price then its bill would have been on the same reckoning around £1070, in other words, over nine per cent higher. Though crude, these estimates indicate that any steam paddler or similar craft turning over to

1. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register 1880-1883 and Figure LXVII.

2. See Figure LXIV.

fishing prior to the fall in coal prices in the later 1870s would have had to contend with much higher operating costs, especially during the early years of that decade.

The decline in coal prices was merely one feature of the depression that afflicted most of the country in the later seventies. Another feature in this economic downturn was, as we have noted, the fall in the volume of shipping entering and leaving the Tyne, Wear and other such rivers.<sup>1</sup> The consequent unemployment that was caused amongst the steam paddle tug fleet induced many of their owners to seek alternative work as fishing vessels<sup>2</sup> at precisely the time they were likely to prove commercially successful. Steam fishing was thus established.

Another factor that encouraged the development of steam fishing at this time arose out of the difficulties afflicting the smack fleet. These are discussed in chapter thirteen in some detail but the nub of the problem was that their efficiency was falling because of the need to exploit ever more distant grounds. This had the effect of cutting down the length of time that each vessel actually spent fishing whilst increasing the duration of the voyages to and from the grounds. These longer distance trips also necessitated the use of more ice to prevent the fish spoiling and thus increased operating costs. Fleeting was one answer but this practice was not popular with the crews. Another alternative was to utilise steam vessels. The steam tug proved successful because, as we have seen, it could exploit small or awkwardly shaped grounds close to the shore that the less manoeuvrable sailing smacks had always to avoid. The following development of the purpose-built steam trawler, being independent of the wind, cut down the time spent travelling to and from distant water grounds. Thus the advantages that the sailing craft possessed over its steam rival were rapidly being eroded.

By 1881 the supply of redundant steam tugs was beginning to dry up and this occurred at precisely the time that Scarborough was seeking such craft in

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1. See Figure LXV.

2. R.C.Sea Fisheries, England and Wales, 1879 XVII, Minutes of Evidence, pp.152-3.



any number. Furthermore, national economic performance had begun to exhibit signs of temporary improvement and the return of relative prosperity spelt, for a time, a revival in shipping activity at the north east ports.<sup>1</sup> As a result, fewer paddle tugs were laid up awaiting sale or looking for an alternative use. Not surprisingly, the going rate for such second-hand craft increased. Whereas one could be secured for less than £2,000<sup>2</sup> in earlier years, by 1882 their value was often nearer £3,000, even for a well-used craft.<sup>3</sup> As we have noted in chapter five, even a sailing craft was by this time generally beyond the resources of most working fishermen. The fishing fleet had thus been increasingly falling into the hands of either middlemen or outsiders during the 1870s and the acquisition of these expensive steam trawlers merely accelerated this trend. After the very first of these ventures it is exceedingly rare to find a working fisherman with a share in a newly acquired craft.<sup>4</sup>

The amount of capital required stretched even the resources of the well established smackowners and fish merchants, including James Sellers and Henry Wyrill. Such financial undertakings encouraged them to bring in more outsiders with capital to spare. It may well be that the investment potential of the smackowner/fish merchant group had been weakened by the scale of their outlay during the previous decade on the now less profitable sailing craft. Whatever the causes - and the tradition of outside investment had always been a feature of the Yorkshire coast fishing industry - they wasted little time in mobilising outside capital, apparently in great abundance at the Resort.<sup>5</sup>

However attractive a commercial proposition the steam paddler may have proved during the five or six years following Purdy's experiment, a number of limitations had always been apparent to the established fishing interest. Their limited range and lack of seaworthiness had been taken into account by the mode of operating that they had adopted. Nevertheless, attempts were soon made to combine their speed and manoeuvrability with the seagoing qualities of a smack. Even before the end of 1880, John Edmond, the principal Scarborough

1. See Figure LXV.

2. Scarborough Gazette, 19th January 1882.

3. Scarborough Gazette, 19th January 1882.

4. See Chapter Five.

5. See Chapter Fourteen.

boatbuilder, and started to modify a conventional sailing smack he had on the stocks so that it could take a steam engine.<sup>1</sup> The vessel was being constructed for George Sydney Smith, a cloth merchant by trade, who also took an interest in the fishing trade. Despite having to accommodate an engine and boilers, the original design was not greatly altered as the smack was only some sixty two feet in length on registry which was similar to a sail powered version. The fitting of steam propulsion with so little modification was possible because the engine and boilers were diminutive, being rated at no more than ten horse power.<sup>2</sup> In effect then this craft was probably no more than an auxilliary-powered sailing smack.

Named the Young Squire, she was fitted out during the winter of 1880/1. However, her first registration was at Hull and she was not re-registered at Scarborough until September of the same year.<sup>3</sup> Young Squire was not an immediate success. Her boiler and engines, built by Plenty and Son of Newbury, Berkshire, were almost six years old on installation and seem to have been under-powered. Shortly after being registered at Scarborough she was laid up and they were removed. When she was returned to work in December she was fitted with more powerful engines supplied by the same firm. These had two simple high-pressure direct-acting vertically-mounted cylinders and were rated at twenty horsepower. The Young Squire was to work from Scarborough until early in 1884 when she was transferred to Grimsby.<sup>4</sup>

Whereas the Young Squire was basically a standard sailing ketch that had been modified for auxilliary steam propulsion, the Pioneer, first registered at Scarborough in October 1881, was a much more radical departure and can perhaps lay claim to being the first purpose-built steam trawler. This iron-hulled craft was some ninety four feet in length and was far larger than any contemporary sailing smack. She was built in the yard of John Shuttleworth of Hull and was fitted with engines, supplied by Messrs. Pattison and Atkinson of Newcastle upon Tyne, that had been manufactured in 1875. The former had two direct-acting inverted cylinders and were rated at thirty five horse power.

1. Whitby Gazette, 24th December 1880.

2. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register 15th September 1881 and 3rd December 1881.

3. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 3rd December 1881.

4. Ibid., 3rd December 1881.



Though nine individuals held shares in her, the prime mover and principal owner was James Sellers.<sup>1</sup> As on so many occasions over the previous thirty five years, Sellers was once more to the forefront of new developments at the port. Though he was later induced to invest in at least one paddle tug,<sup>2</sup> it seems obvious that he still held reservations about their long term viability and saw the future of fishing in the development of sea-going steam screw trawlers.

1881 was a year during which the embryonic steam trawler fleet generally prospered. Favourable prices, good catches, and only limited spells of bad weather meant that the paddlers were able to fish without too much interruption and earn an adequate return for their efforts. Almost all appear to have been profitable and there are no reports of such craft being in financial difficulties or being laid up and sold during the entire first eighteen months of operation. This modest level of success seems to have been sufficient to dispel any lingering doubts about their viability amongst the trawling interest at Scarborough and their wealthy associates. Indeed their success, together with that of the first screw-built craft, seems to have fostered a somewhat over optimistic view of their potential, leading to what can only be described as a mini paddle-steamer mania during 1882.

In the three months from the beginning of December 1881 to the end of February 1882, a further ten steam-powered fishing vessels were registered and all, bar one, were paddle steamers. The addition of a further three before the end of that year meant that the fleet had doubled in size.<sup>3</sup> The enterprises that were formed at this time had little trouble finding backers and existing ventures proved most attractive. The Star O Tay Steam Trawling and Fishing Company's £25 shares were reported to be changing hands at a premium of thirty shillings.<sup>4</sup>

A further indication of the confidence such ventures held can be gauged from the events surrounding the birth of the Yorkshire Steam Trawling Company Limited. In early December 1881 this enterprise was still very much in its

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1. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 19th October 1881.
  2. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 12th May 1882.
  3. See Figure LVIII.
  4. Scarborough Gazette, 11th May 1882.

embryonic stage and yet by the end of the first week in January 1882 sufficient capital had been raised for the first steam boat, Prince Consort, to be purchased from Cardiff.<sup>1</sup>

It was perhaps inevitable that during a period of such bouyant confidence several over-optimistic ventures should have been embarked upon. None fitted this description more fully than the Knight of the Cross Steam Trawling Company Limited. Indeed, this enterprise was to founder even during the relatively favourable economic conditions that prevailed throughout 1882. One of the prime movers behind this concern, which came into existence about the same time as the Yorkshire Steam Trawling Company Limited, was again Henry Lamble Woodger. In this particular instance he worked closely with two other Scarborough gentlemen, G.S.Smith and F.Shaw. The initial capital raised by the company was just over £2,931. Shares were divided into 64ths and for each one acquired its owner had had to venture over £45. The capital was used mainly for the purchase of the steam tug that the company was named after.<sup>2</sup> On arrival from Liverpool, she proved to be the largest and most powerful member of the Scarborough fleet. The demand for steam tugs at this time was particularly strong and despite her age - she had been built at Willingham Quay on the Tyne in 1862<sup>3</sup> - the company had to lay out £2,550 in order to secure her purchase.<sup>4</sup>

Knight of the Cross had been built for towing large vessels and her 121 foot long hull contained a vertical side lever engine rated at 70 horse power, which must have given her a voracious appetite for coal. The cost of fitting her out for trawling was a further £381.20p.<sup>5</sup> However, her owners were confident that when operational she would more than justify the financial outlay. Because of her power and size it was also felt that it would be possible to operate her much farther afield than her contemporaries. In fact, trips to the Norwegian coast were mooted. Her cargo space was extended as far as was practicable and, with a full catch on board, it was estimated that she would be

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1. Scarborough Gazette, 5th January 1882.
  2. Scarborough Gazette, 19th January 1882 and Appendix.
  3. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 1882.
  4. See Appendix XXIV.
  5. See Appendix XXIV.



capable of earning £300 from one trip on a good market.<sup>1</sup>

Reality proved otherwise. It is apparent that the paddler was in far from sound condition when she was purchased, as over the next twelve months engineering bills alone amounted to over £213 and caused her to lose much valuable time fishing. Furthermore, over her entire fishing career, which including time laid up with mechanical problems, was no more than fifty weeks, she managed to earn £477-10-0 from selling her catch. This represented an average of less than £10 per week. This modest sum was far from sufficient when it came to meeting the outgoings. Apart from the cost of repairs, the wages and shares due to the crew, and sundry other outgoings, the coal bill alone amounted to more than £210. The company was rapidly drained of its remaining resources and in November 1882 the directors were obliged to make a call of £3 per share on each holder but this did little to stem the outgoing financial tide.<sup>2</sup>

By the end of January 1883 the prospects of eventual profitability seemed so bleak that the shareholders decided to cut their losses and at an extraordinary general meeting steps were taken to wind up the company. Though the Knight of the Cross had cost more than £2,550 barely a year previously, no more than £800 was obtained from her sale. After all assets were sold off and outstanding debts paid, the holder of each share received back less than £2.45p. As over £48 had been laid out on each, the entire venture for many was little short of disastrous.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately for the Scarborough fishing community, the fate of the Knight of the Cross Steam Trawling Company Limited, was merely a precursor of things to come.

The rate at which new steam tugs arrived at Scarborough tended to obscure the developments in the purpose built sector which received much less publicity. In February of 1882, John Edmond, the Scarborough shipbuilder, launched his second ketch rigged trawler, Kingfisher. Like her elder sister she was of wooden construction. This craft, however, was far larger being 76 feet from stem

1. Scarborough Gazette, 5th January, 1882.

2. See Appendix XXIV.

3. See Appendix XXIV.

to stern and possessed more powerful compound engines, rated at 25 hp.<sup>1</sup> She was, unfortunately, to be the last of her line, for there is no record of any similar craft ever being built by Edmond<sup>2</sup> or anyone else at Scarborough. Her construction had been ordered by George Sydney Smith, a local shipowner, who had felt strong enough financially not to recruit any partners for the venture. Such optimism was to prove his undoing for he soon found himself in financial difficulties and on being declared bankrupt in August 1883, his liabilities were estimated to stand at £4,600.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, his failure was attributed to his great interest in steam trawling. Smith, however, proved a resilient character and by the same October he had been discharged from bankruptcy and managed to retain his hold on the Kingfisher. In order to keep her operational he had been able to secure the support of several wealthy Leeds gentlemen and bankers who backed him with mortgages totalling some £2,200. His enthusiasm and their confidence seem to have been repaid for the craft continued to operate from Scarborough under this arrangement until March 1886 when it was sold to a Frenchman from Dieppe.<sup>4</sup>

During 1883, a further six steam fishing vessels were registered at the port and five of these were screw driven. All these were designed for exploiting the distant water grounds that were formerly the preserve of the sailing smacks. Everyone had been newly built but their construction had been undertaken at other centres on the Humber or the Tyne. An emphasis on iron hulls seems to have ruled out utilising John Edmond and his like who worked in wood alone. The one paddler to arrive that year was called the Clyde and is worthy of mention in that she was newly built and is the first example of her type at Scarborough to begin her career as a fishing vessel.<sup>5</sup>

Despite this spate of construction, 1883 proved itself to be most unsatisfactory for those attempting to develop steam trawling at the port. We have noted that the only way for the paddlers to remain profitable was for them to

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1. Scarborough Custom House, Vessel Register, 16th February 1882.
  2. Edmond in fact, died in November 1886; Scarborough Gazette, 11th November 1886.
  3. Scarborough Gazette, 30th August 1883 and 13th September 1883.
  4. Scarborough Custom House, Vessel Register, 16th February 1882.
  5. Scarborough Custom House, Vessel Register, 2nd March 1882.



be worked as continuously as possible. The need for this policy was particularly acute during these early years for in a number of cases the total capital laid out on purchase and fitting out often exceeded the amount raised. In such cases the promoters were left with no recourse other than borrowing from the bank. In the case of the Yorkshire Steam Trawling Company Limited the problem was compounded in that it attempted to purchase and introduce to fishing more than one vessel in a very short period of time.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, for the paddle operators in particular, nature was not on their side. For much of that year adverse weather conditions prevailed and both paddle and screw steamers were regularly confined to port - the former often for considerable periods.<sup>2</sup> They were thus unable to work anything like as intensively as was necessary and this reduced their earnings over the whole twelve months.

A further problem that they encountered was directly linked to the limitations of the steam paddlers. We have noted that when fishing they clung closely to the coast and often operated on grounds so near to the shore that the smacks would never have dared to work for fear of running on to the rocks. Such grounds had previously been mainly the preserve of the inshore men but by the end of 1883 they had been trawled continuously by steam paddlers for almost six years with an every increasing intensity. Not unnaturally they began to show signs of exhaustion. Though statistical evidence to prove this contention does not exist there was an overwhelming assertion by all sections of the fishing community - including the steamer men themselves<sup>3</sup> - that this was happening. Furthermore, when the 1885 Trawling Commission was instituted, the controversy, in England at least, was centred on the Yorkshire coast inshore waters. This Commission was the first to carry out a series of scientific observations on such a question and Professor MacIntosh of St Andrews University undertook this research. Most of his work was done in Scotland but the one place he studied in England was the Yorkshire coast grounds. His findings

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1. Scarborough Gazette, 5th January 1882 and 28th February 1884.  
 2. Whitby Gazette, 24th November 1883.  
 3. See Chapter Eleven.

indicate strongly that the operations of steam trawlers in inshore waters had proved an important element in the reduction of inshore fish stocks. This conclusion was also echoed by the Commissioners in their Report.<sup>1</sup>

The steam trawlers operating on these grounds were finding that catches were falling off and less reward was earned for their efforts. Not surprisingly, this also affected their profitability and the product of bad weather and poor catches was a harvest of commercial casualties. One of the first of these was the Yorkshire Steam Trawling Company Limited. For the greater part of 1883 it had boasted a fleet of three vessels but its financial stability fell prey to these problems. The company's paid up capital was £7,854 but because of rapid expansion its capital expenditure had been £9,661. Over the whole year the company had also incurred a working loss of £330. By the February of 1884 its debts to the bank totalled £3,888. Despite a slight late upturn in its performance, the shareholders had had enough. At an extraordinary general meeting in March, the decision was taken to wind the concern up. By this time interest in converting steam tugs was waning and, as two of its three vessels came into this category, it is perhaps not surprising that the sale of the entire fleet yielded only £3,882. Even after all other assets were sold off the shareholders were barely left with any recoupment on their losses.<sup>2</sup>

Many other ventures were wound up in a similar fashion around the same time. Amongst them was the Star O Tay Steam Trawling Company. The managing director here, H.L.Woodger, was less faint hearted than his fellow shareholders and, despite its loss making reputation, bought the craft from his partners outright at a knock down price. He managed to keep it operating for several years until it was finally wrecked in 1887.<sup>3</sup>

The economic problems afflicting the Yorkshire coast fishing industry were by no means confined to the steam fleet as both trawling smacks and herring vessels experienced down turns in fortune during the mid 1880s, though

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1. R.C.Trawling, 1884-5, 1885 XVI, Report xliii.

2. Scarborough Gazette, 28th February 1884.

3. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 25th January 1881.



FIGURE LXVII: Scarborough Steam Fishing Vessels

Date of Registration	Name	Description	Date & Place of Construction	Engines	Comments
3/8/1878	Cormorant	Screw Driven Yacht	Preston 1878	Compound	Sold 1882
29/12/1880	Dandy	Paddle tug	Willington 1863	Simple side lever	Converted to lighter 1902
5/1/1881	Tuskar	Paddle tug	Low Walker 1870	Simple side lever	Fishing till 1895
14/1/1881	Spurn	Paddle tug	North Shields 1871	Simple side lever	Fishing till 1898
25/1/1881	Star O Tay	Paddle tug	North Shields 1870	Simple side lever	Wrecked 1887
12/4/1881	May	Paddle tug	Low Walker 1870	Simple side lever	
27/4/1881	Patriot	Paddle tug	Low Walker 1867	Simple side lever	
3/8/1881	Star	Paddle tug	Bristol 1879	Simple side lever	
15/9/1881	Young Squire	Screw driven stern assisted ketch	Scarborough 1881	Simple high pressure	To Grimsby 1884
19/10/1881	Pioneer	Screw driven trawler	Scarborough 1881	35hp simple high pressure	
13/12/1881	Isle of Ely	Paddle steamer	North Shields 1866	35hp simple high pressure	
27/12/1881	Flying Sprite	Paddle steamer	South Shields 1869	65hp side lever	
5/1/1882	Admiral	Paddle tug	South Shields 1875	36hp simple side lever	trans. to Kirkaldy 1903
26/1/1882	Prince Consort	Paddle tug	South Shields 1874	60hp simple side lever	To North Shields 1884
28/1/1882	Flying Sylph	Paddle tug	South Shields 1869	80hp simple side lever	Converted to lighter about 1882
2/2/1882	Knight of the Cross	Paddle tug	Willington Quay 1862	70hp simple side lever	Sold to Scottish contractor 1883
13/2/1882	Express	Paddle tug	Waterford 1870	35hp simple side lever	Wrecked 1886
16/2/1882					
20/2/1882	Flying Squall	Paddle tug	South Shields 1871	80hp simple side lever	
15/5/1882	Lord Clyde	Paddle tug	Cork 1864	50hp simple side lever	Sunk 1893
22/8/1882	Fire King	Paddle tug	South Shields 1856	60hp simple side lever	Broken up Sunderland 1890
23/12/1882	Constance	Paddle tug design	South Shields 1882	36hp simple side lever	Sunk 1910
17/2/1883	Albatross	Screw driven trawler	Deptford 1883	Compound	To Liverpool same year
2/3/1883	Clyde	Paddle tug design	Newcastle 1883	60hp simple side lever	To Cardiff 1890
3/3/1883	Cygnets	Screw driven trawler	South Shields 1883	40hp compound	To Montrose 1907
16/7/1883	Prince Albert	Screw driven trawler	Hull 1883	45hp compound	To Montrose 1884

FIGURE LXVII (continued)

Date of Registration	Name	Description	Date & Place of Construction	Engines	Comments
2/8/1883	Sequel	Steam assisted screw driven trawler	Sunderland 1883	20hp compound	To London 1886
5/12/1883	Tyne	Paddle tug	North Shields 1883	Simple side lever	To Cardiff 1890
1/1/1884	Osprey	Screw driven trawler	South Shields late 1883	40hp compound	To Aberdeen 1915
6/1/1888	Dolphin	Screw driven trawler	South Shields late 1887	Compound	Lost December of the same year
2/3/1888	Hero	Paddle tug	Low Walker 1868	60hp side lever	Dismantled 1908
30/8/1888	Valotta	Steam assisted Yawl	Middlesborough 1888	15hp compound	Sold abroad 1912
19/12/1888	Otter	Screw driven trawler	South Shields 1888	45hp compound	Sunk by German submarine 1916
20/2/1889	Dalhousie	Screw driven trawler	Dundee 1886	38hp Triple Expansion Engine	Sunk by German submarine 1916

Source: Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register



not necessarily for the same reasons.<sup>1</sup> This meant that those who spread their interests across all sectors were unable to recoup their losses in steam fishing with a better return from elsewhere. In the wake of these company failures there followed a number of individual bankruptcies. In March 1885 the vessel owner and fish merchant, Edward Rawlinson, went under.<sup>2</sup> Three months later there was an even heavier crash when the business of Henry Wyrill, for years one of the ports leading entrepreneurs, collapsed with debts totalling more than £12,000.<sup>3</sup> The following two years saw no real alleviation of the problems afflicting the fishing interests. Henry Lambie Woodger, perhaps the main proponent of steam trawling at Scarborough, also went bankrupt owing more than £4,767 in November 1887.<sup>4</sup> This last event followed by only a few months the death of that other leading entrepreneur, James Sellers, in the previous May.<sup>5</sup>

These crises cracked the very foundation of the Scarborough fishing industry and the removal of four such prominent individuals in little more than two years greatly weakened the steam trawling sector in particular. Furthermore, several other individuals who had been closely involved in the development of the fishing industry lost interest and are heard of no more. The consequences were predictable. The decline in the strength of the fleet, which commenced by the beginning of 1884 continued unabated throughout the middle years of the decade. By the end of 1887 only sixteen steam trawlers remained compared with twenty seven at the fleet's zenith.<sup>6</sup> From January 1884 to March 1888 not one new steamer was brought to the port leaving such operations to be continued by the remaining somewhat curious mixture of paddle tugs and early purpose-built steam screw trawlers.

The rot halted in 1888. In March of that year Mr Knapton, a local businessman, purchased the paddle tug Hero, which was operated for him by a local skipper. Like many of her forerunners, this craft was second hand, having been built at Low Walker on the Tyne in 1868 and had previously seen service

1. See Chapter Eleven

2. Scarborough Gazette, 19th March 1885.

3. Scarborough Gazette, 11th June 1885.

4. Scarborough Gazette, 10th November, 1887

5. Scarborough Gazette, 12th May 1887.

6. See Figure LXVIII.

at London and Llanelli.<sup>1</sup> Even before she arrived, however, a brand new steam screw trawler, Dolphin, was registered.<sup>2</sup> She was purchased by George Alderson Smith but he had scarcely managed to get the craft fully operational when she was lost in early December. By this time, however, Smith, in conjunction with Edward Marsden and J. Smirthwaite two wealthy Scarborough gentlemen, was almost ready to take delivery of a second craft, Otter.<sup>3</sup> This newly built trawler proved so successful that he acquired in 1889 a further steam screw trawler, Dalhousie,<sup>4</sup> which had been built in Dundee back in 1886. Like almost all other steam screw trawlers built at the port during the 1880s these two craft possessed compound engines.

George Alderson Smith had previously been a figure on the periphery of the Scarborough fishing world. From this time forward, however, he was to assume a dominant position which he was to hold throughout the 1890s. Little is known of his background but he certainly appears to have possessed considerable capital assets which he used to build up a small but modern fleet of steam trawlers.<sup>5</sup>

The arrival of these new craft in the last couple of years of the 1880s coincided with the departure or loss of several others and so overall growth was only slight and there were never more than eighteen craft at this time. This figure was to remain the average size of the Scarborough steam fleet into the nineties. Over the same decade the sailing fleet had been in a steady and relentless decline,<sup>6</sup> and it is clear that the acquisition of new steam vessels had been insufficient to keep pace with their demise. Overall the 1880s bore witness to a considerable erosion in the strength of Scarborough's catching effort in terms of vessels operating from its harbour.

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1. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 2nd March 1888.
  2. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 6th January 1888.
  3. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 19th December 1888.
  4. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 20th February 1889.
  5. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 6th January 1888; 19th December 1888; 20th February 1889.
  6. See Chapter Thirteen.



This experience of Scarborough and its steam fleet was not shared by all other fishing ports. The port had followed the example of North Shields in deciding to adopt the steam fishing vessels but after a period of rapid and somewhat over-enthusiastic growth a considerable number of problems had been encountered. By the close of the period under question a small corps of steam paddlers and purpose-built screw trawlers had proved themselves viable but any long term tendency to growth appears to have been effectively removed. Indeed, much of the vitality and optimism present at the beginning of the 1880s were sadly lacking by their close. In contrast, as Figure LXVIII shows, Hull proved a relatively later starter in this field but from 1882 onwards, like Grimsby it adopted the new technology with an ever increasing rapidity. The pioneer port North Shields, also maintained a strong fleet and in the case of Aberdeen, the development of trawling was almost entirely based on steam vessels.<sup>1</sup> Unlike the experience of Scarborough then several other major fishing ports were able to embark upon a restructuring of their white fishing fleets involving the replacement of sail by steam with little or no loss in their catching capacity.

There are a number of reasons why Scarborough should fail to maintain its development as it had done in previous decades and why its apparently keen interest in steam fishing should not reap rewards on a similar scale to those of other ports. Firstly, unlike North Shields, there was no great local expertise available that could be utilised in the maintenance and operation of steam fishing vessels. The port had only one tug boat of its own, the bulk of its mercantile fleet were sailing vessels, and its local boat builder was really only experienced in the construction of wooden sailing vessels, though, of course, he did try his hand with steam engines on two occasions. This lack of experience is evident in that a number of obviously unsuitable craft were acquired and their resultant poor performance was accompanied by financial disaster which retarded the development of the steam fishing fleet.

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1. M. Gray, op.cit., 166-9.

FIGURE LXVIII: Steam Vessels Belonging to Various Ports 1883-1889

	Scarborough		Hull		North & South Shields		Sunderland	
	No.	Tonnage	No.	Tonnage	No.	Tonnage	No.	Tonnage
1883	27	770	10	1067	64	826	22	388
1884	22	599	10	1087	80	1040		
1885	22	600	15	1326	85	1011	25	421
1886	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1887	16	428	35	2512	84	810	19	400
1888	18	479	52	3529	83	739	16	349
1889	18	549	61	4002	76	783	16	385

Source: Trade and Navigation Returns



Closely linked to this was the fact that, in contrast to for example Hull and Shields, there were no local marine engineering facilities available. If a steam vessel required a heavy overhaul of its engines or boiler then it had to be sent to another port. This was a costly venture and meant that mechanical failure could not be dealt with as quickly as was possible at other ports.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the advent of iron and steel hull construction also required the availability of associated engineering skills that were then missing in a small port such as Scarborough.

The steam engine needed coal and, as we have seen, this was a new factor in fishing costs. Utilising coal, however, again exposed the weakness of Scarborough, this time from the point of its location. Amongst the north east ports it was perhaps the furthest from a pit head. In contrast, North Shields, with its location at the mouth of the world's greatest coal carrying river, could hardly have been better situated. Hull and Grimsby fared almost as well for their steam trawlers received their coal straight out of Humber Keels that had loaded directly at the collieries.<sup>2</sup> Being some distance from the coal fields made fuel marginally more expensive. Indeed, for every mile from the Tyne coal costs would increase proportionately.<sup>3</sup> This meant that steam vessels at Scarborough were at a working cost disadvantage with other large fishing ports along the northern edge of the North Sea.

Finally, of course, there was the question of port facilities. Steam trawlers at this time were in general, about thirty feet longer than smacks. The harbour at Scarborough could certainly not accommodate anything like as many of the former as the latter, so there could be no question of replacing sailing craft on anything like a one to one basis.<sup>4</sup> Hull and Grimsby meanwhile had considerable dock and quayside facilities that were better suited and able to cope with their introduction. Similarly, there were numerous places on the

- 
1. S.P.L. Scarborough Harbour Commissioners, 31st July 1865.
  2. H.Fletcher, A Life on the Humber (1975) 23-4.
  3. C.Elliott, Steam Fishermen in Old Photographs (1979) 8.
  4. See Chapter Sixteen.

Tyne at Shields for mooring trawlers once they had discharged their catches at the fish quay.

This survey has shown that the initial reasons why steam trawling was established when it was, had nothing to do with any sudden technological breakthrough that revolutionised its economics or to a final breakdown of any irrational conservatism that had until then, restricted the entire industry. However, the principal contribution that was made by those technologically outdated former tugs, was that of establishing the concept of economic fishing under power. Though a number of paddle trawlers were to remain economically viable for many years, it was soon clear that the future did not lay in their direction. By the close of the decade, it was more than evident that the wave of technological development had passed over and left them in a backwater. The 1880s witnessed considerable advances in the field of marine steam engineering, including the introduction of the triple expansion engine. As a result steam was finally able to establish its supremacy over sail in most fields of merchant shipping. The fishing industry reflected these changes and the evolution of the steam fishing vessel over the decade bore witness to this. By the end of the decade the basic features of steam trawler design for the next seventy or so years, had been laid down. The modern craft of 1889 boasted not only a considerable range and economic consumption of fuel, it also possessed a steel hull and triple expansion engines which it combined with the seaworthiness of the old sailing smacks. Such features were to remain predominant throughout the entire career of the steam trawler right to its eventual demise.

The story of steam trawling on the Yorkshire coast at this time, however, is essentially the story of Scarborough. Only two other steam fishing craft have been noted in this survey, one of which was a Bridlington based launch and the other a Whitby tug. Whereas both these ports possessed harbours that were in many ways suitable for these craft, neither had a well established tradition of operating first class vessels when steam trawling was taking off in the later 1870s. The other fishing communities, such as Staithes and Filey lacked even such basic facilities as were available at Scarborough and were



thus ruled out of this development. Thus the success or failure of this innovation was reliant, as far as the Yorkshire coast was concerned, on just one port.

The picture of steam trawling then at Scarborough during this time, is essentially a mixed one. Though the new technology did take root at the port the tragedy is that such enthusiasm and pioneering spirit was rewarded by only limited growth. The harvest that was reaped in terms of bankruptcies and upheaval, to say nothing of injury to fish stocks, damaged the well-being of the industry there for many years to come.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: THE SAILING FLEETS 1877-1890

The late 1870s witnessed the zenith of local participation in the Yorkshire coast herring fishery. Upwards of one hundred yawls and converter smacks, together with large numbers of inshore boats fitted out each year to go driving for these fish during a season that could last from July to September. The catching effort thus mobilised was probably about a third of that which the East Anglian ports could muster but it still made the Yorkshire coast herring fleet the second largest in England. Its nearest rival for this position was probably the Cornish fleet based upon St Ives and Penzance but further research will likely show this to be about half the size. Furthermore, compared with the Scottish visitors, the Yorkshire catching effort was greater: the typical yawl of these years might shoot around one hundred and twenty nets<sup>1</sup> whilst the largest craft from north of the border would carry only about eighty.<sup>2</sup>

By this time herring landings were being concentrated on the ports of Scarborough and Whitby. Most of the visiting herring merchants gathered there and invariably created the best markets. Another factor encouraging such centralisation was the practice of some merchants and fishermen to enter into agreements under which the former guaranteed the latter a fixed sum for a portion of the catch. This tied the fisherman to the base used by the merchant. However, the system was at that time by no means as common as in Scotland. Most herrings landed at Scarborough and Whitby were sold on the daily market. The bulk was destined for home consumption and its value determined by short term movements of supply and demand.<sup>3</sup> Staithes, the other main centre, could no longer rival its larger neighbours for volume. All three stations reached their annual peaks of activity between August and October. Apart from the local craft, the Yorkshire coast herring season acted as a magnet for vessels from East Anglia, Cornwall, the Isle of Man and, of course, Scotland.<sup>4</sup>

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1. R.C. Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence q.6039.
  2. M.Gray, op.cit., 83.
  3. Whitby Gazette, 1st October 1881.
  4. Scarborough Gazette, 16th July 1885 and Whitby Gazette, 29th September 1893.



FIGURE LXX: Herring Prices September in Certain Years at Billingsgate andGrimsby

## Billingsgate Market Pickled Herrings Per Barrel

1870	20/- to 28/-
1871	27/6 to 31/-
1872	25/- to 35/-
1873	28/- to 38/-
1874	26/- to 36/-
1875	25/- to 36/-
1876	-
1877	33/- to 42/-
1878	-
1879	-
1880	-
1881	-
1882	-
1883	18/- to 40/-
1884	-
1885	12/- to 22/10
1886	18/-
1887	16/- to 18/-
1888	-
1889	15/- to 20/-

## Grimsby Fresh and Salted Herring per 100

	Salted	Fresh
1882	1/3 to 3/6	3/- to 4/-
1883	-	-
1884	3d to 1/3	6d to 2/7
1885	1/- to 2/9	1/6 to 3/8
1886	3d to 1/-	5d to 1/7
1887	1/- to 1/4	8d to 1/4
1888	-	-
1889	9d to 2/-	1/- to 3/10
1890	-	-

Sources: Redcar and Saltburn Gazette and Eastern Morning News.

Statistics of fish prices in England are notoriously scant prior to 1886. However, these fragmentary records serve to illustrate the depression which afflicted the herring industry after 1883.

Despite the strength of the assembled fleet, the later seventies were not the most rewarding in terms of revenue. Indeed, most Yorkshire coast herring fishermen seem to have experienced somewhat of a downturn in fortune. This seems to be due to poor catches rather than low prices.<sup>1</sup> It is evident that the notoriously unpredictable herring shoals had foresaken many of the inshore grounds and vessels were pursuing them ever further out to sea.<sup>2</sup> The last really successful herring fishery had been 1876. Over the whole of that year the drift and line activities of the Staithes' yawls had yielded an average income per vessel of around £900.<sup>3</sup> The fall off in catch was at first probably marginal in most cases but ironically aggravated by the occasional glut caused by the fleet making sudden contact with large shoals. The resultant heavy landings overwhelmed marketing facilities. Yet despite such difficulties, total herring landings over the whole season were ironically on the increase, thanks to the growing number of visiting craft. Their activities more than compensated for the decline in catches per individual vessel.

The herring season created a temporary demand for labour that Yorkshire coast towns and villages could not entirely satisfy. Shore based activities required the import of rullymen, gutters and packers, many of whom travelled up from East Anglia. On the catching side extra crew members were needed. The number of casual men required for drifting had increased because of the preference then exhibited for trawling rather than lining during the off season. As we have seen, the usual crew of the great liner was seven and for drifting this was increased to nine. In contrast, the converter smacks carried only five men for trawling so an extra four had to be recruited for the herring fishery.<sup>4</sup> Staithes, which stuck to great lining found the extra men amongst its own community but Scarborough had to look further afield. The shortage there was overcome by recruiting migratory labour who were attracted to the port for the casual work. Whilst regular crewmen were paid by the share the

1. See Figure LXX.
2. R.C.English & Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1878-9, 1879 XVII, Minutes of Evidence pp 107-8.
3. R.C.English & Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1878-9, 1879 XVII, Minutes of Evidence p 133.
4. Board of Trade Report on Relations between Masters and Men 1882 XVII, Minutes of Evidence, q 2857.



casuals were paid by the week.<sup>1</sup> Lacking ties with the local community, they often contained an unruly element and their employment was looked upon by the local owners as a regrettable but necessary evil. Complaints were voiced about their preference for the public house to the sea and their propensity to break contracts by unexpectedly refusing to sail.<sup>2</sup> In the absence of an appreciable residue of unemployed fishermen at the port they remained crucial to the proper functioning of the herring season.

The seasons 1880-1883 saw a continued increase in activity by stranger vessels at the ports of Scarborough and Whitby. September 1882, indeed, seems to have been a month of record landings at both ports.<sup>3</sup> However, it is evident that the Yorkshire coast's own fleet was experiencing great difficulty, in the face of this outside competition, in regaining its earlier prosperity for there was an almost complete cessation in the construction of new craft.<sup>4</sup> Part of the reason for this lay in the current enthusiasm at Scarborough for steam trawlers but even this in itself seems to indicate that the herring fishery was the less attractive to locals. The rapid increase in activity at this time was being undertaken by these outsider vessels: at Scarborough the number of landings by such vessels between 1879 and 1882 more than trebled,<sup>5</sup> despite the inconvenience occasioned by the harbour reconstruction. At Whitby, where landings had long been dominated by outsiders, a similar upward trend was noticeable. At this time there was little change in the ports from which these craft originated but Scotland and East Anglia appear to have become more dominant.<sup>6</sup>

The herring industry along the Scottish east coast had also experienced a period of steady expansion after surviving the collapse of the Irish market in the 1840s. For over thirty years, from the middle of the century, it had experienced almost continuous growth in terms of both effort and output. This expansion was primarily based upon the export of pickle-cured herring to eastern

1. Board of Trade Report on Relations between Masters and Men 1882 XVII, Minutes of Evidence qq 2860-4.

2. Board of Trade Report on Relations between Masters and Men 1882 XVII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 2881 and 2913.

3. See Figure LXXI.

4. See Figure LXXI.

5. See Figure LXXI.

6. S.P.L. Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Minutes, 30th July, 1888.

FIGURE LXXI: Fishing Boat Landings

	Whitby Boats 15 tons and upwards	Open boat herring	Other	Scarborough Landings by Strangers*
1879	167			585
1880	235			1220
1881	302			1497
1882	377	2333	1050	1860
1883	360	2411	1052	1720
1884	410	3065	3826	1850
1885	272	1777	3095	2305
1886	276	1750	2943	2557
1887	409	1634	3259	2755
1888	240	1565	1953	2323
1889	137	1396	2538	2269
1890	95	2403	3885	2655
1891	57	1685	4005	2635
1892	65	2084	4164	2908
1893	60	2065	5160	3175
1894	38	1601	6395	3068
1895	57	2066	6914	2978
1896	48	1306	5849	2967
1897	34	1132	5017	3765
1898	23	1072	3991	4052
1899	7	637	3899	3195
1900	14	779	3543	2929
1901	7	1106	3844	3173
1902	9	899	3438	2978
1903	45	760	4179	2850
1904	43	502	4064	
1905	33	—	—	
1906	37	555	4486	
1907	45	471	4465	
1908	82	434	4751	
1909	43	305	4473	
1910	110	399	4908	
1911	36	413	6076	
1912	60	175	4579	
1913	214	189	3948	
1914	131	109	5507	

\* During peak herring season months

Sources: Whitby Harbour Commissioners Ledgers, Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Minutes







European markets. The absence of any substantial economic setbacks had fostered an atmosphere of optimism and prosperity, particularly among the curers who occupied a position crucial to the successful operation of this trade.<sup>1</sup>

Along that coast the most common method of purchase then prevalent between fisherman and curer was the engagements system. Under this, the curer undertook to buy at a pre-arranged rate up to 250 crans landed by each boat. To process these herring he also engaged a 'crew' of three women who would pack and gut them after landing. Apart from the payment of an initial bounty, the curer would settle up with his employees and engaged crews at the end of the season.<sup>2</sup>

Curer's profits were dependent upon the state of overseas demand for his product but adverse conditions in those markets had never been sustained long enough to have any real effect on this body of operators. Despite this there existed weakness behind the prosperous facade. The pace of expansion had been forced by the curers only through their running up of debts. Processing capacity grew to such an extent that it had become necessary to promise the catching sector such considerable rates for their catches that could only be covered if the price they received for the cured herring remained very high. Gray tells us that even a small drop was certain to cause losses for most of the curers.<sup>3</sup>

During this long period of expansion, prices had always exhibited a tendency to recover quickly and the banks had grown accustomed to sustaining their customers through such difficult times, confident of their ultimate recovery. The threat to this solid and yet brittle web of confidence was that of a market collapse lasting for a number of years which would cause a long term fall in the price received by the curers for their products. Such a catastrophe began in 1884. That year in Scotland the combination of large catches and poor quality fish, considerable debts run up by the curers to engage fishermen, and a low overall price on the Continent, meant a loss for many curers of as much as £1 per barrel.<sup>4</sup> Unlike previous experience, there was to be no immediate return

1. M.Gray, op.cit., 146-7.

2. A.R.Murison, 'The Scottish Herring Industry' (PhD.Glasgow 1929) 33.

3. M.Gray, op.cit., 146.



of prosperity and in the following years it became increasingly apparent that the capacity for catching and processing white herring was in excess of immediate Continental market demand. It was also evident that this situation would prevail with the emphasis on low or no profitability until production and catching effort were reduced or the market underwent some long term change. The consequence was that the banks withdrew support which caused many curers to fail. The survivors gradually abandoned the engagement system in favour of daily purchase by auction. This allowed a much more flexible response to changes in supply and demand. It was to take the Scottish herring industry close on ten years to show strong signs of recovery.<sup>1</sup>

The collapse of the Scottish overseas market growth which had encouraged the crisis, had only a limited direct effect upon the Yorkshire coast industry because only a small proportion of its catch was destined ultimately for the same consuming centres.<sup>2</sup> Most of its herring were meant for the home market to be sold in either fresh or lightly cured form. Nevertheless, it took very little time for the repercussions to make themselves felt. These indirect effects were to be far more serious.

Like other branches of the fishery on the Yorkshire coast, the 1883 herring season had been one of the worst for many years, thanks largely to the bad weather which had confined vessels to port for days on end. After indifferent catches when they were able to put to sea the fishermen had mainly terminated their activities earlier than usual.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, the local industry was in poor financial shape and hoping to recoup its losses in 1884. Unfortunately, that season was marked by very heavy catches that resulted in rock bottom prices - a fact possibly exacerbated by more Scottish and Northumbrian herring finding their way onto the English market during the first part of the season.

During the next few years the Yorkshire fleet was to find the herring fishery so unremunerative that they almost totally abandoned it. In 1885, herring

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1. M.Gray, op.cit., 147-8.

2. A cargo of cured herring was shipped direct to Stettin from Scarborough by H.L.Woodger in 1881 but at that time it was uncommon for such direct shipments to take place: Scarborough Gazette, 29th November 1883.

3. S.P.L., Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Minutes, 29th November 1883.

landings proved so prolific that at Scarborough the market was glutted daily during the peak season. Quite often the landing price remained as low as 6d per hundred, whereas two shillings would have been considered unsatisfactory in other years.<sup>1</sup> The larger vessels were not the only casualties. The 1886 season followed a markedly similar pattern and proved particularly bad for the Flamborough fleet of open herring craft.<sup>2</sup> They returned home after a season based on Scarborough to report that many crews had not even covered their expenses, despite making large catches, thanks to the prevalence of low prices.<sup>3</sup>

Within a few years it was observed that there had been a total cessation of herring fishing by this community because it had become so unprofitable.<sup>4</sup> The decline in the number of first class Scarborough vessels fitting out during the season was almost equally rapid. In 1882 about thirty two such craft still went herring drifting<sup>5</sup> but by 1887 only three made the necessary preparations.<sup>6</sup> By the following years local interest had fallen so low that the only fitting out of a local yawl was undertaken by strangers.<sup>7</sup> By the early nineties no Scarborough first class vessels were following the herring shoals which had once provided the most profitable fishing in the annual round of activity. This trend was also reflected by a similar loss of interest at Filey and Staithes.

Paradoxically, the demise of the Yorkshire coast first class herring fleet had gained momentum at a time when more and more boats from other areas were being attracted to Scarborough by that very fishery.<sup>8</sup> Throughout the eighties there was an almost continuous increase in the number of strangers working from the harbour and almost certainly in the amount of fish landed. The answer to this lies in the fact that it was this growing competition which proved the undoing of the Yorkshire fleet.

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1. Scarborough Gazette, 1st October 1885.
  2. Scarborough Gazette, 21st October 1886.
  3. Ibid., 21st October 1886.
  4. R.Fisher, M.A., Flamborough Village and Headland (Hull 1894) 49.
  5. S.P.L., Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Minutes, 1st March 1884.
  6. S.P.L., Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Minutes, 30th July 1888 and Scarborough Gazette, 3rd March 1887.
  7. Scarborough Gazette, 23rd February 1889.
  8. S.P.L., Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Minutes 30th July 1888



In Scotland, after the calamities of 1884, there was, as we have noted, a gradual abandonment of the engagement system between curers and fishermen. The removal of this financial arrangement loosened the bond which tied the fisherman to the port where the curer operated.<sup>1</sup> This gave the fisherman greater freedom of movement, if not financial security, and it was natural for him to seek out the ports which might prove the most remunerative. It is evident that there has been an increase in Scottish boats journeying south in the years preceding 1884, as complaints about their methods of working occurred frequently. After 1884/5, fishing out of English ports such as Scarborough when the Scottish season was still underway was probably more attractive - even given the low prices prevailing there - than supplying the home curing trade, where supply could soon swamp outlets. Once having started working off the English coasts for herring they may well have been induced to stay even longer and visit East Anglia by the very fact that their longlining activities during the off season back home were meeting with increased competition from the newly emergent steam trawling centres based on Aberdeen and Granton.

During the eighties there was also pressure on many East Anglian boats to start herring fishing earlier in the year. This was due to the declining yields from the off season white fishery in the Southern Bight of the North Sea. There was thus an increased effort all round being undertaken off the Yorkshire coast at a time when marketing prospects were less favourable.

The reason why the Yorkshire coast fleets found it difficult to respond successfully to this outside challenge was partly in the nature and design of its craft. They had, of course, been built with a dual purpose in mind and caught white fish during the off season. Furthermore, mindful of the exposed nature of the coast and the harsh weather they encountered they had been constructed with sea keeping qualities to the uppermost and could weather all but the very worst conditions. They were thus built broad in beam but this made them somewhat slower than vessels of slimmer hull construction.<sup>2</sup> In the

1. Under the engagement system, the curer had specified the port where the herring were to be landed.

2. The abandonment of the third mast in the 1840s had also reduced the speed of what were formerly swift craft for their construction.

decades before 1880 speed was of slightly less importance as the craft had sometimes remained on the grounds for several days and brought much of their catch in slightly salted rather than all fresh.<sup>1</sup>

The abandonment of the lugger rig by the Yorkshire coast first class vessels in the 1860s had also cut top speed. Dandy and gaff rigs had been adopted so that the craft could be handled by smaller crews and were more manoueverable when trawling. At least a knot was lost off top speed.<sup>2</sup>

The Scottish craft made few concessions to white fishing needs and retained the speedy lugger rig as they increased their dimensions. Before 1870 they had rarely exceeded thirty five feet in length. By the 1880s the largest craft, known as zulus, regularly exceed sixty feet.<sup>3</sup> These well built craft were much swifter sailers than the Yorkshire coast craft. To them speed was the uppermost factor as it was the Scottish practice to return from the herring grounds each day. The cured fish trade there required herring to be as fresh as possible. When such craft came south in increasing numbers their speed meant they arrived back in harbour first.<sup>4</sup> Early arrivals in times of glut or low prices were assured of the day's best prices. As prices fell during the later 1880s the practice of landing only when their holds were full proved most unprofitable. Overday herrings needed salting at sea and had always commanded a lower landing price than fresh but their value slumped to such an extent during the mid 1880s that there were periods when they were unsaleable.<sup>5</sup>

The ability of the Scottish craft to reach market first came not only from their superior speed, it was also a result of the fishing practices adopted by their crews. The Yorkshire first class craft, like those from Cornwall and East Anglia, cleared their nets of fish as they came aboard. The nets were then passed below decks down one hatch and the herrings down another. The catch were

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1. S.C.Sea Fisheries, 1893, 1893-4 XV, Minutes of Evidence qq 6750-6753.
  2. E.Dade, 'The Old Yorkshire Yawls', Mariners Mirror, 19 (1933) 190.
  3. M.Gray, op.cit., 83-4.
  4. E.Dade, loc.cit., 190.
  5. Scarborough Gazette, 1st October 1885 and 6th October 1887. Whitby Gazette, 22nd October 1887.



sold at so much a hundred and the fish were thus counted the same way. This method had been carried on for decades and probably much longer but the Scottish fishermen brought with them an entirely different system. Their boats had a large open hold in the centre and they fished using fine deep nets with a very light warp. It seems that they could keep their nets in the water until they were ready to return. Apparently, this type of fishing gear could be left in the water in conditions that would force the Englishmen to begin bringing their's back on board. Quite often this was believed to be an advantage for there were considered to be more herrings around in a blowing sea. Once the nets were hauled in, the Scotsmen bundled them down the large hold opening, together with fish, warps, bouys and all. They could then set sail for shore whilst the other craft were still separating fish from nets.<sup>1</sup>

The Scotsmen cleared their nets in harbour and sold their fish by the cran. This again speeded up the process for the cran was a volume measure and removed the need for counting. Under this system there was, of course, no chance of drying nets at sea and such practices were totally carried out after landing.<sup>2</sup>

The immediate response of the Yorkshiremen to the Scottish competition was to modify their boats in an attempt to give them more speed. Originally, the yawls had been built with a clinker hull but to speed the craft up this was made smooth on many boats in the middle of the 1880s. The lands were filled up with a feather edged plank and over this a 3½ inch skin of American elm was fixed. Thick bends were put on the outside just below the deck and fastened right through to new knees and frames. The whole process was known as doubling.<sup>3</sup>

The process of doubling probably improved the speed of the craft but not sufficiently to make them competitive with the Scottish craft. The result then was that the herring fishery was, as we have seen, swiftly abandoned by the Yorkshire coast fishermen. The yawls continued to operate but by the end of the decade they concentrated on white fishing or were being laid up and sold off.<sup>4</sup> By this time the herring fishery based on Scarborough harbour was dominated by

1. E.Dade, loc.cit., 190.

2. E.Dade, loc.cit., 190.

3. E.Dade, loc.cit., 190-1.

4. S.P.L., Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Minutes, 30th July 1888.

the Scottish.

The experience at Whitby was somewhat different to that of Scarborough from the middle of the 1880s. Prior to that time, its fortunes during the herring season had closely followed those of its neighbouring port. Activity during the season reached its peak during the years 1880-4. In the latter year there were landings by 410 first class boats and 3065 small herring craft,<sup>1</sup> whilst a total of 3,755 tons of fish were shipped out by rail.<sup>2</sup> Like Scarborough, it seems to have attracted, at least temporarily, the attention of more Scottish craft.

Thereafter decline set in. The harbour was in poor condition and the Scottish boats had been less than welcome on some occasions in the past so it is not surprising that many preferred to land at Scarborough.<sup>3</sup> The 1885 season proved a poor one for the port with first class landings falling by about one-third. As a result much of the casual labour force, which traditionally assembled at the beginning of the herring season, were unable to find employment.<sup>4</sup> The fatal blow for Whitby, however, was probably the removal of its local tug, which was sold off in that year.<sup>5</sup> As we have seen, in the days of sail the possession of steam towing facilities was of immeasurable importance to any fishing port so that it is not surprising that Scarborough, with its harbour authority paddle tug, was able to attract more herring craft visiting the Yorkshire coast.

Thus whilst landings at Scarborough continued to increase, those at Whitby fell. 1886 was another poor year and although there was quite a recovery in 1887 the downward trend was once more soon evident. During the whole of 1889, there were only 137 landings by first class craft.<sup>6</sup> The decline of Whitby's status as herring port is reflected in the downturn in the total amount of fish traffic by rail that left the port, as can be seen from figure LXXIV.

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1. See Figure LXXI.

2. See Figure LXXIV

3. N.C.R.O., Whitby Harbour Commissioners Minutes, 5th September 1883.

4. Whitby Gazette, 19th September 1885 and 10th October 1885.

5. Whitby Gazette, 1st January 1887.

6. See Figure LXXI.



Like Scarborough and Filey, the men of Staithes found it difficult to cope with the invasion from north of the border. In the late seventies and early eighties, new designs of craft based on those used by the Manx and Cornishmen, were introduced<sup>1</sup> but their effectiveness seems to have been limited. Indeed, its first class fleet fell by about a half over that decade.

Thus in the course of the years covered by this chapter, a radical transformation had overtaken the Yorkshire coast herring fishery. In short, local domination of the catching sector was effectively and totally removed, thanks largely to the competition posed by the Scottish craft. At the same time activity was further concentrated; this time on the port of Scarborough.

#### White Fishing Operations by the Sailing Fleet

As we have noted in Chapter Eleven, there is a strong case for accepting that fish landings on grounds usually frequented by English trawling smacks were falling away rapidly during this period. Not surprisingly, this factor was the underlying cause of many of the problems that afflicted the white fish sailing fleet at this time.

However, the first change of note that occurred during these years was the transfer of a number of yawls formerly based on Filey to Bridlington. The first craft had actually moved about 1875<sup>2</sup> but most moved between the end of 1877 and 1881.<sup>3</sup> The principal causes appear to have been the inability of any scheme for harbour construction at Filey to get off the ground and the problems associated with harbour reconstruction at Scarborough where they were often moored.<sup>4</sup> Not all of Filey's first class fleet moved but its strength was considerably reduced by the opening of the 1880s.

When greatlining, few of these craft actually landed their catches at Bridlington Quay. The harbour, though a thriving base for inshore trawl fishing, lacked handling and marketing facilities on a scale that could cope with the newcomers. Many of the yawls continued to visit Scarborough but increasingly

1. Whitby Custom House Vessel Register 11th February 1879, 8th October 1881 and 24th April 1882.
2. Hull Custom House, Register of Fishing Vessels 25th March 1875.
3. Hull Custom House, Register of Fishing Vessels 18th November 1877 to 5th January 1881.
4. Scarborough Gazette, 23rd October 1879.

they took their fish into Grimsby.

As in the early 1870s, the principal problems afflicting the vessels were the high cost of bait and poor landings. As the first class fleet declined in strength on the Yorkshire coast during these years so did the number of craft that went great lining. Surprisingly, those yawls which were not disposed of during this period probably spent an increasing amount of their year fishing in this fashion. This was largely due to the changes in the herring fishery which made it increasingly unattractive to the Yorkshire coast fishermen and so a number continued white fishing when they might otherwise have gone drifting.

The problem which increasingly faced the sailing smack from 1878 was that of the steam trawler. Though, as we have seen, these pioneering craft did not frequent the same grounds as the smacks, they did land on Scarborough market. They often obtained the best prices as their fish was usually fresher because these converted paddle tugs came to port every day rather than only once or twice a week.<sup>1</sup> Originally, many sailing trawlers which had worked out of Scarborough had landed daily but as the grounds upon which they could safely operate became worked out, they had been forced to work further and further afield thus necessitating voyages lasting several days.

Nevertheless, the sailing trawlers responded to such problems in an apparently positive fashion. One attempt to overcome the problems created by the increasingly long journeys to fishing grounds had been to spread the practice of fleeting. For several years a number of Scarborough trawlers had joined fleets that had been formed at either Hull or Grimsby. In the spring of 1880, Scarborough formed its own boxing fleet.<sup>2</sup> The moving spirit behind this venture seems to have been James Sellers and he owned or had an interest in about half of the vessels which sailed. The fleet actually mustered some forty one craft.<sup>3</sup> For a major part of the decade Scarborough continued to fit out its own individual fleet for the spring and sometimes summer trawling months.<sup>4</sup>

1. See Chapter Twelve.

2. Scarborough Gazette, 6th May 1880.

3. Scarborough Gazette, 6th May 1880.

4. Scarborough Gazette, 24th May 1883, 19th June 1884 and 14th July 1893.



Fleeting, however, did not solve the problems that afflicted the sailing trawlers. Throughout the decade the prevailing conditions proved continually adverse to their prosperity. Though the average price per cwt of fish landed by the smacks continued, as we have seen, to rise, this was more than offset by the continuing fall-off in catches. Thus the income earned annually by each trawling smack continued to fall.<sup>1</sup> The few craft that proved successful were generally the purpose-built steam trawlers which began to appear in increasing numbers as the decade wore on. Because steam trawlers were much more expensive to construct their rate of introduction, at first, was comparatively slow. It seems likely that if they had been introduced at a faster rate then the demise of the trawling smack would have been even swifter for the greater range and speed of the steam trawler reduced the problems associated with travelling to distant grounds.

Not surprisingly, the Scarborough fleet of sailing trawlers began to fall away.<sup>2</sup> Many vessels were sold off; at first to other fishing ports then later for use as coastal traders or to overseas interests. Even so a considerable number continued to work throughout the decade. Attempts were made to improve their efficiency by the installation of small steam capstans able to help with the hauling up of the trawl and the landing of the fish.<sup>3</sup>

With the unrelenting pressure that was still being applied to their profit margins, the smack owners attempted to restore their financial position by cutting costs.<sup>4</sup> This was to bring them into direct confrontation with their labour force for the only time during the nineteenth century.

The extension of fleeting at Hull and Grimsby had proved unpopular with the crews at both ports and the owners were only able to secure their own way after substantial industrial confrontations.<sup>5</sup> At Scarborough the owners do not appear to have met such stiff resistance for there is little evidence of any organised reaction by fishermen in the late 1870s and early 1880s. Nevertheless, as we

1. See Chapter Eleven.

2. See Figure LXII.

3. Scarborough Gazette, 14th April 1887.

4. Scarborough Gazette, 1st April 1887.

5. R.Brown, op.cit., 24-25 and 34.

shall see below, the structure of fleet ownership had altered over the previous few decades to such an extent that few working fishermen had any capital interest in the first class fleet.<sup>1</sup> In short, they relied totally for their income on their shares or wages earned solely by labour. It was these that the owners proposed to cut.

During December 1886, a meeting of Scarborough smackowners was held at which it was decided to alter the terms of the existing crew engagements. Part of the old agreements with the crews had stipulated that the owner should receive five per cent of the gross profit (before any other deductions were considered) for providing the steam capstan. Out of this money he was expected to provide the oil waste and other necessities that kept it in working order. Henceforward, the smackowners decided to demand six and a quarter per cent and to refuse to provide any necessities.<sup>2</sup>

This decision was put to each individual crew when their craft returned to port.<sup>3</sup> The smacks, by virtue of their winter operations, did not arrive home together so their crews were not faced with these demands at the same time. As they lacked any real organisation, most seem reluctantly to have accepted the arrangement which meant a cut in income for the members of the crew who were on shares. Resentment at the owners' decision remained and was fuelled by the fact that the sharemen's real income was also falling because of the declining revenue the smacks earned from fishing.

The men's ability to organise a counter-attack had by necessity, to wait until the majority were on shore together and the general feeling gauged. The first such occasion was when most boats came in to take advantage of the Easter weekend market by landing on Maunday Thursday. On that day, the 14th April 1887, a well attended meeting of men was held at the Sandside Coffee House. After protracted discussion they agreed to provide the oil and waste but to object to the deduction of the six and a quarter per cent. On Easter Saturday they refused to return to sea on the owners' terms. In effect nearly three

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1. See Chapter Fourteen.

2. Scarborough Gazette, 7th April 1887.

3. Scarborough Gazette, 7th April 1887.



FIGURE LXXII: Yorkshire Coast First Class Steam and Sailing VesselsRegistered for Fishing

	Scarborough Custom House		Whitby Custom House		Sailing		Steam	
	No.	Tons	No.	Tons	No.	Tons	No.	Tons
1882			22*					
1883	101	4851	27	770	21	853	1	7
1884	96	4597	22	599	24	1055	1	7
1885	94	4473	22	600	23	1013	1	6
1886	-	-	-	-	-	-	.	-
1887	84	4164	16	428	22	981	1	12
1888	80	4023	18	479	22	981	1	12
1889	81	4036	18	549	19	865	1	12
1890	77	3846	18	529	14	534	-	-

Sources: Trade and Navigation Returns; \*B.O.T. Report of Relations between Masters and Men.

hundred men were on strike.<sup>1</sup> On Easter Sunday the men held a parade through the town followed by attendance of the service at St Thomas's Church.<sup>2</sup>

The strike was to last upwards of a week with no breaking of ranks. Almost immediately, though, rumours began to circulate that the owners planned to thwart their action by importing Grimsby men to work on the smacks. The leaders of the men seem to have kept a low profile and few ringleaders could be positively identified, however, they included one M. Watkins.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, they swiftly communicated with the secretary of the Grimsby Fishermen's Protection Society in an attempt to stop the importation of blacklegs. They took the opportunity to remind him that when the Grimsby boats had been on strike the Scarborough smackmen had refused to join boats from that port. In a short while a reply was received pledging support for the strikers together with a copy of the rules of the Grimsby association and a suggestion that they form their own union.<sup>4</sup> By this time, however, the strike had been settled.

On the Wednesday following Easter, the owners met in the Sandside Coffee House and offered to return to the original five per cent if the stocker bait was thrown in with the rest of the catch. Stocker bait consisted of fish such as gurnards, rays, monks and dabs and, depending on the quality, might vary a great deal in value. The men had traditionally split the proceeds of stocker bait between themselves and it might yield the crew between one shilling and nine shillings apiece. This offer was rejected by the men and the owners made a few further concessions.<sup>5</sup>

A few days later the strike was settled. The capstan percentage received by the owners returned to five per cent whilst the men agreed to provide its oil and waste. In future, it was decided that the stocker bait should be divided into six shares, two of which were to go to the owner and the others to the men. The three leading members of the crew who were already paid by the share on the rest of the catch were to receive one full stocker bait share each and the last

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1. Scarborough Gazette, 14th April 1887.
  2. Scarborough Gazette, 14th April 1887.
  3. Scarborough Gazette, 21st April 1887.
  4. Scarborough Gazette, 21st April 1887.
  5. Scarborough Gazette, 21st April 1887.



one was to be divided equally between the two wage men.<sup>1</sup>

The two wage earners of the crew came out of the arrangement less well than the sharemen as this was the only variable portion of their income. However, with the decline in income having affected the sharemen's earnings, those on a fixed wage had previously fared somewhat better for their wages do not appear to have been downwardly graded for some time.

Concessions had been made by both sides but, given the adverse economic conditions then prevalent and the difficulties they faced in organising themselves, the men's achievement was by no means insubstantial. Despite this relative success, there is no evidence that a permanent trade union was formed by the fishermen at the port at this time.

The agreement could, as might be expected, have done little to alleviate the underlying lack of profitability which was really caused by declining catches and thus income. The return was poor enough for one owner to refer to the smacks as floating workhouses;<sup>2</sup> implying that they were kept at work for the benefit of the men. In reality, it would probably have cost more to leave the craft laid up in harbour and earning no income but incurring mooring charges. For many owners the realistic alternative was sale and in some cases there was no choice for there were a series of bankruptcies during the course of the 1880s which led to the disposal of craft.<sup>3</sup> Yet despite the run down of the fleet there was little obvious unemployment amongst the fishermen.<sup>4</sup> In some cases unemployment was disguised by men returning to open boat fishing to earn a smaller income catching shell fish and the like.<sup>5</sup> The main reason at Scarborough, though, seems to have been migration. Indeed, many men seem to have migrated to ports such as Aberdeen where prospects seemed more attractive.<sup>6</sup>

In fact, the fishermen seem to have deserted the smacks at a faster rate than the fleet shrank for by 1890 it was often difficult to find crews. There

1. Scarborough Gazette, 21st April 1887.

2. Scarborough Gazette, 14th April 1887.

3. See Chapter Twelve.

4. See Figure LXIII.

5. S.C.Sea Fisheries 1893, 1893-4 XV, Minutes of Evidence, qq6700 -6703.

6. Scarborough Custom House, Board of Trade Letter Book, 14th May 1891.

FIGURE LXXIII: Number of Fishermen Relieved by Poor Law Guardians atScarborough 1880-7

	Urban District	Sanitary District	Total
1880	19	17	36
1881	18	15	33
1882	10	17	27
1883	14	16	30
1884	13	19	32
1885	14	21	35
1886	10	22	32
1887 (9 months)	8	18	26

Source: Scarborough Gazette, October 1st 1887



were shortages in particular of skippers and first hands. The Fishing Boats Act of 1883 had introduced certification for such positions on all craft over 25 tons.<sup>1</sup> This seems to have given such men a scarcity value and no sooner had many men qualified for the certificate than they left the port.<sup>2</sup> Many who remained exhibited a marked reluctance to man the smacks. This was particularly the case in the summer as their profitability had declined to such an extent that it often proved more remunerative to ply for hire in an open boat amongst the visitors.

Whereas at most fishing stations along the Yorkshire coast the first class fleet was on the decline, Whitby in fact was able to build up a small fleet of first class smacks during the eighties, which numbered at its maximum about four. These were purchased by several local business and trades people who ventured their capital together.<sup>3</sup> In addition, at certain times, a number of first class steam lining vessels took to landing their catches in the harbour and their contributions were supplemented by occasional steam trawler landings.<sup>4</sup> However, as we have noted, conditions locally were adverse to the success of such a development. The port did not emerge as a major white fish landing centre at this time and the limited expansion did little to offset the decline in the herring fishery.

Over the whole period covered by this chapter, the overall emphasis in most sectors of the Yorkshire coast first class fishing fleet was on decline thanks to continuing economic problems underlain by difficulties on the supply side.

#### The Inshore Stations and Fishery

Of all the sectors of the Yorkshire coast fishing industry, it was probably the inshore men who suffered the most during this period. As we have already seen, certain stations, such as Flamborough, virtually abandoned their parti-

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1. 46 & 47 Vict. cap 22.

2. Scarborough Custom House, Board of Trade Letter Book, 14th May 1891.

3. Whitby Custom House Vessel Register, 6th February 1884, 7th April 1884, 24th December 1884, and 17th February 1886.

4. Whitby Gazette, 9th July 1887.

pation in the herring fishery in the later 1880s. This had not been through poor catches but because of low prices and competition from the Scottish fishermen. This development occurred during the second half of the 1880s and was one of the last blows to afflict the inshore men during this period.

Some idea of the extent of the decline in activity at leading inshore stations can be gauged from figure LXXIV, which shows the amount of fish carried inland by rail from them. However, this was not primarily due to the herring fishery as most small boats landed these fish at either Scarborough or Whitby.

The decline in activity can be mainly attributed to the fact their white fishing grounds were being exposed to the full blast of exploitation from the later 1870s by the first paddle trawlers. In the 1850s and 1860s, the principal complaints had been levelled at the sailing smacks who had forced the inshoremen to abandon a number of soft bottomed grounds. The inshoremen deserted these because their long lines were often damaged by the beam trawls.<sup>1</sup> As a result, they had been confined to the rocky bedded grounds, upon which trawls could not then be worked because they would be damaged, and some patches of smooth grounds that the smacks could not effectively exploit.<sup>2</sup>

There had been two main reasons why smacks could not work on some of these smooth bedded inshore grounds. Firstly, some were too small for these craft to operate on without the risk of running off onto the adjacent rocky bottom and damaging their nets. Secondly, there were other smooth bottomed grounds that were so close inshore that the smack could not be sure of having sufficient leeway to safely tack out of the bay or miss the headlands.<sup>3</sup> As a result, these grounds were also left alone.

Thus despite their confinement, the inshore men had been left prior to the late 1870s with two basic types of ground on which the smacks did not work. There was no legislative protection which gave them sole rights to such grounds.

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1. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq6820-6828.
  2. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq5369-74.
  3. R.C. English and Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1878-9, 1879 XVII, Report, XXVII.



FIGURE LXXIV: Return of Fish Conveyed Inland by Rail from Various Yorkshire Coast Stations

	Filey Tons	Flambro' Tons	Redcar Tons	Staithe Tons	Hornsea Tons	Withernsea Tons	Patrington Tons	Whitby Tons	Scarborough* Tons
1879	1134	322						4552	8900
1889	1103	357	22	486	27	20	17	2885	9787
1881	885	617	43	564	38	14	24	3686	9285
1882	899	511	33	517	22	21	23	3681	9239
1883	606	573	28	622	36	33	13	2516	7359
1884	642	289	6	462	41	11	11	3755	9118
1885	437	352	10	436	49	8	-	2451	10562
1886	407	267		632	35	10	14	2499	12032
1887	301	262		571	-	16	12	2359	13705
1888	330	272		737	44	46	17	2916	11602
1889	191	248		862	86	44	13	1623	10218

\* The increase in Scarborough's traffic was largely a result of herring landings by stranger craft.

Source: Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables.

The only barriers to exploitation by smacks were those of practicality.

During the 1870s, the friction between the inshore and smackmen had begun to die down a little as the smackmen concentrated more and more on grounds ever further from the coast. The arrival of the steam trawlers completely altered the situation.

These early paddlers were, as we have seen, restricted by both design and range to the exploitation of inshore grounds. Being more manoeuvrable than the sailing smack, they were able to work the smaller smooth-bottomed grounds that had hitherto been the preserve of the inshoremen. This we know they did with a formidable efficiency.<sup>1</sup>

Faced with losses of lines and gear the inshore men were left with no alternative but to retreat almost entirely into the areas of rocky ground. The principal problem, however, was damage to stocks. As we noted in chapters eleven and twelve, the continuous trawling activity on these grounds led to a diminution of stocks. By 1885 Professor McIntosh found that half the fish trawled up by paddlers at Scarborough consisted of immature fish too small for the market.<sup>2</sup>

The inshore men felt the decline in catches much more immediately than the paddle trawlers who, being more mobile, could move on along the coast to other grounds when catches fell off. Moreover, the fishermen of Flamborough and other inshore stations were still beset by problems which had been afflictions in previous decades. These were principally the high cost and uncertain availability of bait. It is not surprising that the inshore catching effort continued to fall off during this period. Many of those fishermen who continued in their traditional employment became increasingly reliant on the shell fishery for their livelihood, particularly after the herring fishery also became unprofitable.<sup>3</sup> In addition, those who worked from ports particularly favoured by the tourist trade were able to supplement their income by plying for hire.

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1. See Chapter Twelve.

2. R.C. on Trawling, 1884-5, 1885 XVI, Minutes of Evidence, q12,433.

3. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., 25th October 1895.



Some of the men who left the inshore fishery at this time migrated to the larger fishing ports but it is very evident that many retained their original distaste for trawling and could not countenance such a move. At Staithes, for example, we find that many men who left the fishery preferred to go and work in the iron yards at Middlesborough rather than go to the thriving trawling ports of Hull, Grimsby and Aberdeen, as did the smackmen of Scarborough.<sup>1</sup>

In many ways, the conditions then prevalent in the inshore fishery were symptomatic of those prevailing in much of the North Sea. It was becoming apparent to most interested parties that a substantial inshore sector would be unable to survive without further regulation and protection. The inshore fishermen were to find in the later 1880s an unlikely ally in the form of the trawling interest which had come to believe, rightly or wrongly, that the inshore grounds were a nursery for North Sea fishing stocks.<sup>2</sup> They came to feel that such grounds should be protected from the excesses of their own members. Protection, in the form of the North Eastern District Sea Fisheries Committee, arrived late in 1890.

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1. R.C. on Trawling, 1884-5, 1885 XVI, Minutes of Evidence, q .10,004.

2. See Chapter Eleven.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: CHANGES IN THE STRUCTURE OF OWNERSHIP

One question that confronts the student of fisheries' history is just how and where does the industry fit into the chronology of that transformation of the economy and society that we loosely term the industrial revolution? So far we have approached directly only one aspect of this question, for whilst making a detailed investigation of the Yorkshire coast fishing industry we have attempted to relate its interaction with other forces that were altering the character of the economy at both local and national levels.

The remaining task is perhaps more formidable and probably less rewarding: it is that of attempting to relate phases of the industry's development to some of the usual definitions of industrialisation that are applied to the transformation of other economic activities during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. If this be possible then we might be able to assign fishing a place in the chronology of economic change in much the same way as other historians have attempted for, say, cotton textiles or agriculture.

The reasons why such an intention may prove most hard to fulfil will be outlined below. Many of the problems that need to be overcome relate to the unique nature of the fishing industry and the difficulties of realistically applying definitions of change to which have really been developed from the study of other areas of economic activity.

Because of the obstacles to be overcome this may at first appear to be a less than fruitful avenue to follow but, as we shall see below, some historians have already used such phrases as 'industrialisation' and 'industrial revolution' in their discussion of areas of fisheries activity which have interested them. It is therefore my intention during this chapter to examine the problems associated with the use of such terms as well as attempting to indicate the possible relationship of fishing to the economy as a whole under such a line of analysis.

The definitions of industrial revolution or industrialisation have been many and varied.<sup>1</sup> It would at this juncture, be valuable to attempt to identify

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1. See, for example, R.M.Hartwell, The Industrial Revolution in England, Historical Association Pamphlet No.58 (1965), 7-10.



some of the factors that in combination could be used to relate these two phrases to the pattern of change that was occurring within the fishing industry. First and foremost perhaps, the industrialisation or revolutionary change of an economic activity is usually associated with a large increase in both its output and the size of the market it serviced. Secondly, it is usual to find within such a transformed activity, the systematic and widespread application of either modern science or empirical knowledge to the processes of production for the market. Thirdly, there is a tendency to find a shift in emphasis from rural to urban communities that is closely linked to the external economies associated with location and concentration of an industry. A fourth and further factor would be an increase in the economies of scale achieved through the extensive injection of capital resources to replace or complement human effort. Further, in most cases where an activity has undergone such a process of industrialisation, it is usually possible to identify new social and occupational classes that have come to the fore as a result of a transformation of the traditional structures of capital ownership within an industry.

In any economic activity undergoing such a metamorphosis there will inevitably be found evidence of profound discontinuities between its traditional and transformed structures and practices. W.W.Rostow noticed that this clearly marked watershed in national growth practices often occurred over a relatively short period of time. Indeed, he introduced the term 'take-off' to describe this critical period during which many economies moved into a period of sustained growth.<sup>1</sup> Whilst his definitions and timing of these 'take-offs' have been the subject of much criticism - particularly when he attempted to relate them to the British economy as a whole<sup>2</sup> - there were often short periods in the development of many individual industries that were critical to their transformation. By identifying such brief times of rapid change and discontinuity, it might be possible to gain some indication of where that activity fits into

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1. W.W.Rostow, 'The Take Off into Self Sustained Growth', Economic Journal LXVI, No.261, March 1956.
  2. R.M.Hartwell, op.cit., 12-13.

the general chronology of the industrial revolution in the United Kingdom.

A great deal of detailed research remains to be undertaken on the various regional fishing industries of England and Wales before a clear national picture emerges. However, our knowledge of their Scottish counterparts has been greatly enhanced thanks to the work of Gray,<sup>1</sup> Goodlad<sup>2</sup> and Murison.<sup>3</sup> Though their work has been primarily concerned with the development of the fishing industry they have, of course, related this to other economic developments. They have not, on the other hand, attempted to tie in their work too closely with such concepts as 'take-off', 'industrialisation' and 'industrial revolution'. Some other students of the fisheries have been less reticent. Tunstall, for example, in his work on the Hull fishermen, seems very confident in proclaiming that fishings' industrialisation was not completed until 1900.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Michell, who splits the evolution of the fishing industry into five distinct phases, places its industrialisation in the third of these, which he says ran from 1880 to 1920/30.<sup>5</sup>

It appears that the key factor that leads both to such fundamental conclusions is that of the widespread adoption and application of steam power to the process of capturing fish. The application of steam power to industrial processes has traditionally been linked with that intriguing metamorphosis that made Britain the world's first industrial nation, though by no means does it figure strongly in all of the relevant industries' early stages.

However, the introduction of steam into the trawling sector at least, was accompanied by several fundamental changes. The considerable financial outlay which construction of the steam trawler entailed encouraged the establishment of a number of limited liability companies at ports such as Aberdeen, Hull, Grimsby, Boston and Scarborough. Even the cost of converted second-hand steam tugs was, as we have noted, far higher than the price of a brand new sailing

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1. M.Gray, The Fishing Industries of Scotland 1790-1914 (Aberdeen 1978).

2. C.A.Goodlad, Shetland Fishing Saga (Shetland 1971).

3. A.R.Murison, 'The Scottish Herring Industry' (Unpublished PhD thesis, Glasgow 1929).

4. J.Tunstall, The Fishermen (1962) 18-19.

5. A.R.Michell, 'The Evolution of the North Sea Fisheries With Special Reference to the Delta Area', in The Rhine, Meuse, Scheldt Delta, eds. P.W.Klein and J.H.Paelink (Erasmus University, 1979), 98-106.



smack and normally beyond the resources of many working fishermen.<sup>1</sup> Most of these new companies that commenced operations during the eighties were, as today, controlled by land-based individuals and some proved to be particularly enduring, including the Boston Deep Sea Fishing Company that was founded in the 1880s and lasted until 1983.

In addition, we have noted that the steam trawler was a highly efficient and wide ranging hunter when compared with the sailing smack and that the twenty or so years that followed its introduction bore witness to a marked expansion of its operations with the opening up of new trawling grounds off the coasts of Norway and Iceland. This was accompanied, after the eighties, by a marked expansion in the landings of white fish. Furthermore, during the period after 1880 when the steam trawler was establishing itself there was an accompanying widespread application of several other innovations, the most notable of which were the artificial production of ice for the preservation of fish and the successful commercial utilisation of the otter trawl which increased the steam trawler's catching efficiency yet more.<sup>3</sup>

It seems clear that the widespread application of these latter innovations was closely linked to the rise of the steam trawler. Ice, for example, had long been imported from Norway for use by fishing vessels.<sup>4</sup> However, the incentive to expand greatly the new processes of artificial production was stimulated by the demands for ever increasing quantities of ice as steam trawlers ranged ever greater distances from their home ports in the twenty years following 1890. The basic otter trawl had been developed before steam fishing boats established themselves, but they had proved difficult for sailing boats to operate. However, the gear was easily adapted for steam trawling.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, it is evident that a considerable amount of evidence can be marshalled in favour of the view that steam trawling was the crucial innovation of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Barwood, however, has gone

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1. See Chapter Twelve.

2. In 1893 the increased catching efficiency of the steam over the sailing trawler was variously estimated at from three to six fold: S.C.Fisheries 1893 XV, Minutes of Evidence qq.351; 1,165; 4,199.

3. See Chapter Fifteen.

4. See Chapter Eleven.

5. See Chapter Fifteen.

further and says:

'As with many other industries, the advent of steam brought about the laying of the foundations of trawl fishing as we know it. Other discoveries contributed, but steam played the greatest part.' 1

It was not only in the trawling sector that the steam fishing vessel was swiftly to rise to prominence. From the later nineties onwards the herring fleet began to adopt steam drifters on an increasing scale. Their introduction was gradual at first but within a short time they proved so successful that there was a rapid scramble by both Scottish and East Anglian fishermen to acquire them.<sup>2</sup> Steam drifters thus contributed formidably to the massive increase in catching power that was one characteristic of the almost continual boom experienced by the British herring industry as a whole in the first fourteen years of the twentieth century.

Here also the application of the new technology affected traditional patterns of ownership. Steam drifters cost at least double that of a sailer and often considerably more. It became, as a result, more difficult for working herring fishermen to find the requisite capital themselves and landmen took an increasing financial involvement in the catching sector. In Scotland, for example, Gray tells us that this was the first time that a more substantial direct share in the fishing boats was held by non-fishermen.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, the introduction of steam fishing forged stronger links between the industry and the kind of engineering trades that typified the industrial economy that was Britain in the last half of the nineteenth century. At the same time, its connections with older activities, associated closely with the pre-industrial economy, were weakened. There was a considerable extension of marine engineering facilities at those major fishing stations that could accommodate them, in order to provide adequate service and maintenance. There was also a corresponding decline in the importance of trades such as sailmaking and carpentry. By 1914 the modern steam trawler or drifter was usually built of steel rather than wood, as was its sailing counterpart of 1880.

1. G.Barwood, Trawl Fishing: British Trawlers' Federation (1967), 4.

2. See Chapter Fifteen.

3. M.Gray, *op.cit.*, 155-7.



Another and related feature of the decades during which the steam fishing vessel was rising to pre-eminence, in the trawling industry at least, was a shift in locational emphasis. Many smaller more rural stations experienced decline whilst the larger urban centres such as Hull, Grimsby, North Shields and Aberdeen experienced an often phenomenal expansion. Even considerable fishing ports such as Scarborough and Staithes were unable to sustain their importance and languished.<sup>1</sup> In part, of course, this was due to the need to provide this extensive and sophisticated marine engineering back-up.

Many of the dramatic changes that the fishing industry underwent during this period can thus seem to be associated in some way with the rise of steam propulsion. If it can be accepted that the introduction of the steam engine was the catalyst for the transformation of the fishing industry that some have believed, then a formidable case can be put forward for identifying the critical period as the years between 1880 and 1914. We would then be in a position to state that this activity was a latecomer to the process of industrialisation. The crucial questions that have to be asked here, however, are just how do the general changes that took place during these years relate to those that occurred in the preceding decades and just how important in particular was the steam vessel in comparison with earlier innovations?

Recent research has tended to suggest that the role of the steam in the transformation of many areas of the economy during the crucial periods of industrial change has been overexaggerated. Von Tunzelman,<sup>2</sup> for example, has shown that in many sectors great increases in output and changes in organisation were obtained through the continued utilisation of traditional power sources such as wind, water, animal and human labour. Moreover, in the maritime field as a whole we have noted in chapter twelve that the final ascendancy of steam over sail had to await the development of the compound and triple expansion engines during the seventies and eighties.

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1. See Chapter Thirteen.  
2. See Chapter Twelve.

Two obvious points emerge from this concerning the fishing industry. Firstly, with regard to the technological developments of the steam engine, it can no longer be assumed that the successful purpose-built steam trawler did not emerge earlier because the fisheries had not undergone a process of industrialisation. It seems likely that the steam engine was simply not efficient enough to compete with the sailing smack on long distance voyages until its coal consumption rates were cut. Indeed, even the utilisation of the much more limited converted paddle tugs for fishing operations in the later seventies and early eighties was largely possible it seems because of a marked fall in the cost of coal and their cheap price consequent upon the lack of employment towing ships in and out of major estuaries.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, if it accepted that the role of the steam engine in the transformation of an economic activity has been overstated in many cases, then it is all the more necessary that other factors which may have radically altered the nature of the fishing industry be examined more closely.

It is obvious from the remainder of this thesis that the industry underwent a series of profound and dramatic changes sometime between 1790 and 1914. However, it is necessary here to identify some of the problems that face the economic historian in attempting to categorise such changes, apply some of the definitions of industrialisation or industrial revolution, and perhaps enable the identification of a crucial period that will allow the assignment of the industry to a place in the chronology of Britain's industrial revolution.

Initially, of course, we must continue to bear in mind what has already been stressed. That fishing is a unique activity. It is neither industry in its narrowest sense, agriculture or transport and yet it contains elements of all three. We must continue to bear such uniqueness in mind and this makes it more difficult to apply effectively terms such as industrialisation and industrial revolution which were derived from studies of other economic activities. If we continue to use these terms we must remember their shortcomings for describing this unique area of economic activity.

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1. See Chapter Twelve.



The next problem that must be faced is that the fishing industry is, and always has been, far from homogeneous in nature. A survey of the catching sector will always reveal that there are a whole range of different activities being carried out, from inshore shell fishing to distant water trawling or from the large scale capture of herrings with originally drift-later seine-nets to the capture of certain varieties of white fish with great lines. Another illustration of its diverse nature can be seen from the number of governmental bodies that have at one time or other overseen it this century. In the mid 1930s the White Fish Authority and the Herring Industry Board were set up to assist in the advancement of these respective activities whilst the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food assumed its basic modern form in 1903. Since the 1890s, of course, the inshore men have enjoyed the support of the several District Sea Fisheries Committees and the whole Scottish industry came under the direction of the Scottish Fisheries Board.<sup>1</sup>

The processing and supply side of the industry again shows evidence of considerable diversity, ranging from the supply of wet and frozen fish for the British home market to the supplying of canned and dried fish products to overseas consumers. A whole variety of species find their way into a considerable range of market places.

Another and closely related problem is that of geographical diversity. When viewed from a historical perspective, each area's fishing activity appears in many ways distinctive. This is perhaps most apparent to the outsider when they consider the sheer variety of traditional vessel design and utilisation that becomes evident from even a brief perusal of the works of Edgar March.<sup>2</sup> Further detailed local research will no doubt reveal much information about regional differences in structure, economic organisation, as well as of development levels. Such diversity within one industry has prompted Gray to talk in terms of fishing industries. Certainly, such problems should be sufficient to engender caution when attempting to generalise about its economic development.

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1. See Chapter Ten.

2. E. March, Sailing Drifters (London 1952).

Paradoxically, whilst on the one hand it is necessary to emphasise the unique nature of each region and type of fishery, it is at the same time essential that we take account of the close relationships that necessarily existed between the markedly different catching and land-based sectors. Inevitably, the emergence of any new element that altered the conditions in one would, through the working of the forces of supply and demand, almost inevitably have repercussions in the other. It would be, for example, less than totally rewarding to confine our discussion of the causes and consequences of the spread of trawling purely to the catching sector. It has been necessary to relate it closely to land based activities associated with processing, distribution, and consumption.

Finally, the fisheries historian must always bear in mind the unique nature of the resource base. Unlike almost any other modern activity, this industry is still geared to hunt a prey over which, apart from preventing over-fishing, it has little control, thanks to the interplay of numerous marine biological variables, including food supply, water salinity, and oceanic currents.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the fisherman cannot be sure, even from day to day, that he will be able to locate his prey. This has always been particularly a problem when seeking a fish such as herring that is notoriously unpredictable in its movements. Such problems are always aggravated by the weather itself, which can cause much valuable fishing time to be lost and can often markedly affect catch levels at some stations.

Thus, the quantities of fish landed, and the relative number of each species, are not only subject to the interplay of the normal market forces of supply and demand, but also to the even more complex interaction of climatic, biological, and oceanographic variables that are largely out of the control of man. So together with all the aforementioned features of this industry, they must be taken into account when attempting to examine its transformation.

Bearing these considerations in mind, it is possible to identify a number of aspects of the industry that not only underwent a process of great change

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1. J.Nicholson, Food from the Sea (1979) 2-22.



FIGURE LXXV: Scarborough Customs Port Area

Breakdown of Occupation of Owners of Newly Registered First Class Fishing Vessels \*

Years	No. Vessels Registered	Percentages											
		Fishermen	Stackowners	Fish Merchants	Ship Owner	Maritime Tradesman	Boat Builder	Gentleman	Merchants	Farmers	Tradesmen	Women	Other
1786/8	12	60		15				2		2		7	7
1824/5	13	64				5		6	10	8		2	5
1825/9	2	80		10					10				
1830/4	12	64		7		5	11	9		4			
1835/9	21	76		1		4	4	1	7	3		1	
1840/5	18	52	2	7		2		1	9	6		3	11
1845/9	8	58	6	6			6			5		2	
1850/4	23	74	8			3			1	2		11	1
1855/9	44	55	8	5		3	1	1	7	3		4	
1860/4	48	35	15	13			2	3	5	2		2	5
1865/9	37	28	8	7			1		15	2		3	7
1870/4	16	27	3	3		6	6	19	15			1	11
1875/9	45	12	12	34		3	2	19	10			2	3
1880/4)	29	1	21	2		9		25	18			9	10
1885/9)													

\* In terms of percentage share of vessels newly registered during periods above.

Source: Scarborough Custom House Vessel Registers

during the period of this thesis but, because of the scale and nature of their alteration, also had a profound effect on its entire structure. If it is possible to define any consistent pattern in these changes then we may, with more certainty, be able to identify the decade or decades that were of crucial importance.

On the processing and distributive side of the industry, there were a number of changes that took place during the course of the one hundred and twenty years from 1790 but, for England at least, the most important of these revolved around the transfer of inland fish distribution from road and water to rail. As we have noted, the Whitby to Pickering and Hull to Selby projects of 1835 and 1840 respectively proved of some benefit to the Yorkshire coast industry - whilst the latter also nurtured the development of the infant Hull industry.<sup>1</sup> However, the real growth came after extension of the rail network to the coast in the mid forties and the introduction of sympathetic carriage conditions after mid-century.

We have seen also, that as a direct result of the coming of the railways, two further important changes were wrought in terms of its distributive and marketing potential. Firstly, access was gained to a much wider national market than had ever previously been the case. Secondly, because of the reduced cost of distribution, fish could reach a far wider cross section of the community. By the late 1850s, fresh fish was no longer a luxury enjoyed only by the rich, but an article of cheap mass consumption.<sup>2</sup> Cheaper varieties of fish, now commonplace on the fishmongers slab, made their first appearance in many inland towns. Merchants were quick to extend their contacts with inland towns. It is apparent from the evidence given before the 1863-6 Sea Fisheries Commission that not only Scarborough and Whitby, but also Hull, Grimsby, Yarmouth, and Lowestoft had already established the inland market connections that they still enjoy today.<sup>3</sup>

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1. See Chapter Four.

2. See Chapter Four.

3. See Chapter Four.



FIGURE LXXVI: Whitby Customs Port Area

Breakdown of Occupations of Owners of Newly Registered First Class Fishing Vessels\*

Year	No. Vessels Registered	Percentages											Total		
		Fishermen	Snackowners	Fish-merchants	Ship Owners	Maritime Tradesmen	Boat Builders	Gentlemen	Merchants	Farmers	Tradesmen	Women			
1787/8	21	72					4	9	2						13
1824/5	24	76				2	10	6						6	
1825-9	2	70				5	10					10			
1830-4	5	70				17							6		
1835-9	4	58		15										14	13
1840-4	4	80	3	2										10	5
1845-9	2	60	10	10									10	10	10
1850-4	4	30		14	20			26							
1855-9	9	65	3		9	4			2				4	13	
1860-4	2	53		22				4	4					17	
1865-9	3	48		5	12			5	25					5	
1870-4)	3	56			6	6			18					7	7
1875-9)															
1880-4)															
1885-9)	5	60			8				25					7	

\* In terms of percentage share of vessels newly registered during periods above.

Source: Whitby Custom House Vessel Registers.

The greatly increased speed of travel thanks to the railway, not only meant that fresh fish was more commonplace inland. It also encouraged the introduction of lighter cures of smoked fish. For the first time the emphasis was on taste rather than keeping quality. The Yarmouth bloater and the Newcastle kipper were reputedly developed in the later forties<sup>1</sup> and early fifties. Furthermore, that familiar British institution, the fried fish and chip shop, was becoming commonplace by the 1880s.<sup>2</sup>

On the catching side of the industry, a number of innovations were being rapidly adopted along most of the Yorkshire and east coast in the years following the 1840s, thanks in part to the opportunities provided by the expansion of the railway network. In the inshore crab and lobster fishery, for example, we have seen that catches and productivity were greatly increased with the replacement of the traditional trunks by crab pots.<sup>3</sup> The most important innovation to be adopted, however, was the practice of trawling for white fish. Though it is apparent that the trawl net was by no means a newcomer to the scene, its significance during the decades around mid century lay in the speed and scale of its application. Much of the stimulus that encouraged its adoption lay in the cheap transportation offered by the railways. By the 1860s at Hull and Grimsby, as well as Scarborough, it is evident that trawling was the dominant means of catching white fish. Yet until the 1840s the majority of white fish caught off the Yorkshire coast had for centuries been taken by hook and line.<sup>4</sup>

The period after 1840 also bore witness to a rapid growth of both the Yorkshire coast's fleet and amounts of fish being landed, as we have noted in Chapter Four. This expansion encompassed the first class white fish and herring sectors as well as most types of inshore activity. Furthermore, these decades also witnessed other changes in traditional practice. Yorkshire vessels

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1. C.L.Cutting, Fish Saving (1955) 276-7.

2. C.L.Cutting, op.cit., pp.239-240.

3. See Chapter Eight.

4. See Chapter Five.



had been visiting the East Anglian autumn herring fishery for over two hundred years and yet this practice almost died out from 1851. Instead, they concentrated upon the expansion of their own herring fishery, which was to attract fishermen from as far afield as Cornwall and Scotland.<sup>1</sup>

Such vigorous signs of change were not limited to the Yorkshire coast at this time, for as Clarke<sup>2</sup> and Gillett<sup>3</sup> have pointed out, this was the period when Hull and Grimsby were really to establish themselves. In addition, the Huxley Commission noted such widespread evidence of expansion in many areas of the British Isles that they used it to refute allegations that the industry was decaying through overfishing.<sup>4</sup>

One important feature of the decades following 1880 during which the steam trawler established itself that is often stressed was the expansion of distant-water trawling. From the early nineties onwards, new grounds were opened off such places as Norway and Iceland.<sup>5</sup> Though these developments were spectacular in nature their sense of uniqueness is diminished when it is recollected that these were merely part of a continuing trend that had been established by the expansion of trawling from its west country base in the early 1800s. Throughout the three decades following 1840, for example, many of the North Sea grounds were being opened up and exploited.

One other aspect of the fishing industry remains to be examined before it is possible to reach any firm conclusions about which period was crucial to its restructuring: this concerns the relationship between capital and labour. One experience that was common to the evolution of a modern industrial structure in many activities was the separation of the elements of capital and labour that were often formerly closely entwined. Of all the questions faced, this is perhaps the most formidable. Separate registration of fishing vessels did not commence until 1869.<sup>6</sup> Even this registry was by no means an altogether

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1. Scarborough Gazette, 30th August 1852 and Whitby Gazette, 13th June 1863.
  2. G.S.Clarke, 'The Location and Development of the Hull Fishing Industry' (unpublished M.Sc. thesis, Hull University 1957) 86-7.
  3. E.Gillett, A History of Grimsby (Hull 1970) pp.220-235.
  4. R.C.Sea Fisheries 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Report, X-XVII.
  5. J.Nicholson, Food from the Sea, (1979) 73-4.
  6. See Appendix III.

a reliable guide, for only the principal owners could be noted in the available space and there was precious little room available for other details. However, as is fully explained in the appendix, it has proved possible to build up a substantial picture of the details of the Yorkshire coast's first class fleet from the Custom House Registers of Shipping. These were first opened in 1786<sup>1</sup> and are complete from that date to the present for all Yorkshire Customs Ports. They provide a wealth of information about all aspects of vessel ownership, which has been analysed below.

Though this analysis will throw much light upon the Yorkshire coast industry, it is evident that this exercise will have to be repeated throughout the areas where these records still exist before a truly national picture will emerge. This is, of course, because of the diverse nature of the different regions and is evident from the number of different ownership structures encountered. Even today, the proportion of the fleet owned by commercial companies and working fishermen varies from port to port, as does the number of crewmen with a share in vessels. What is obvious, however, is that by 1914 the most advanced sector based upon the first class trawling fleet epitomised modern capitalistic organisation in that ownership of its capital was predominantly in the hands of large limited liability companies. Though the fishermen they employed often benefitted from a share in the value of the catch, they were essentially wage labour, in that their income was a direct result of their labour and skill, rather than from capital investment. In this sector, then, the elements of capital and labour had, to a large extent, been separated. The crucial question is just when did this transformation come about?

Although the first class fleet based on the Yorkshire coast stations was involved in the herring fishery for much of the period covered by this thesis, white fishing remained of crucial importance. Indeed, those vessels that were not specialist trawlers were usually dual purpose craft that went trawling or great lining when not drifting for herring.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, until the mid 1880s,

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1. See Appendix III.

2. See Chapters Five and Six.



the Scarborough fleet in particular remained in the vanguard of all developments. As a result, any analysis of the fleet ownership structure would be likely to shed light on this problem. In this respect, the historian is fortunate in that the necessary data has survived in the Custom House Registers mentioned above. When this system was first introduced it contained a requirement that all part owners of a vessel had to be recorded along with their occupations and places of abode. What was not originally recorded was the exact proportion of the vessel that each owned. However, when the whole procedure was reformed in 1824, this information was forthwith provided. Each vessel was divided into sixty four shares and the fraction belonging to each part owner was recorded.

During a vessel's life on the register, its ownership details could be subject to little change. Alternatively, another's registration record might contain details of several alterations. In many of these cases, the changes are not easy to quantify accurately. This was either because of an absence of clarity - it was often difficult for the clerks to fit all the new details accurately within the limited space available for altered registrations - or because some transactions were of a limited or temporary nature. Therefore, the registrations that can be most accurately analysed are those given when it is first recorded at the Custom House. This could be when the craft was first built or when it was transferred in from another Customs Port area. In other words, all fishing boats original ownership details are analysed at the ports of Scarborough and Whitby but not those of subsequent changes which may occur. All of these registrations have been split into five year periods commencing 1825-9, followed by 1830-4 and so on up to 1889.<sup>2</sup> For each of these periods it has proved possible to build up a clear picture of the ownership structure of vessels joining the fleet.<sup>3</sup>

A similar analysis of the pre 1825 registry runs into difficulties because of the absence of the share proportions for each vessel. However, to arrive at

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1. For a detailed discussion of these developments see appendix.
  2. See Figures LXXV and LXXVI.
  3. Bridlington Custom House Vessel Registers were separate from Hull's until 1851 and that port's first class craft can still be traced in the Hull registers after that date. However, there were so few first class vessels owned in the Bridlington Customs Port area prior to the 1870s that its contribution to the total Yorkshire coast fleet was usually negligible.

an estimate of the original ownership structure of the first vessels registered it has been necessary to assume that each vessel was divided equally between the number of owners recorded. If there were two owners, for example, then it has been assumed that each possessed a 50% share: if there were four then each is assumed to possess 25%. In this way it has been possible to build up data for 1786-8. This can be usefully compared with periods after 1825. Yet another useful set of data can be obtained from the 1824/5 new registration details. When the new procedures were introduced, all vessels then in existence were re-recorded. Thus it is possible to build up a complete picture of fleet ownership in those two years that can be compared with that of 1788 and the new registration periods that followed.

We have already noted that the first class fishing fleet operating from the Yorkshire coast stations in 1825 differed little in size and makeup from that which had been first registered in the late 1780s.<sup>1</sup> The fifty following years, however, were to witness many changes including a quadrupling in size.<sup>2</sup> In addition to this, we know that there had been also a considerable increase in the average size and cost of each vessel.

A study of figures LXXV and LXXVI will show that this considerable and marked expansion had not been achieved without alterations to the ownership structure. Initially, in both Scarborough and Whitby Custom Port areas, the bulk of the capital embodied in the vessels themselves was owned by working fishermen: sixty and seventy per cent respectively. The picture was much the same in 1825 and the breakdown of the ownership/occupation structure for new registrations between 1830 and 1834 were again markedly similar. Indeed, for any five year period between 1830 and 1849 it was never the case at either Customs Port for less than fifty two per cent of newly registered tonnage to be owned by fishermen. Usually, the figure was much higher. The profits of one or two good seasons - such as those around 1833/4 - often appear to have been sufficient of an impetus as to encourage a group of fishermen to venture

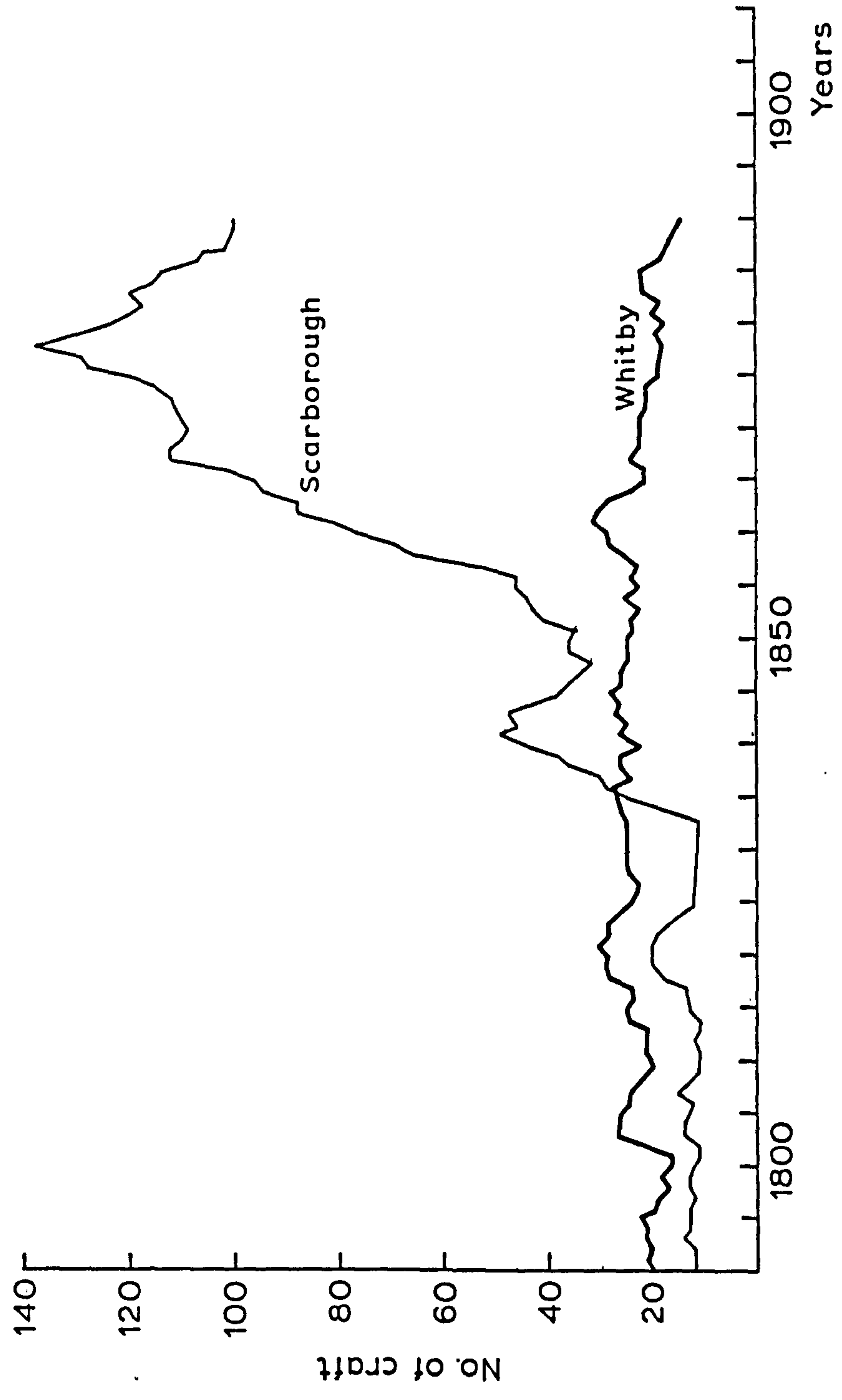
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1. See chapters two and three. Also see figures LXXV and LXXVI.

2. See Figure LXXVII.



Fig. LXXVII Fishing vessels registered in Scarborough & Whitby Customs port areas



Source: Scarborough and Whitby Custom House Vessel Registers

their savings in the building of such craft. Though these craft were generally paid for immediately upon their receipt from the builder,<sup>1</sup> there were only a few cases where one individual had either the capital reserves, or the inclination, to purchase a vessel outright. In general, such enterprises required the pooling of the resources of between two and five individuals.

Despite the obvious ability of many groups within these tight-knit fishing communities to finance such ventures themselves, it was apparently sometimes necessary to attract outside capital. In this respect the local fishing industry was fortunate for, as we have noted in Chapter One, there was a widespread and long-established tradition of shipowning along the Yorkshire coast. A great number and variety of individuals found it worthwhile to take a financial interest in the large fleets that were built or registered at Scarborough and Whitby. Because the commercial life of the towns and villages from Bridlington northwards was so steeped in the business of maritime commerce, it was quite natural for this interest to be extended to fishing vessels. Thus a considerable potential source of capital was available locally.<sup>2</sup>

Although a few vessels registered at the two Custom Houses prior to 1850 were owned outright by merchants and traders, the breakdown of ownership structures in Figures LXXV and LXXVI reveals that such non-fishermen usually partnered fishermen in the various ventures. In such a specialised field as fishing, it made obvious commercial sense, for those whose principal skills and occupations lay elsewhere, to combine in their enterprise with experienced men. A not untypical partnership was that which owned the John and Mary. She was a three masted lugger and had been built at Scarborough in 1819. On her registration at Whitby in 1825 forty eight of her shares were owned by J. Jackson, a farmer of Kettleless, whilst the remaining quarter were owned by Mathew Dobson of Runswick, a fisherman.<sup>3</sup> It was also common, however, for a

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1. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 5160-5166.
  2. A further lucrative though illegal activity that linked together local individuals of differing occupation and social strat was smuggling. See, for example, Chapter One.
  3. Whitby Custom House Vessel Register, 7th March 1825.



few more individuals to be part-owners. The lugger *Friends*, for example, newly built and registered in 1829, was owned jointly by four fishermen, a master mariner and a shopkeeper, all of Robin Hoods Bay.<sup>1</sup>

Some of these non-fishermen, such as master mariners, boatbuilders, and sailmakers, had obvious maritime connections. In other cases, where farmers, gentlemen, and various merchants are found, the connections are less obvious and serve to illustrate the commercial interaction of sea and land that was such a feature of the region at this time. A further illustration of these strong links can be obtained from a survey of their places of residence.<sup>2</sup> At Whitby, for example, between 1830 and 1854 no person resident outside the boundaries of these two Custom Ports had a share in any of these registrations. Earlier, in 1787, only one outsider can be found, and he a merchant from Yarmouth. At Scarborough, it can be seen in Figure LXXVIII that as late as the 1875-9 period, only a small portion of the vessels being registered was not locally owned. It seems fair to assume that such ventures were entered into only by groups of individuals well known to each other.

During the years prior to 1850, it is obvious from the registration statistics that the long term ratio of non-fishermen to fishermen in the ownership of the fishing fleet was somewhat similar at both Custom Ports. If anything the influence of the non-fisherman was less strong at Whitby. A further feature of the northerly area is that during the five year period studied, as much as fourteen per cent of new registrations were owned by women. These were, almost without exception, widows living at Staithes. It seems likely that their late husbands had been fishermen. Evidently they retained relatively substantial reserves of capital in some cases. Sometimes they owned a small share in a new venture worth perhaps £75 to £150,<sup>3</sup> occasionally more. In one case, three Staithes women owned a lugger outright. The vessel concerned was the *Friends Adventure* and upon its first registration in 1835

1. Whitby Custom House Vessel Register, 24th April 1829.

2. See Figures LXXVIII and LXXIX.

3. Based upon George Young's estimate that a newly built fiveman lugger cost about £600 to build in the 1815-30 period. Geo. Young, op.cit., 820-3.

FIGURE LXXVIII: Location of Owners of Fishing Vessels Being Registered at Scarborough  
 (in terms of percentage share of vessels newly registered during periods below)

Date	Within Custom Port Area	North & East Ridings	West Riding	Lancashire	East Anglia	Rest of Eng- land & Wales	Outside England and Wales
1787/8	96	4					
1824/5	91	9					
1825/9	100						
1830-4	100						
1835-9	100						
1840-5	97	3			4		
1845-9	89	7					
1850-4	100						
1855-9	96	4					
1860-4	95	5	1				
1865-9	99						
1870-4	94				4	2	
1875-9	89	5					
1880-4	59	3	26	4		7	1
1885-9							

Source: Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register



ownership was divided between Ann Sanderson, Elizabeth Theaker, and Sarah King. The lugger was skippered by Ralph Sanderson, possibly a relation of the first-named.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the extension of ownership outside of the immediate fishing community, there is no instance at either port of one man owning outright more than one vessel prior to 1850. Occasionally there were such cases as that of William Newton of Filey. He was a baker by trade but held shares in two separate vessels during the early 1830s.<sup>2</sup> However, even this arrangement was the exception rather than the rule. It is fair to say that ownership of these large craft was diversified rather than consolidated. In other words, individual fishing luggers usually had several owners rather than one person owning several fishing luggers.

An analysis of the fishermen owners confirms that, in most cases, the crew ownership of the vessel was not limited to the master. It was a common occurrence for several members of the crew to own a share of the vessel in which they sailed. For example, the Sarah and Anne, a three masted lugger built and registered at Whitby in 1841, was jointly owned by three Staithes fishermen and this was a common situation. However, the crew's financial interest in the capital equipment they utilised did not end there. As George Young tells us, it was the normal practice for five out of the crew of seven to own the catching gear. During the three decades after the Napoleonic Wars the individual financial commitment of these crewmembers towards the gear probably amounted to about £20.<sup>3</sup> This blurred still further the differences between the elements of capital and labour. The majority of those who worked in the large boat fishery ventured their own capital and relied upon a share in their vessel's profits for income rather than on wage labour.

After 1850 the picture begins to alter dramatically in the Scarborough Customs port area. Though there had been a short burst of expansion based on the herring fishery in the 1830s, the normal structures of ownership and

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1. Whitby Custom House Vessel Register, 16th May 1835.

2. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 31st December 1825 and 12th September 1833.

3. Geo.Young, op.cit., 820-3.

FIGURE LXXIX: Location of Owners of Fishing Vessels Being Registered at Whitby  
 (in terms of percentage share of vessels newly registered during periods below)

Date	Within Custom Port Area	North & East Ridings	West Riding	Lancashire	East Anglia	Rest of Eng- land & Wales	Outside England and Wales
1787/8	98				2		
1824/5	98				2		
1825-9							
1830-4	100						
1835-9	100						
1840-4	97	3					
1845-9	89	7			4		
1850-4	100						
1855-9	96	4					
1860-4	95	5					
1865-9	98	2					
1870-4							
1875-9							
1880-4							
1885-9							

Source: Whitby Custom House Vessel Register.



traditional methods of fishing had not altered noticeably. Indeed, as we have noted, this expansion was not sustained for the trend was halted in the 1840s and then put into reverse in the latter part of the decade. Shortly after mid-century, however, growth was resumed and the fleet rapidly gained in strength - almost without check - until the later 1870s. It was during this period that we have noted the widespread adoption of different types of vessels and rigs.<sup>1</sup>

Another feature of this period 1850-1878 was the steady increase in both the size and cost of new vessels.<sup>2</sup> A survey of the vessels registered in 1789 at both Customs Port reveals an average length of forty eight feet. There was little real evidence of growth for at least sixty years. As late as 1845-9, the corresponding averages for newly registered vessels was 48.5 feet. Thirty years later, however, newly registered vessels at Scarborough were an average of twenty feet longer. At Whitby there was a corresponding trend though the increase - in the region of ten feet - was less marked. Costs of vessels grew proportionately. Over the first half of the century, the costs of the large three masted luggers were variously estimated at between £600 and £700, with gear amounting to another £110.<sup>3</sup> By the 1860s, the price of similar first class fishing vessels from the boatbuilders was - according to size - variously estimated at between £850 and £1,200.<sup>4</sup> The trawling smacks, that were becoming such a feature of the Scarborough fleet, also followed a broadly similar pattern. In the early 1860s their cost varied between £700 and £900 and occasionally reached £1,000.<sup>5</sup> By the 1880s a sailing trawler cost in the region of £1,500 and £1,600.<sup>6</sup> During the same period fishing gear of all types was also becoming more sophisticated and expensive.

Such factors combined to make it more difficult for working fishermen to raise the capital required for purchasing a vessel. Initially, the settlement

1. See Chapters Three, Five and Six.

2. See Chapter Five.

3. Geo.Young, op.cit., 820-3.

4. R.C.Sea Fisheries, 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII, Minutes of Evidence, qq 5985-6.

5. R.C. on Trawling, 1884-5, 1885 XVI, Minutes of Evidence, q 8631.

of a number of trawlers at Scarborough between 1850 and 1854 appeared to indicate that the working fishermen's proportionate share of the fleet was increasing. However, the circumstances surrounding the arrival of these vessels was unusual. As we have noted in Chapter Five, these newcomers were usually both elderly and small. As such, their value was low compared with new craft, making it easier for their masters to undertake their purchase. However, the statistics mask the fact that many of these craft were acquired with the aid of mortgages; arranged usually with persons resident in Hull, Ramsgate, or Yarmouth. From a survey of the Custom House Registers of these craft between 1850 and 1854, when the first important bout of settlement took place, it is apparent that few of these fishermen originally had the initial capital available for their purchase, despite their low value. Unlike the traditional Yorkshire coast fishing boat arrangement, these outsiders were not permanent sharers in the venture. Until the principal was paid back, the skipper would pay an annual rate of interest, usually about 5%.<sup>1</sup> Thus, if he met the success and more than a little luck, the trawler skipper would eventually own the craft outright. This system of individual rather than collective ownership - with the initial capital being raised by means of mortgage rather than by recruiting extra partners for the venture - appears to reflect a customary practice that originated with the south coast fishermen. It is yet another indication of the many differences between the various fishing communities of the British Isles. It is extremely rare, for example, to find a Scarborough or Whitby fishing vessel mortgaged in this way prior to the 1850-4 period.

Many of the newcomers did not remain long at Scarborough, preferring to move to the ports of Hull and Grimsby.<sup>2</sup> However, trawling was a practice which had established itself at Scarborough by the mid 1850s. The introduction of this practice actually served also to widen the divisions between capital and

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1. The smack *Welcome*, for example, registered at Scarborough in 1855 and owned by John Clarkson, master mariner of Scarborough though probably from Ramsgate. His vessel was actually mortgaged to Isaac Markrow of Ramsgate in the sum of £290 and an annual interest rate of 5%. This was paid off in 1858. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register 19th September 1855.

2. See Chapter Five.



labour. Unlike greatline or drift net fishing, it was not usual for the crew of a trawling smack to own part of the fishing gear. This was generally the property of the smackowner.<sup>1</sup> Trawling crews were thus not required to venture their own capital for the season's fishing. As a result, a larger proportion of the crew relied upon a wage under this type of operation. Only three out of the trawling smack's crew of five were generally on shares,<sup>2</sup> compared with six out of seven on the great lining luggers.<sup>3</sup>

The rapid expansion of the fleet registered at Scarborough after mid-century was achieved through increased investment by individuals with capital outside of the ranks of the working fishermen. A number of these fitted into the traditional mould of land based maritime investor that we have already noted were common along this coast. Yet another group were smackowners, who by thrift, hard work and not a small element of luck, had made sufficient profit out of one vessel to purchase at least another. An almost entirely new faction, however, made up the most significant group during the next few decades: these were the fish merchants and salesmen.<sup>4</sup>

The improved rail carriage arrangements introduced during the fifties, had led to an ever increasing volume of fish being landed at Scarborough and despatched to inland markets.<sup>5</sup> The salesmen and merchants who handled these transactions were paid by commission and the marked increase in the volume was reflected in an increase in their income and wealth. Several Scarborough individuals used these opportunities to plough back their profits and as we have noted a number had built up sizeable fleets by the 1870s. In some cases they owned vessels outright whilst in others they entered into partnership with the man who would be skipper. Investment in the catching sector was for this group, doubly advantageous. Not only did they provide an additional source of income but it also ensured that fish landed by vessels in which they had an

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1. R.C.Sea Fisheries 1863-6, 1866 XVII-XVIII Minutes of Evidence qq 6915-7.
  2. Hull Advertiser, 18th October, 1856.
  3. Geo.Young, op.cit., 820-3.
  4. See Figure LXXV.
  5. See Chapter Four.

interest would be sold by them.<sup>1</sup>

As can be ascertained from Figure LXXV, the proportion of first time registers at Scarborough that were owned by working fishermen fell during every five year period after 1850-4. This progressively weakened their hold. By 1875-9 they could account for only twelve per cent of additions to the fleet. It is obvious also from the details of many vessels already registered to fishermen that they were being sold off to the fishmerchant/smackowner group, particularly to James Sellers and Henry Wyrill.<sup>2</sup> Thus by the last decade before the introduction of steam fishing to the Yorkshire coast, it is apparent that there had been a radical alteration in the structure and relationship of capital and labour amongst the first class fleet based upon the port.

However, the majority of investors whatever their occupation were local in origin. Indeed, although outside investment did become more important at both Customs Ports, it still remained a marginal factor. During the five year periods studied prior to 1879, it never exceeded eleven per cent at Scarborough or sixteen per cent at Whitby for new registrations.<sup>3</sup>

The pattern of investment within the Whitby Customs port did not follow that of Scarborough after 1850. Except for the periods 1850-4 and 1865-9, when there were unsuccessful attempts mainly by business interests to establish a small number of first class vessels at Whitby itself, there was little change in the traditional structures of ownership.<sup>4</sup> Working fishermen continued to own the dominant proportion of new registries. The land based interest continued to be drawn from the local groups that were long used to investing in maritime ventures.

The continuation of traditional trends there is also indicated by the fact that there was no great long term growth in the size of the first class fleet and, as we have noted, traditional types of vessels and fishing practices

1. See Chapter Five.

2. Sellers was also one of the first local individuals involved with the Yorkshire coast fishing industry who was prepared to expand his fleet by obtaining mortgages.

3. See Figures LXXVIII and LXXIX.

4. LXXVI.



remained predominant.

There was also no corresponding rise to importance as vessel owners by the smackowner/fishmerchant group. Part of the reason for this may be due to the fact that the first class fishing fleet based upon the Whitby Customs port stations of Staithes and Runswick tended to be, as we have noted, more mobile in the landing and dispersal of their catch, using stations as far afield as Newcastle and Grimsby.<sup>1</sup> In part, this was due at Staithes to the lack of adequate railway facilities prior to the 1880s.<sup>2</sup> As a result, there was not the huge proportional increase in inland shipments from Staithes that were such a noticeable feature of Scarborough. Even though there was a great increase in activity by inshore craft throughout the year, this in itself was insufficient to create the same sort of revenue earning opportunities that had laid the foundations for the rise to prominence of the fishmerchant/smackowner group.

At Whitby itself, the story was somewhat similar, however, because the large and continually increasing herring landings were handled by outside salesmen and merchants not permanently resident at the port. These individuals moved with the herring season and therefore did not develop the port's fleet in the way that their competitors at Scarborough did.

It is thus interesting to conjecture on the differing development of the fishing industry in two adjacent Custom Port areas. At Scarborough subtle alterations began to disturb the established fabric of the industry after 1830 but it was in the thirty years following 1850 that the station experienced an unparalleled period of growth and transformation. In contrast, though there was a little growth in the Whitby area as far as the first class catching sector was concerned, the emphasis was on continuity.<sup>3</sup> The industry's relative importance was thus shifting its emphasis from the more rural northern communities to the port of Scarborough which was more urban in nature than any other on the coast. Though at Whitby there had been great potential for expansion within

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1. See Chapter Seven.

2. See Chapter Four.

3. With the exception, of course, of the development of the herring fishery.

the broad confines of the Esk at Whitby, no large first class fishing fleet grew up at the station during the nineteenth century. Amongst other factors, it is evident that the creation of the fishmerchant/smackowner groups were crucial to the development of the industry at Scarborough. These remained absent from Whitby and without them there was less incentive to improve and make more attractive the harbour to the fishing industry.<sup>1</sup>

The introduction of steam trawling at Scarborough, particularly from 1880, encouraged the consolidation and further development of land based ownership. As in the previous decade, the local smackowner/fishmerchant group played a dominant role in their acquisition and operation. Though these pioneer vessels were almost all second hand, we know that they cost between two and three times as much as a newly built trawling smack.<sup>2</sup> It is then not surprising that these individuals who promoted their introduction also sought out partners with capital to share in such ventures. The acquisition of two or three such vessels would stretch the resources of even these wealthy men and they had also to consider the element of risk that accompanied involvement in such novel ventures.

H. L. Woodger and Henry Wyrill were particularly active in this connection.<sup>3</sup> Their share in the newly acquired vessels was to be totally eclipsed by the number of outside investors whom they brought in, many of whom were previously totally unconnected with the industry. It seems possible also that the investment potential of the fishmerchant/smackowner group had been weakened by their rapid expansion of the sailing fleet, particularly during the previous decade; coupled with the competition they had faced at the port from 1878 to 1880 from north eastern steam trawlers. At the same time, the fact that there were so many wealthy persons interested in the potential of steam meant that it was still possible to stimulate expansion in this direction at a brisk rate.

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1. The lack of a first class fleet and the poor condition of the harbour at Whitby by the 1880s combined to form a vicious circle. Without the improvement of the harbour there was less incentive to develop a fleet and yet without a fleet it was difficult to justify expenditure on the harbour
  2. Scarborough Gazette, 5th January 1882.
  3. See Chapter Twelve.



That it was possible for the industry at Scarborough to mobilise so much outside investment is due in no small way to the town's status as a fashionable resort. Scarborough in the 1880s was a magnet for the wealthy, some of whom were regular visitors, yet others were permanent residents. There had long been, of course, a tradition of outside investment in the local fishing industry. However, this dimension was considerably increased with the introduction of steam trawling. The more prosperous of the fishmerchant/smackowner group undoubtedly enjoyed a considerable standing in the local community and moved in social circles that brought them into regular contact with this reservoir of potential investment. This group were certainly successful in inducing many who were attracted to this fashionable resort to risk a portion of their wealth in these ventures.

A breakdown of the locations of the steam trawler investors shows that, contrary to previous experience, almost forty per cent came from outside the Scarborough and Whitby Customs port areas. The most important regional source of outside investment was the West Riding of Yorkshire. The majority of these long distance investors described themselves as either gentlemen, merchants, or manufacturers.<sup>1</sup> Mr. W.A.Mallinson of Leeds, was only one of several who were closely involved in the textile industry.<sup>2</sup> Some, like Robert Middleton, also of Leeds, enjoyed connections with engineering concerns.<sup>3</sup>

Some of the fleet were operated as private companies with the usually numerous part-owners generally relying upon one of the smackowner/fishmerchant group to manage day to day affairs. However, there were, of course, some public trawling companies formed in 1882 and 1883.<sup>4</sup> Apart from limited liability, there was not a great deal of difference in the composition of the public and private companies. Both, for example, recruited shareholders from similar backgrounds and locations.

The 1880s were really the last decade during which an in depth analysis

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1. See Figures LXXV and LXXVIII.
  2. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 21st January 1882 and 17th February 1883.
  3. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 17th February 1883.
  4. See Chapter Twelve.

of the ownership structure can be attempted. For the remainder of the period to the First World War there was a steady but almost relentless decline in the strength of the first class fleet along the Yorkshire coast. By the early nineties, most of the surviving sailing vessels were worth little more than their breaking value. Indeed, most of those that managed to remain in operation during the first decade of the twentieth century fell back into the hands of working fishermen who utilised them for only a few months of the year. The few new registries of steam vessels were generally the property of trawling companies of the types established during the 1880s. Immediately prior to the outbreak of hostilities, a few second hand steam drifters were acquired along the coast, generally by landsmen in association with skippers, but this new trend did not have time to establish itself before the events of August 1914 overtook it.<sup>1</sup>

In conclusion then, as with so many other aspects of the fishing industry on the Yorkshire coast, this analysis of the ownership structure of the first class fleet points to the critical changes that took place during the three or four decades prior to 1880. In this case, from 1850 onwards there were marked discontinuities in traditional patterns of ownership and investment, as well as a concentration on the Scarborough Customs Port area whilst its Whitby counterpart languished. The rapid expansion of the former's fleet seems to have been accompanied by a radical restructuring of the pattern of capital ownership in a manner bearing many similarities to changes undergone by other economic activities that have passed through the throes of industrialisation.

Nevertheless, the limitations of this kind of analysis must be stressed. The ownership structure under assessment relates only to the Yorkshire coast first class fleet and is concentrated on Scarborough in particular where trawling was an important, if sometimes seasonal, activity for these vessels. Evidence available from other areas, such as those providing the Scottish herring fleets, would suggest that a similar radical restructuring of the ownership did not take place at this time. Even today, of course, ownership of first

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1. See Chapter Fifteen.



class vessels by fishermen is still an important feature of many ports.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, on the Yorkshire coast itself, we know from Chapter Eight that there was also a marked expansion of the inshore fishery based on the open boats and this appears to have been achieved without changes in the traditional structure of ownership.

Taking all factors into consideration, it appears that the crucial catalyst for expansion in the case of the fishing industry was the railway rather than the steam fishing boat. After 1850 in particular - once the problems of carriage rates and conditions had been sorted out - they provided cheap bulk fast transport for this perishable commodity for the first time. This allowed fresh fish to become an article of cheap mass consumption on the national market. Access to such a market created an upturn in demand which also stimulated expansion in the catching sectors that responded in different ways.

Despite the dangers of comparing fishing with other activities, in the case of the Yorkshire coast fishing industry it may prove possible to see a parallel between its development over the years 1850 to 1880 and say the earlier story of the textile industry's revolution. In the case of textiles, we saw at first both domestic and factory production expand to meet increased demand. In the case of Yorkshire coast fishing we can see a marked expansion during the 1850-1880 period of both the capital intensive first class fleet and the inshore family owned open boat fishery. In short, both sectors benefited from the growth of marketing opportunities. Whereas the decline of the open boat fishery after 1880 might have been expected if this parallel with the earlier experience of the textile industry continued to hold true, then so too can the decline of Scarborough as a first class port whilst Hull, Grimsby and Aberdeen continued to expand. In the textile areas many sites of the original

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\*. In the twentieth century, particularly since the war, government loans and grants helped many fishermen to retain an interest in fishing vessels which might otherwise have been concentrated in the hands of companies.

water powered mills gradually gave way in importance to those better sited for receiving coal for the steam engines. In much the same way Scarborough languished whilst its neighbours on the Humber grew thanks partly to their superior engineering facilities and better access to coal supplies.<sup>1</sup>

To return to the period 1850-1880, however, though both traditional and modern sectors benefited from the growth of marketing opportunities, much of this trade passed through the hands of the new middlemen such as James Sellers and Henry Wyrill who invested their profits in the capital-intensive first class fishery.

Though the dangers of placing too great an emphasis on ownership structures in the fishing industry as an indicator of change have been stressed there is, of course, somewhat of a special case within the trawling sector. The deep sea branch of this industry, as it existed in the twentieth century, in terms of the organisation of capital and labour was the nearest equivalent to large scale land based industry to be found in fishing. The evidence of Scarborough suggests that the elements of capital and labour were to a large extent separated as in the modern industry by its precursors prior to the introduction of steam. Before such findings can be taken as general, a similar analysis of ownership structures at ports such as Hull and Grimsby will have to be undertaken.

The problems of applying such concepts as industrialisation and industrial revolution to this activity should now be somewhat clearer. Nevertheless, this discussion has unearthed strong evidence to suggest that the English fisheries' most radical period of readjustment in response to the needs and opportunities offered by the new urban and industrial based economy occurred during the decades 1850 to 1880. Though this is earlier than Tunstall and Michell might suggest, it is still appreciably later than many other sectors of the economy that have caught the eye of economic historians. Although these years include those of the so called high farming, argument over the agrarian revolution and importance to economic change centres on much earlier periods. Though this

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1. See Chapter Twelve.



thesis has shown that fishing was making perceptible progress from at least the later eighteenth century it produces no evidence to suggest that any major structural change or large scale general expansion took place in England prior to 1850 that can in any way be compared with those changes being wrought in agriculture.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: OUTSIDE DOMINANCE 1890-1914

The period under review was to witness the continuation of many trends that had been evident in the previous decade and were subtly altering the nature of all sectors of the fishing industry. The British trawling industry, for example, was to become increasingly dominated by the three North Sea Ports of Hull, Grimsby and Aberdeen. With regard to the herring fishery, though the East Anglian influence remained vigorous, the Scottish industry was to markedly expand its interests both north and south of the border.

The previously noted exploitation of ever more distant white fishing grounds was also to be a continued feature of these years. The result of the ever increasing range of fishing trips was to be a shift in emphasis from the North Sea grounds to those of more northerly latitudes. Line fishing had for centuries been pursued with varying degrees of intensity off the coasts of Iceland by English craft<sup>1</sup> but trawling in the same region really dates from the early 1890s.<sup>2</sup> The development during the eighties of the longer range purpose built steam trawler had made such practices commercially viable whilst the denudation of the traditional North Sea grounds provided the impetus for change. Though the Icelandic grounds were the first to be trawled in the early 1890s the practice was to spread to the seas of Norway, Greenland and the Barents Sea. By 1914 such deep sea grounds were more important suppliers of fish to the English market than those of the North Sea.

Throughout these years the total amount of fish landed annually in England and Wales was to continue to rise. Such a story was not true for the Yorkshire coast. In terms of all types of fish the peak landings were reached in 1894/5 and followed thereafter by a fluctuating but slightly downward trend.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, as we shall see below, an ever greater proportion of the catch was to compose of herrings whilst white fish landings fell off as the fleet of craft registered at Yorkshire coast ports fell away.<sup>4</sup> The apparent deterioration

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1. E.March, Sailing Trawlers (1953) 16.
  2. G.Morey, The North Sea (1968) 130.
  3. See Figure LXXX.
  4. See Figure LXXXI.



in the performance of the Yorkshire coast industry can be attributed to a number of diverse factors which will be discussed below.

Throughout the 1890s, the first class sailing fleet based on the Yorkshire coast fishing stations continued the decline which had become so apparent in the previous decade. Though Scarborough could still muster thirty active sailing trawlers as late as 1893,<sup>1</sup> this figure represented only one-third of its late 1870 strength.<sup>2</sup> Nor, despite their reduced numbers, did the survivors prove any more profitable. In 1892 they had earned an average between £400 and £500 gross, or under half of their likely earnings in the late 1870s.<sup>3</sup> This was probably caused more by a reduction in catch size rather than through any fall off in prices and was common to sailing trawlers operating from many North Sea ports.<sup>4</sup>

In order to remain evenly remotely profitable, the smacks were having to travel extremely long distances to find grounds worth fishing. As the number of craft declined, the practice of forming a separate Scarborough fleet was abandoned - probably around 1890 - but the remaining craft continued to join Hull or Grimsby fleets during the spring fishings. Increasingly, the Scarborough smacks also continued fleeting - as did vessels from the other ports - during the summer season.<sup>5</sup> This was a new departure for Scarborough craft who had previously fished singly at that time of the year. Again, it is indicative of just how uneconomic single smack fishing had become.

During this decade, it became very evident to even the most optimistic of contemporary observers that the smacks had only a limited future at Scarborough and there had been no new construction for the port since the early 1880s.<sup>6</sup> Their demise was to prove particularly rapid. This was not only because the grounds on which they had long fished, particularly off the Dogger Bank, were amongst the worst affected by the fall off in catches. It was also due to the

1. Scarborough Post, 14th August 1893.

2. R.C.English and Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1878-9, 1879 XVI, Minutes of Evidence and Scarborough Post 4th August 1893.

3. Scarborough Post, 14th July, 1893.

4. See Chapter Eleven.

5. Scarborough Post, 14th July 1893.

6. The last new built first class sailing fishing vessel registered at the port was the Snowdrop in March 1886. She was also probably the last such craft constructed in the harbour. She was lost in the Frobisher Straight in 1908. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 13th March 1886.

FIGURE LXXX: Total Quantity and Value of Fish Landed at Yorkshire Coast Stations

Year	Quantity Cwt	Value £
1886	282,983	122,776
7	308,584	124,260
8	292,207	124,402
9	260,718	125,530
1890	246,426	122,872
1	181,379	113,586
2	260,583	110,496
3	287,156	126,376
4	321,033	136,772
5	357,589	151,423
6	328	142,263
7	264,737	141,665
8	290,002	119,312
9	236,873	148,803
1900	200,622	139,290
1	224,598	128,283
2	-	-
3	255,909	123,311
4	227,479	92,023
5	161,013	89,298
6	223,575	101,495
7	222,099	71,106
8	182,985	80,962
9	249,290	116,637
1910	224,207	103,373
1	201,325	96,267
2	245,104	94,747
1913	189,726	123,980

Source: Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables.



increasing competition they faced in the 1890s from the wide ranging purpose built steam trawlers which were rapidly replacing the smacks at Hull and Grimsby in particular. At Scarborough the situation was further aggravated by the exposed nature of the harbour which usually meant that more days were lost by the fleet than those of other ports due to confinement to harbour in bad weather. The smacks' obsolescence was so apparent that it often proved very difficult for their owners to sell them.<sup>1</sup> Few other English ports were interested in buying them for fishing though some of the larger examples were adapted for coastal trading. Others were sold to foreign owners, particularly the Scandinavians.<sup>2</sup> One of them, the Contrast, even found its way to Dakar in what was then French West Africa.<sup>3</sup> The more elderly or less sound had a less glamorous fate, they were either used as storage hulks or else broken up, often where they lay in the harbour.

The final nail in the coffin of the sailing smack on the north east coast was the introduction of the otter trawl to commercial fishing operations in the July of 1895.<sup>4</sup> In terms of catching power this gear was apparently thirty per cent more efficient than a comparable beam trawl.<sup>5</sup> Though its use had been pioneered by sailing yachts, it had proved difficult to adapt for the less manoueverable and slower sailing smacks. It was ideal for steam trawlers, however, and was adopted by all such Scarborough craft very quickly. Within a year they had abandoned the beam trawl to the sailing smacks.<sup>6</sup> Naturally, this innovation made the steam trawler even more efficient compared with the smack:<sup>7</sup>

1. Report of Inspector of Sea Fisheries (England & Wales) 1899, 1900 XI, 10.
2. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 18th February 1859; 5th February 1877; 11th October 1877; 25th April 1876; and 26th April 1878.
3. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 22nd July 1862.
4. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Minutes, 8th July 1896.
5. W.Garstang, 'The Impoverishment of the Sea', Journal of the Marine Biological Association VI, July 1900, 48-50.
6. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Minutes, 8th July 1896.
7. A myth has arisen that the otter trawl was so named because its use was pioneered by the Scarborough steam trawler Otter. Though the Otter was probably one of the first such craft to use it, the gear was already thus named. E.W.H.Holdsworth described the otter trawl in 1883 whereas the S.T. Otter was not constructed until 1888: E.W.H. Holdsworth, 'Apparatus for Fishing', Fisheries Exhibition Literature 1 (1883) 28-32.

FIGURE LXXXI: Yorkshire Coast First Class Steam and Sailing Vessels

	Scarborough Custom House				Whitby Custom House			
	Sailing		Steam		Sailing		Steam	
	No.	Tons	No.	Tons	No.	Tons	No.	Tons
1890	77	3846	18	529	14	534	Nil	Nil
1891	66	3342	18	529	11	419	"	"
1892	65	3248	16	389	10	377	"	"
1893	64	3169	16	395	10	377	"	"
1894	62	3147	17	415	10	377	"	"
1895	57	2865	18	435	10	377	"	"
1896	53	2670	19	451	10	377	"	"
1897	51	2515	20	471	8	303	"	"
1898	50	2397	18	439	5	184	"	"
1899	37	1665	18	438	5	184	"	"
1900	34	1413	19	474	5	184	"	"
1901								
1902	26	1198	13	365	4	149	"	"
1903	23	1056	14	365	3	112	"	"
1904	16	674	12	345	3	112	"	"
1905	19	797	12	345	3	112	"	"
1906	19	797	12	345	2	75	"	"
1907	22	915	12	345	2	75	"	"
1908	22	915	7	233	2	75	"	"
1909	22	915	7	233	2	75	"	"
1910	21	870	6	217	2	75	"	"
1911	21	870	6	217	Nil	Nil	"	"
1912	19	788	5	202	"	"	4	121
1913	16	647	11	373	"	"	4	126

Source: Trade and Navigation Returns



Garstang has estimated that a typical contemporary trawler was probably some 300% more efficient in terms of catching power.<sup>1</sup> By 1900 trawling by first class sailing craft was all but finished at Scarborough.<sup>2</sup>

For the great lining yawls, the story is also one of unremitting decline. In addition, the annual fishing pattern of the diminishing group of craft was, by the nineties, drastically shortened at many fishing stations. By that decade it was extremely rare to find one of these yawls being fitted out for the herring fishery which was - as in the later eighties - left almost entirely to strangers and smaller craft. During the summer season, when they had formerly been at their busiest, the vessels belonging to Bridlington Quay, Filey and Scarborough were usually laid up.<sup>3</sup> However, the fishermen from these places tended to use them in the winter months thus dispensing with the traditional practice of laying them up during those months.<sup>4</sup>

Partly through their long spells of idleness and partly because of the impoverished nature of the grounds they traditionally worked, their annual earnings had slumped dramatically. In their heyday during the 1850s and 1860s this type of craft had often grossed in excess of £900 annually.<sup>5</sup> By 1892 they rarely managed to earn more than £200 apiece each year.<sup>6</sup>

Despite their obsolescence a few of these yawls were to outlast the Scarborough sailing smacks by several years. The *Tranquility* and *Prosperous*, built in 1866 and 1858 respectively, were still working when the second decade of the twentieth century opened.<sup>7</sup> All had long since repaid the cost of their original outlay many times and considerations such as depreciation were far behind them. Their resale value was practically negligible so some fishermen found it worthwhile to keep them seaworthy for certain operations. It proved practical to work them for a few months each year whilst expending only the absolute minimum on maintenance. In the mid 1900s up to a dozen of them found a novel employment which brought them back into use during the summer months

1. W.Garstang, loc.cit., 48-50.

2. Report of Inspector of Sea Fisheries (England and Wales) 1900, 1901 XI, 190-3.

3. Scarborough Gazette, 1st March 1894.

4. Scarborough Gazette, 14th July 1893 and 4th August 1894.

5. R.C.Trawling, 1885 XVI, Minutes of Evidence, qq 9655-7.

6. Scarborough Post, 4th August 1893.

7. Scarborough Custom House Register of Shipping, 19th July 1866 & 9th October 1858.

when they went crabbing off the Holderness coast.<sup>1</sup>

The war terminated the career of the last Scarborough yawls. Fishing in the North Sea during that conflict was both restricted and dangerous and - off the Yorkshire coast at least - limited to either steam trawlers or small inshore craft. Shortages of raw materials made their wood and copper fittings valuable and they were all broken up in the harbour with the exception of the William Clowes. That yawl acted as headquarters of the Scarborough Yacht Club until it too succumbed to the same fate in 1921.<sup>2</sup>

All the Staithes' yawls had ceased to work a few years before those of Scarborough. The last two there were laid up after 1909. During the final years their annual pattern of usage was slightly different to that of the Scarborough yawls but even more restricted. They were employed during the summer months only and spent the rest of each year laid up in Whitby Harbour.<sup>3</sup>

#### Steam Fleet

Scarborough was the only Yorkshire coast station that could boast a fleet of steam vessels for most of these years. Their numbers fluctuated during the 1890s but there were generally around fifteen such craft based on the port. Only about six of these were purpose built steam screw trawlers. The remainder were converted paddle tugs. Though the limitations of such craft had become apparent during the previous decade the Scarborough owners stuck to those which had proved viable. Indeed, a brand new vessel of this class was acquired as late as 1895 for fishing.<sup>4</sup>

In terms of gross earnings steam trawlers were much more profitable than the sailing smacks. In the early nineties they were making on average about £1,500 per year. This was about three times the current income of the smacks.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, as we have noted, their efficiency was markedly increased by the wholesale adoption of the otter trawl in 1895/6. Yet it was still proving necessary to venture farther afield as nearer water grounds were gradually denuded.

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1. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Minutes, 30th June 1906.

2. E.Dade, loc.cit., 183-7.

3. J.R.Bagshawe, op.cit., 63-4.

4. Scarborough Custom House Vessel Register, 17th September 1895.

5. Scarborough Post, 4th August 1893.



The paddlers travelled greater distances as well but their general lack of seaworthiness precluded the exploitation of deep water grounds. They visited instead the remoter stretches of the British Isles' coastline.<sup>1</sup> Dependence upon inshore waters proved their undoing, for the number of such unexploited grounds available was limited. Later in the decade it often proved necessary to lay them up during the summer months because they could not cover expenses. Gradually they were sold off. Even so, about four lasted into the twentieth century and Scarborough proved to be the last port operating such craft; the final example, Constance, being wrecked at Hartlepool on the 22nd March 1910.<sup>2</sup>

Scarborough's steam screw trawlers tended to range right across the northern latitudes of the North Sea. Though trawlers from Hull and Grimsby were beginning to open up grounds off the Icelandic coast, Scarborough participated in this venture to only a small degree. In 1895, for example, only one of its craft was regularly working in waters near that country.<sup>3</sup>

The port's small deepwater fleet received a boost in September 1900 with the formation of the Scarborough, Hartlepool and North Sea Fishing Company. Within a short while they had purchased two trawlers, Morning Star and Evening Star. They were usually based in Scarborough Harbour and were joined by a further vessel in the following year.<sup>4</sup> Even with this initiative, Scarborough's importance as a trawling station remained well down on its zenith of the late 1870s.

Despite the almost complete demise of the trawling smacks before the turn of the century there had been nothing like a commensurate increase in steam trawling as was the case with Hull and Grimsby. Indeed, as the first decade of the new century wore on, its own steam fleet exhibited a tendency to shrink, though to some extent this was offset by landings of craft from other ports. It is apparent that many of the problems which had beset the steam

1. Scarborough Gazette, 25th November 1897.

2. A. Godfrey, *op.cit.*, 29.

3. Scarborough Custom House, Registrar General of Seamen Letter Book, 24th April 1895.

4. Inspectors Report on English and Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1900 1901 XI, 190-3 and Scarborough Gazette, 13th September, 1900.

trawling pioneers at the port in the 1880s had not been overcome. There were still no large scale engineering facilities and, whilst the costs of transporting bunker fuel remained high, the harbour was still too cramped and inadequate a base for a large fleet of steam trawlers. For many years to come, its first class fleet would play only a minor role in the exploitation of the off-shore North Sea grounds whilst leaving the exploitation of the distant water grounds - on which the nation increasingly relied for the maintenance of its fish supply - to ports such as Hull, Grimsby and Aberdeen.

For the working fishermen themselves, the decline of the port's status was no less traumatic. As we have noted in Chapter Thirteen, they were already leaving the port in the 1880s because of economic problems and this trend was to continue throughout the next decade. The most popular ports for migration seem to have been Aberdeen, Grimsby, Milford Haven and Fleetwood.<sup>1</sup> The former appears to have been the most popular and we hear of at least one trawler there manned entirely by a Scarborough crew.<sup>2</sup> Some men, such as John Graham who was well known in the town at the turn of the century, divided their time between Scarborough in the summer, where they worked in boats catering for visitors' trips or did painting jobs, and Aberdeen in the winter.<sup>3</sup> In other cases the link with the port was almost completely severed as some fishermen took their families and household possessions with them. Others, like George Sheeder, owner of a first class fishing craft for over twenty years, never made the transition to steam and went into the inshore fisheries on finding their former calling so unrewarding.<sup>4</sup> Between 1886 and 1890, when the first class fleet based on Scarborough was reduced to a shadow of its former importance, upwards of two hundred and fifty fishermen left the port.

Two or three years before the outbreak of the Great War there was somewhat of a revival of the first class fishing fleet based on the Yorkshire coast. A number of steam first class vessels were acquired and not only for Scarborough but also Whitby and Filey.<sup>5</sup> By that time there were a considerable number of

1. Departmental Commission on Inshore Fisheries, 1914 XIX, Minutes of Evidence, q 4569.
2. Scarborough Gazette, 13th September 1900.
3. Scarborough Gazette, 13th September 1900.
4. S.C. on Sea Fisheries, 1893 XV, Minutes of Evidence qq 6702-3.



second hand purpose built steam trawlers on the market and it seems it was this type of craft that were purchased. Most were bought by working fishermen in conjunction with shore based individuals who had spare capital for such ventures. It does seem possible that but for the outbreak of the Great War there could have been a wholesale re-expansion of the first class fishing fleet based on the Yorkshire coast.

### The Herring Fishery

As we have already noted, the Yorkshire coast first class fishing fleet had been driven out of the herring fishery during the eighties mainly through the sheer number of landings made by northern craft that flocked to Scarborough each season. Throughout the years down to the Great War this outside dominance was to continue.

On the Scottish east coast, Gray has noted that from 1893 herring prices emerged from the trough that they had entered in 1884 and a new era of expansion commenced.<sup>1</sup> In England, however, prices do not seem to have picked up quite so quickly for it was not until the later nineties that those on the east coast during the peak Yorkshire landing month of September really show an upward trend.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, it is evident that England was affected by this Scottish revival for there certainly was a considerable increase in the exploitation of the Yorkshire coast herring fishery during this decade. Though a full run of herring landing statistics for the area during this decade has apparently not survived it is clear from contemporary reports and surviving data that herring landings rose markedly.<sup>3</sup> At Scarborough, the premier port, total landings of all fish show a marked upturn from 1892 and the bulk of this upturn was of herrings rather than white fish.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, contemporaries considered 1895 to be a record year for landings of that fish at the port.<sup>5</sup> This phen-

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1. M.Gray, op.cit., 146-9.

2. See Figure LXXXII.

3. See Figure LXXXIII.

4. S.P.L., Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Minutes, 30th August 1894.

5. S.P.L., Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Minutes, 21st August 1896.







FIGURE LXXXII: Value of Herring Landed on the East Coast every September  
1886-1901

	per cwt
	p
1886	31
1887	26
1888	29
1889	34
1890	34
1891	50
1892	31
1893	27
1894	26
1895	23
1896	24
1897	41
1898	20
1899	47
1900	45
1901	34

Source: Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables.

omenon seems to have been closely associated with an increase in interest being shown in the port by Scottish curers.<sup>1</sup> By the middle of the decade they had established the practice of regular visits and, in terms of numbers, were soon of greater importance than the contingent of merchants hailing from East Anglia,<sup>2</sup> who had traditionally been the most significant outside participants in the marketing sector. This new trend itself reflected a shift in emphasis with regard to the products and marketing outlets for the Yorkshire coast herring.

The heavy volume of herring landings prompted new calls from the trade for improved handling facilities<sup>3</sup> and to some degree these were answered. The North Eastern Railway converted Gallows Close into a goods yard in 1899 with specific provision for the handling of fish. Lines were laid between elevated roadways thus enabling the transfer of fish barrels and boxes from cart to wagon to take place without the need for lifting to a different level. It was estimated that this innovation speeded up loading time by some fifty per cent.<sup>4</sup> Calls for harbour improvements met with less success though a modest scheme to widen the West Pier was carried out.<sup>5</sup>

In the years since the construction of the railway network, the bulk of these fish landed on the Yorkshire coast had been destined for consumption inland in fresh, slightly smoked or lightly salted form. The home market during this period was far more important than the export sector which had - until the 1880s - dwindled to negligible proportions.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, the Scottish herring industry had concentrated on salt pickling herring for the export market. This type of curing had been all but abandoned by the Yorkshire curers in the 1840s<sup>7</sup> but during the nineties there was a marked growth in this mode of production - albeit in the hands of the Scottish.

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1. Scarborough Gazette, 9th September 1897.
  2. E.Dade, 'The Old Yorkshire Yawls,' Mariners Mirror 19 April, 1933, 183-7.
  3. S.P.L.Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Minutes, 30th January 1895, and Scarborough Gazette, 21st December 1899.
  4. Scarborough Gazette, 21st December 1899.
  5. Scarborough Gazette, 21st December 1899.
  6. Scarborough Gazette, 11th October 1883.
  7. See Chapter Seven.



FIGURE LXXXIII: Wet Fish Landings Scarborough

	Herrings cwts	Total cwts
1886		195,009
7		225,217
8		197,296
9		171,514
1890		183,780
1		134,979
2		203,480
3		233,771
4		254,375
5	193,433	273,994
6	134,633	242,392
7		213,057
8	137,771	244,370
9	108,290	187,100
1900		148,962
1		178,444
2		217,666
3		192,466
4	138,041	192,426
5	97,430	146,718
6	130,881	194,278
7	135,159	192,326
8	108,513	156,151
9	174,412	223,031
1910	143,312	194,727
1	122,265	171,485
2	89,312	132,754
3	128,124	167,901
4		
5		
6		

Sources: Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables; North Eastern District Sea Fisheries Committee Minutes.

Much of the herring they processed was destined for Continental markets. A healthy direct trade was built up between Scarborough and such Baltic ports as Stettin. The first were often cured on the quays and surrounding areas and then loaded onto ships lying in the harbour which took them to the Baltic.<sup>1</sup> From there they were transported inland by the ever extending eastern European rail network.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, it was the opportunities provided by growing railway construction there which were a major underlying factor in the increase in demand. Expansion of the market meant that more and more Scottish curers found it a lucrative proposition to journey to England and continue production well after their own summer season had finished. During these years not only Yorkshire but also East Anglia became part of their yearly round of activity which, in some cases, already included Shetland.<sup>3</sup> Partly through the nature of their work and partly because of the emphasis on mobility, their production processes were labour intensive and relied on little fixed plant. Each curer usually employed several gangs of women to clean, split and pack the herring between layers of salt in the barrels. This work called for a level of skill that was not usually available at the fishing stations they visited and so the curers took their labour force with them. The women were often recruited in northern Scotland and often could speak only Gaelic.<sup>4</sup> Others were recruited in Northumberland from villages such as North Sunderland and Beadnell.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the curer would employ a cooper who would often travel ahead of operations in order to lay in an adequate supply of barrels.<sup>6</sup>

However, the Scottish salt pickle curers were not the only ones to make their presence increasingly felt at this time. Another important group of visitors were concerned with smoking herring and thus producing the kipper or sometimes the bloater. Hailing from Hull in particular, they had also adopted

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1. Scarborough Gazette, 21st December 1899.
  2. M.Gray, op.cit., 149.
  3. Ibid., 153.
  4. Verbal conversation with Walter Carline of Hull.
  5. Verbal conversations with Mrs M Dawson and Mrs N McKee of North Sunderland
  6. Verbal conversations with Mr E. McKee of Hull.



the habit of following the herring seasons around the coasts. Hull was not traditionally a port with a record for catching herring but many local white fish curers had developed an expertise in processing these fish during the 1880s. This was because of the large scale importation of Norwegian winter herrings that had become an important feature of the trade of the port.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, between 1890 and 1914, many new firms sprang into existence concerned principally with the curing of herring.

Typical of these was the firm of Sampsons. This was founded by four Hull brothers about 1909 and they soon established bases in a number of fishing stations around the country. Their yearly round of activity commenced in Hull when they concentrated on curing the Norwegian winter herring. In comparison with the home caught varieties, these were large and somewhat coarse fish but they found favour because there were few British herring landed at that time of the year, except in ports well away from centres of population. As this trade declined, part of the workforce would remain in town and smoke white fish whilst the rest would travel to Mallaig for the season there. Operations would then switch to Eyemouth in order to take advantage of the summer season landings. During late August, Scarborough became the centre of activity and then in early October production would be concentrated on Lowestoft. In December the workforce would return to Hull in preparation for the arrival of the Norwegian herrings.<sup>2</sup>

Sampsons together with a large number of other Hull firms were to maintain this seasonal pattern of activity until at least the middle of the 1950s when the traditional herring trade began to collapse. These kipperers required a greater amount of fixed capital than the salt pickle curers as smokehouses were essential. Sampsons owned their own facilities in Hull and Eyemouth but rented them at other fishing stations.<sup>3</sup>

In earlier decades, the smoking of herrings at Scarborough had provided an important source of income for such local men as James Sellers, Henry Wyrill

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1. G.S. Clarke, *The Location and Development of the Hull Fishing Industry* (Hull M.Sc., 1957) 47-8.
  2. Verbal conversations with Walter Carline and Edmund McKee, both former employees of Sampsons, and Mrs Una Lofthouse (see Sampson).
  3. Ibid.

and Henry Lamble Woodger. From the opening of the nineties onwards this productive sector was also to be dominated by outsiders. Though some local firms retained an interest their numbers were reduced. Thus another aspect of the lucrative herring fishery fell into the hands of outsiders.

The exploitation of the Scottish east coast and East Anglian herring fisheries was to expand continuously through the first decade of the twentieth century. The boom was only terminated by the Great War. The East Anglian peak was 1913 when the catch of herrings was 5,273,745 cwts. This figure has never been surpassed.<sup>1</sup>

The experience of the Yorkshire coast was somewhat different. The highest levels of activity in terms of herring catches were probably reached during the years 1892-1898. Certainly the Scarborough herring landings of 1895 for which records still exist, were never matched.<sup>2</sup> Although a large number of craft continued to visit Scarborough each year those figures were only occasionally approached. Though real growth tailed off there is no evidence of any serious decline. It seems likely that the port's capacity had been reached. Fluctuations in the size of the catch or the length and intensity of the season can generally be attributed to the perennial difficulty of locating the notoriously unpredictable shoals of herring, or to weather conditions. The port's herring fishery was as near to stability as was possible in such a volatile branch of trade.

During the early twentieth century, Scarborough was above and away the most important herring fishing station along the Yorkshire coast. Whilst its facilities were stretched to the utmost, those of Whitby suffered from under use. As we have noted, activity there had fallen away during the 1880s but the port seemed to stage something of a recovery at the end of the decade. After 1895, however, a much more deep rooted decline set in.

The major problem which sapped the vitality of the herring trade at Whitby remained the condition of the harbour. Attempts to improve its condition were

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1. D. Butcher, The Driftermen (Reading 1979) 14-15.  
 2. See Figure LXXXIII.



hamstrung by lack of finance and its decay was to continue unabated well into the first decade of the twentieth century. It is not surprising that the general air of dereliction which surrounded most of its fishing facilities encouraged many craft to try elsewhere. By the early 1900s Whitby was, to all intents and purposes, reduced to the status of a herring base for small boats<sup>1</sup> drawn mainly from the local communities. Larger craft preferred Scarborough, Hartlepool or sometimes even further afield.<sup>2</sup> Even when the harbour was finally improved it proved difficult at first to entice back the larger craft though - as we have noted - a few larger craft were acquired locally just before the Great War.<sup>3</sup>

With Scarborough's capacity having been effectively reached and with Whitby proving unattractive, it is not surprising that attempts were made to encourage the trade at Bridlington Quay, as it was the only other large harbour on the Yorkshire coast. Herrings had been landed at the port for many decades but the business there had been localised and primarily small scale. Open boats there, had been concerned primarily with the exploitation of the so called Autumn Bay herring shoals and the total catch landed annually had probably rarely amounted to more than 500 cwt.<sup>4</sup> Landings by larger craft had been relatively infrequent, as again the condition of the harbour had acted as a deterrent, and had all but ceased after its own fleet of first class yawls had given up this branch of the fishery in the later 1880s.

Its harbour then was greatly underused but compared with Scarborough its facilities were quite rudimentary and its condition - though somewhat better than in earlier decades - was still questionable. In 1899 an attempt though was made to establish it as an important landing station in the annual round of the herring fishery. A number of Scottish herring merchants arrived early in the season and set up operations there and this in turn attracted a large number of sailing drifters to the harbour. Great benefit was gained from the increase in revenue that resulted and the practice was repeated in 1900.<sup>5</sup> That year for

1. See Figure LXXI.

2. Whitby Gazette, 9th August 1901.

3. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Minutes 31st March 1913.

4. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Minutes 5th December 1900.

5. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Minutes 5th December 1900.

some unclear reason, the experiment proved less successful and the buyers left the port a month earlier.<sup>1</sup> They did not return in strength during the following years and Bridlington Quay reverted to being primarily an inshore herring station.

Just over a decade later there was a marked increase in herring landings at both Hull and Grimsby. This fishery took off from the former port when it was discovered that the basic trawl net could be modified for taking herrings.<sup>2</sup> This mode of fishery was pioneered by Milford Haven and Fleetwood in the early 1900s. By 1908 several Scottish vessels had joined in and within two years Aberdeen trawlers were taking herring in the North Sea. The practice then spread swiftly to Scarborough, North Shields, Hartlepool and Grimsby. However, Hull rose swiftly to become the premier herring trawling port with half of all such British catches being landed there by 1913.<sup>3</sup>

Like the first class yawls, the smaller undecked craft faced stiff competition from strangers working off the Yorkshire coast. In the early nineties, many inshoremen continued to ignore the herring fishery that had proved so unprofitable during the previous decade. Towards the end of the decade, prosperity improved and a number of the ploshers and mules were fitted out once more.<sup>4</sup> Throughout the first decade of the new century these craft continued to find it worthwhile to follow the herrings though they were at times hampered by the great distance at which the shoals were sometimes to be located. This problem became more acute after 1910 and these craft did so badly in 1913 that had it not been for motorisation during the Great War, many might have been permanently laid up.<sup>5</sup>

For the British herring industry as a whole, 1913 turned out to be a boom year in which all previous records were surpassed.<sup>6</sup> However, on the Yorkshire coast all boats fared less well than normal. Poor landings encouraged many

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1. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Minutes 5th December 1900.
  2. J.T.Jenkins, The Herring and the Herring Fisheries (1927) 138-155.
  3. Ibid., 138-155.
  4. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Minutes, 8th November 1898 and 30th September 1899.
  5. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Minutes, 30th September 1913.
  6. Inspectors Report on English and Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1913, 1914 XXX 134-5.



of the curers to move their processing crews down to East Anglia much earlier than usual and the boats soon followed.<sup>1</sup> Most were to more than make up for the short falls incurred on the Yorkshire coast.

Since the demise of the Yorkshire coast first class herring fleet in the later eighties there had also been a fall off in visits by the Cornish craft of St Ives and Penzance. Hardly any ventured to the Yorkshire coast after 1910.<sup>2</sup> Afterwards, the season was almost completely dominated by East Anglian and Scottish fishermen who used Scarborough as their base between the exploitation of the other North Sea herring fisheries. Another alteration to the fleet was the introduction of steam drifters. The first successful English steam drifter was probably the Consolation built at Lowestoft in 1897.<sup>3</sup> Within a year or so of its construction the worth of steam in this branch of fishing had been demonstrated and many such craft were being acquired by fishermen north and south of the border. By 1905 they were well in evidence at Scarborough and soon became the most important source of landings.<sup>4</sup> They were particularly suited to the port because they could enter and leave in weather conditions that would deter a sailing vessel and could travel to and from the distant grounds much more quickly. Moreover, being smaller than many trawlers they had less difficulty berthing in the harbour.

In conclusion then, the years 1890-1914 saw many more changes alter the nature of the Yorkshire coast herring fishery. Not the least of these was the continued increase in the influence and importance of outsiders in all its aspects.

### The Inshore Fisheries

The early 1890s proved to be a continually difficult period for the inshore fishermen. Despite the creation of the North Eastern District Sea Fisheries Committee in 1890 and its subsequent passing of a bye law that excluded trawl-

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1. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Minutes 30th September 1913.
  2. E.Dade, loc.cit., 183-7.
  3. D.Butcher, The Drifters (Reading 1979) 44.
  4. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Minutes 30th September 1913.

FIGURE LXXXIV: Total Quantity and Value of Fish Landed at Yorkshire Coast Stations

	Excluding Whitby & Scarborough			Including Whitby & Scarborough		
	Quantity	Value	Value Inc. Shellfish	Quantity	Value	Value Inc. Shellfish
	cwt	£	£	cwt	£	£
1886	31,659	16,164	21,634	282,983	122,776	129,717
7	30,447	17,751	22,934	308,584	124,260	130,382
8	32,512	16,873	21,806	292,207	124,402	130,962
9	26,805	15,026	20,982	260,718	125,530	133,324
1890	25,234	14,566	22,714	246,426	122,872	132,825
1	23,370	14,080	19,857	181,379	112,586	119,794
2	27,576	16,309	23,731	260,583	110,496	119,633
3	27,211	17,336	25,017	287,156	126,376	136,214
4	34,471	23,634	31,793	321,033	136,772	147,491
5	42,137	26,946	34,697	351,589	151,423	163,316
6	48,483	30,783	39,740	328,615	142,263	154,380
7	25,174	15,711	22,551	264,737	141,665	151,453
8	27,275	16,245	23,388	290,002	119,312	129,362
9	30,962	20,331	28,464	236,873	148,803	159,857
1900	33,828	21,894	30,305	200,622	139,290	151,706
1	26,128	17,926	27,896	224,598	128,283	142,311
2	27,648	17,216	27,489	223,278	125,234	141,325
3	27,625	16,894	26,422	255,909	123,311	135,396
4	27,143	17,086	27,185	227,479	92,023	104,749
5	18,991	13,714	23,628	161,013	89,298	101,091
6	22,045	15,705	24,206	223,575	101,495	112,681
7	22,791	13,915	22,388	222,099	71,106	81,860
8	16,625	11,779	19,701	182,985	80,692	91,040
9	16,273	10,836	17,458	249,290	116,637	125,024
1910	23,219	17,564	22,575	224,207	103,373	110,371
1	20,855	14,113	22,234	201,325	96,267	107,870
2	22,497	14,134	23,415	245,104	94,747	107,627
3	15,683	11,737	21,483	189,726	123,980	137,106

Source: Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables.



ing along much of the Yorkshire coast's three mile limit,<sup>1</sup> there is little evidence of fish stocks quickly recovering. Indeed, the average landings of inshore stations for the first four years that official landings were kept, 1886-1889, were higher than for the corresponding four year period after 1890.<sup>2</sup> On their own, however, these might not show the full picture.

Indeed, to a considerable degree, any analysis of the performance of the inshore fisheries based solely on statistical returns from the individual landing stations can only reveal an incomplete picture. This is because there was no attempt to differentiate between landings by home fishermen and outsiders at the quayside. The figures for many small stations had also, for example, never included the herring that their fishermen landed at the larger stations. As many of their men had felt obliged to stay out of the herring fishery for a number of years, the decline of the white fish sector was probably larger than the statistics for many of the small ports would indicate for they would spend an increasing amount of time taking and landing white fish at their home base.

Faced with poor catches of white fish and low prices during the herring season, the inshore men had only three real alternatives. The first was to intensify their exploitation of the shell fishery. The second was to increasingly cater for the water borne summer tourist trade. The last was to leave the industry they were born to altogether and seek another livelihood. The crab and lobster fishery provided the most obvious alternative, especially as the season, which commenced in March, could be extended through the main part of the herring fishery. For those who commenced crabbing early in the year it was no more than a logical step to continue this activity when the herring fishery prospects proved dismal.

The shell fishery was indeed the only sector of the inshore fishery that could still be construed as prosperous and could claim a record of almost continuous expansion since the opening of the railways. The later eighties and nineties were notable for an unsurpassed level of activity in this direction at most fishing communities. Flamborough, for instance had seventy craft

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1. See Chapter Ten.

2. See Figure LXXXIV.

crabbing in the mid nineties compared with fifty some twenty years before.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, each craft deployed on average more pots. At the later date the typical Scarborough coble was laying sixty to eighty pots against thirty or forty laid in the seventies.<sup>2</sup>

The growing dependence of the inshore men upon just one mode of fishing during the summer months caused problems. Formerly, a poor return from one type of fishery, say crabbing, might be offset for the community as a whole, by better fortune attending a different activity, such as lining. Though the herring trade revived for the inshore men in the later nineties only a limited number took it up. Poor lining returns also meant crabbing remained the most attractive pursuit. However, a bad season could spell destitution for an entire community who could only wait and hope for prosperity to return with say the winter line fishing.

Stock denudation through the sheer popularity of the shell fishery remained an ever present threat. The N.E.D.S.F.C., as we have noted in chapter ten brought in close seasons for crabs and lobsters which were at first met with almost universal approval along the Yorkshire coast.<sup>3</sup> After 1900, however, the herring fishery became less profitable once more and the poor return from lining made fishermen want to devote more time to crabbing. A clamour for the removal of restrictions on the shell fisheries arose. An enquiry into the matter was held in 1905 and the close season for crabs was abolished.<sup>4</sup> Thereafter, the season terminated naturally as the condition of crabs declined later in the year.

As we have noted, the long line fishery often proved a source of much disappointment to the inshore sector at this time. A limited revival in the mid nineties proved to be rather short lived largely, it seems, because of poor yields.<sup>5</sup> Bad seasons seem to have been the usual order of the day and a good year was much of an exception. Bait shortages remained a problem and if any-

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1. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Minutes, 18th October 1895.
  2. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Minutes, 18th October 1895.
  3. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Minutes, 8th November 1905.
  4. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Minutes, 6th November 1905.
  5. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Minutes, 23rd January 1907.



FIGURE LXXXV: Yorkshire Coast Fishermen

	East Riding*	North Riding	Total
1881	417	1215	1622
1891	386	1050	1436
1901	400	678	1078
1911	582	599	1181

\* Excluding Hull

Source: Census returns.

thing the commodity became more difficult to obtain despite N.E.D.S.F.C. attempts to safeguard sources through conservation measures.<sup>1</sup>

One far reaching consequence of the bait problem was a shift in the attitude of the inshore fishermen to trawling. In the early 1890s most inshore communities still reviled the practice and welcomed the restrictions placed upon it in 1891 in inshore waters. Yet little more than a decade later many were calling for the chance to trawl inshore.<sup>2</sup> Trawling, of course, removed the need for bait and many small craft fitted out with the gear, ostensibly for use outside the three mile limit until inshore restrictions were lifted. Only Flamborough remained resolutely opposed and even this community was to adopt the practice during the Great War. Even some individuals at Staithes, where the practice had been regarded with the utmost contempt, lobbied for inshore trawling.<sup>3</sup> The controversy was not resolved until the bye law in question was suspended in the face of Great War food shortages.

Over these years then, the inshore fisheries experienced further decline. The drift of men from the inshore fishery must have contributed to the fall off in the Yorkshire coast industry's labour force during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As figure LXXXV illustrates, decline was not uniform. Communities north of Scarborough were more acutely affected than those to the south. There was indeed an increase in the number describing themselves as fishermen in the southerly area according to the 1911 Census. However, many of these describing themselves as fishermen were in fact only part-time. Much of their income was derived from the growing tourist trade which continued to make the sea attractive to some.<sup>4</sup>

Poverty of capital was endemic throughout the inshore fisheries, especially after 1900. By the opening of the 1910s it was becoming evident that a vessel could be made more profitable by adapting it to motor power. Lack of finance meant this innovation could only be carried out by few Yorkshire

1. See Chapter

2. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Minutes, 23rd January 1907.

3. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Minutes, 5th June 1905 and 23rd January 1907.

4. Departmental Commission on Inshore Fisheries, 1914 XXX, Minutes of Evidence, q 4568.



coast fishermen before the Great War.<sup>1</sup> The inshore sector was caught in a vicious trap. Without the injection of new capital there was little likelihood of any revival in prosperity but without prosperity there was little chance of sufficient capital becoming available.

The inshoremen had really nowhere to turn. They were unaccustomed to dealing with banks and vice versa.<sup>2</sup> There were few individuals left in their communities willing to risk capital in such a depressed activity. Their hand to mouth existence at this time meant there was little chance of accruing their own capital. Furthermore, at the smaller stations the return on fish was sometimes less than might have been expected. Often all buying and marketing arrangements were by this time in the hands of one individual. Such lack of competition, as the local fishery officer pointed out in 1909, often resulted in lower than average prices.<sup>3</sup>

When it is further considered that the marine oil engine was a comparatively new innovation, totally outside the previous experience of local fishermen, it is not surprising that Yorkshire coast fishermen did not make earlier use on a large scale of its potential. Until the Great War the sail and oar remained the principal means of propulsion in the inshore fisheries and were still important afterwards.

In conclusion then, the inshore fishery continued to be beset with problems and decline was not reversed, despite the creation of the N.E.D.S.F.C. and its conservationist aims.

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1. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Minutes 23rd January 1907.
  2. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Minutes 31st December 1900.
  3. H.C.R.O., N.E.D.S.F.C., Minutes 31st December 1900.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: PORT AND HARBOUR FACILITIES

One important aspect of the Yorkshire coast fishing industry which merits much more than a passing mention is the associated development of port and harbour facilities. The industry's nineteenth century expansion could not have been fully sustained without their improvement. Indeed, the modern industry is still largely based on a harbour infrastructure that emerged at that time. Thus the relationship between the trade and harbours has been of crucial long term importance.

The Yorkshire coast ports of Whitby, Scarborough and Bridlington have long possessed harbours. Whatever may have been the case in earlier times, for the whole of the eighteenth and much of the nineteenth century their existence was reliant more upon their potential role as harbours of refuge than on the prosperity of local fishing or commercial activities.

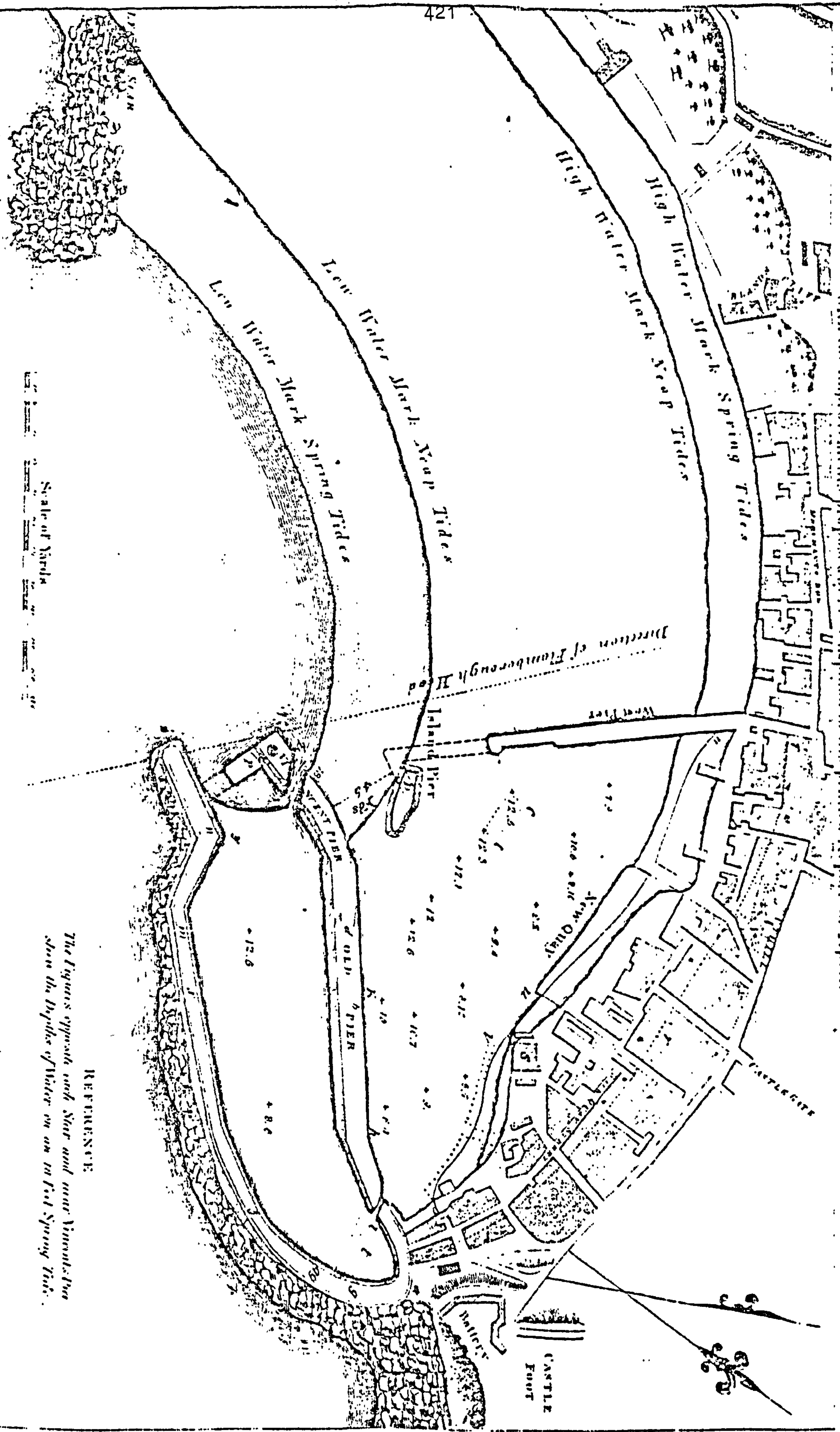
When North Sea weather conditions deteriorated, no sailing vessel between the Firth of Forth and Yarmouth Roads could really feel safe out of harbour. The most treacherous section was undoubtedly the Yorkshire coast. Here, the combination of one of the most dangerous seas in the world with a hostile and inhospitable shore spelt destruction for many ships and their crews. Contemporary news papers reported shipwrecks with much the same frequency as road accidents are mentioned today. Godfrey and Lassey estimate that the total number of Yorkshire coast shipwrecks since 1500 probably exceeds 50,000.<sup>1</sup> The 1859 Royal Commission on Harbours of Refuge revealed that 1,549 persons died through coastal wrecks in the year 1854 alone.<sup>2</sup> The scale of these disasters was sometimes considerable. In February 1861 no fewer than three hundred and fifty five ships were lost, mostly off the east coast.<sup>3</sup> Upwards of seventy men were drowned in Bridlington Bay on the 10th February 1871 when a number of vessels ran onto the beach during a fierce storm.<sup>4</sup> Such calamities helped fuel the controversy which spasmodically flared up over the provision of adequate refuge harbours.

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1. A. Godfrey and P. J. Lassey, *Shipwrecks of the Yorkshire Coast* (Dalesman 1974) 8.
  2. R.C. on Refuge Harbours, 1859X, Report XIV.
  3. A. Godfrey and P. J. Lassey, *op.cit.*, 267.
  4. H. U. B. J. L., *Draft Representation to the Commissioners of Bridlington Harbour from the Fishery Trade (1876/7)* DDLG5/62.

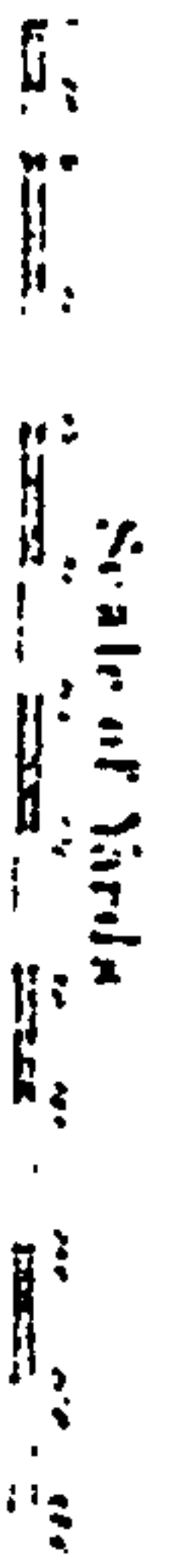


# PLAN of SCARBOROUGH HARBOUR, 1831.

With the Improvements proposed by Mr. Chapman in his printed Report of April.



From Surveys by T. O. Blackett and John Barry, under the Directions of Wm. Chapman Esq. C. E. M. R. I. A. S.



REFERENCE:  
 The figures opposite each Star and near Vincent's Bay show the Depth of Water on an in Fall Spring Tides.

As Duckham reminds us, long before the nineteenth century a whole string of local, and often commercially significant, harbours had acquired the essential role as havens for vessels caught on a lee shore and in urgent need of repairs.<sup>1</sup> The three Yorkshire ports had a strong claim to this status being situated on the busy but hazardous east coast collier route. All thus obtained the legislative right to levy passing tolls on traders benefitting from their existence. Bridlington was empowered to collect these from 1697, Whitby from 1792 and Scarborough after 1732.<sup>2</sup>

These sources of revenue grew as collier traffic from the north east to London expanded during the later eighteenth century. Whitby derived the greatest benefit, for it could levy one half penny per Newcastle cauldron or two pence per London ton. Bridlington and Scarborough were entitled to levy half this amount. All was collected by toll officials at the port of shipment.<sup>3</sup>

Thanks to this regular source of income, the three ports were able to develop their harbours, though their state of repair was sometimes less satisfactory than the collier trade would have liked. Without such revenue it is inconceivable that development on anything like the scale existing by the mid nineteenth century could have been achieved. Local trade yielded insufficient resources. Bridlington, for example, commenced major reconstruction in 1816 which took over three decades to complete. As late as 1836, when much work had been carried out, it was estimated that a further £57,000 would be needed to complete the scheme. Annual revenue averaged £3,000 at that time of which only £1,000 came from sources other than the passing toll. The latter's role was considered so crucial that the 1836 Select Committee on Harbours of Refuge reported that if Bridlington Quay was forced to rely on just local funding then work in progress would have to be suspended and the harbour would fall into decay.<sup>6</sup> Parliament thus renewed Bridlington's right to levy passing tolls and the scheme was completed.

1. B.F. Duckham, 'Wrecks and Refuge Harbours 1856-61', Transport History 6 (July 1973) 150-1.

2. Ibid., 150-1.

3. S.C. on Harbours of Refuge 1836 XX, Report 4-5.

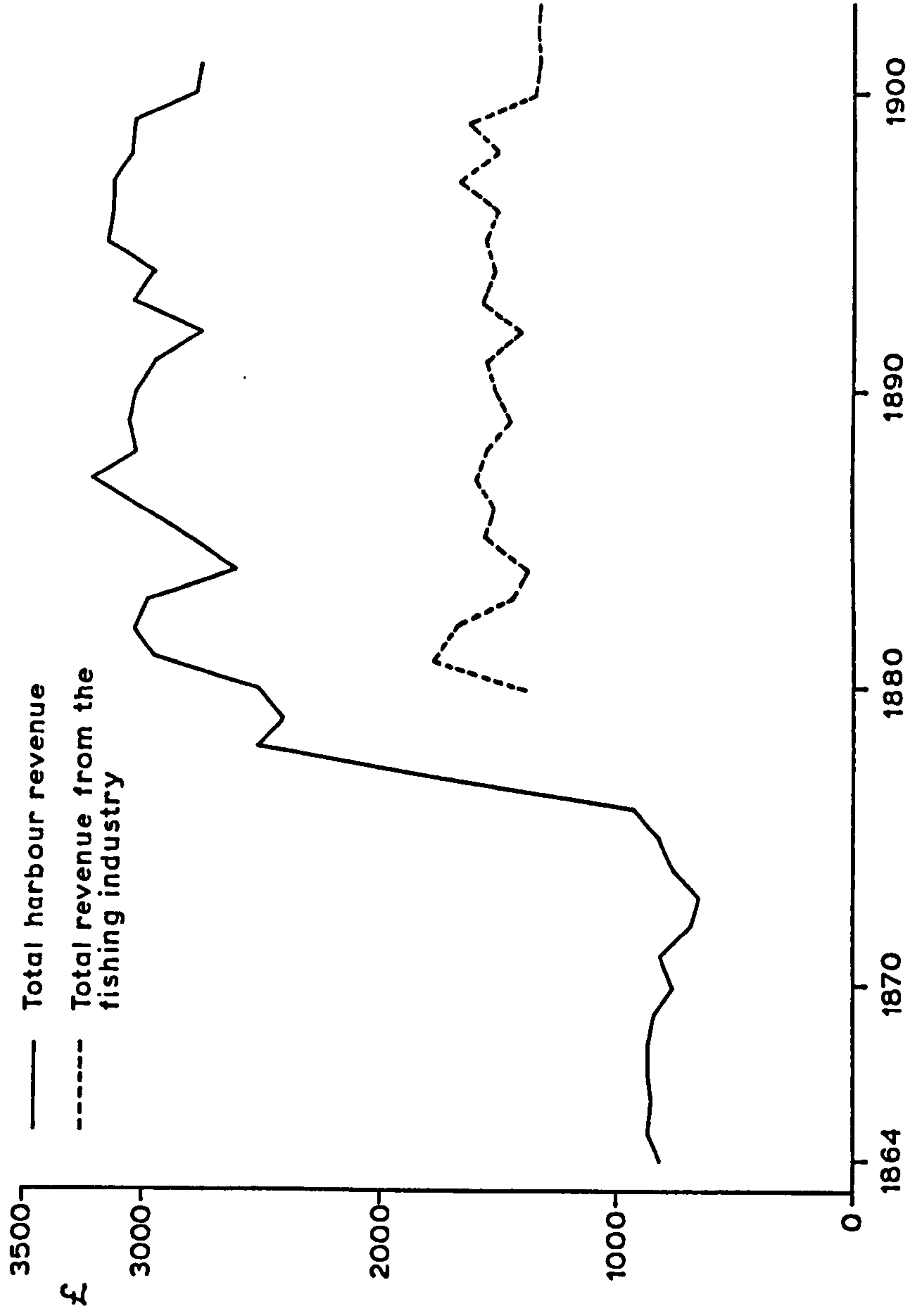
4. S.C. on Harbours of Refuge 1836 XX, Report 4-5.

5. S.C. on Harbours of Refuge 1836 XX, Report 4-5.

6. S.C. on Harbours of Refuge 1836 XX, Report 14-15.



Figure LXXXVII. Scarborough Harbour Revenue.



Source: Scarborough Harbour Commissioners' Ledgers

Each harbour's administration was vested in bodies known as harbour commissioners. These generally perpetuated their number by self election. Most individual commissioners had little direct maritime commercial experience. Scarborough usually had one hundred and eighteen commissioners, most of whom were clergy or gentry living in the district though a few lived over two hundred miles distant. From 1834 the mayor and four of the corporation were included but as late as 1846 their ranks included only nine sailors and a similar number of shipowners.<sup>1</sup> At Whitby and Bridlington the picture was not too dissimilar.<sup>2</sup>

Over the nineteenth century slow reform made the composition of these harbour authorities reflect more closely the local maritime, commercial and civic interest groups. Such changes did not occur overnight and it took Scarborough until 1900 to accept a really suitable process of electing commissioners.

In view of the Commissioners' lack of commercial and maritime experience, it is perhaps not surprising that there were frequent complaints regarding their abilities to run harbours effectively. At Whitby, for example, it was noted that the West Pier of fine Whitby Stone had not been placed in the most suitable direction. Furthermore, at Scarborough, prior to the 1840s, the outer harbour had always been too choked with sand to be of any use.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, at all three, the questions of silting up and lack of suitable quay space were regular bones of contention.

In fairness, the Commissioners faced problems that were by no means inconsiderable. Each harbour authority had the job of trying to satisfy or reconcile two different and often conflicting interest groups. The passing toll contributors required that the amount of mooring space available should be as great as possible so that large fleets of vessels could take refuge in bad weather. In contrast, local trade activities tended to congest the harbours. In 1831, the Scarborough Commissioners found themselves at the centre of just such a

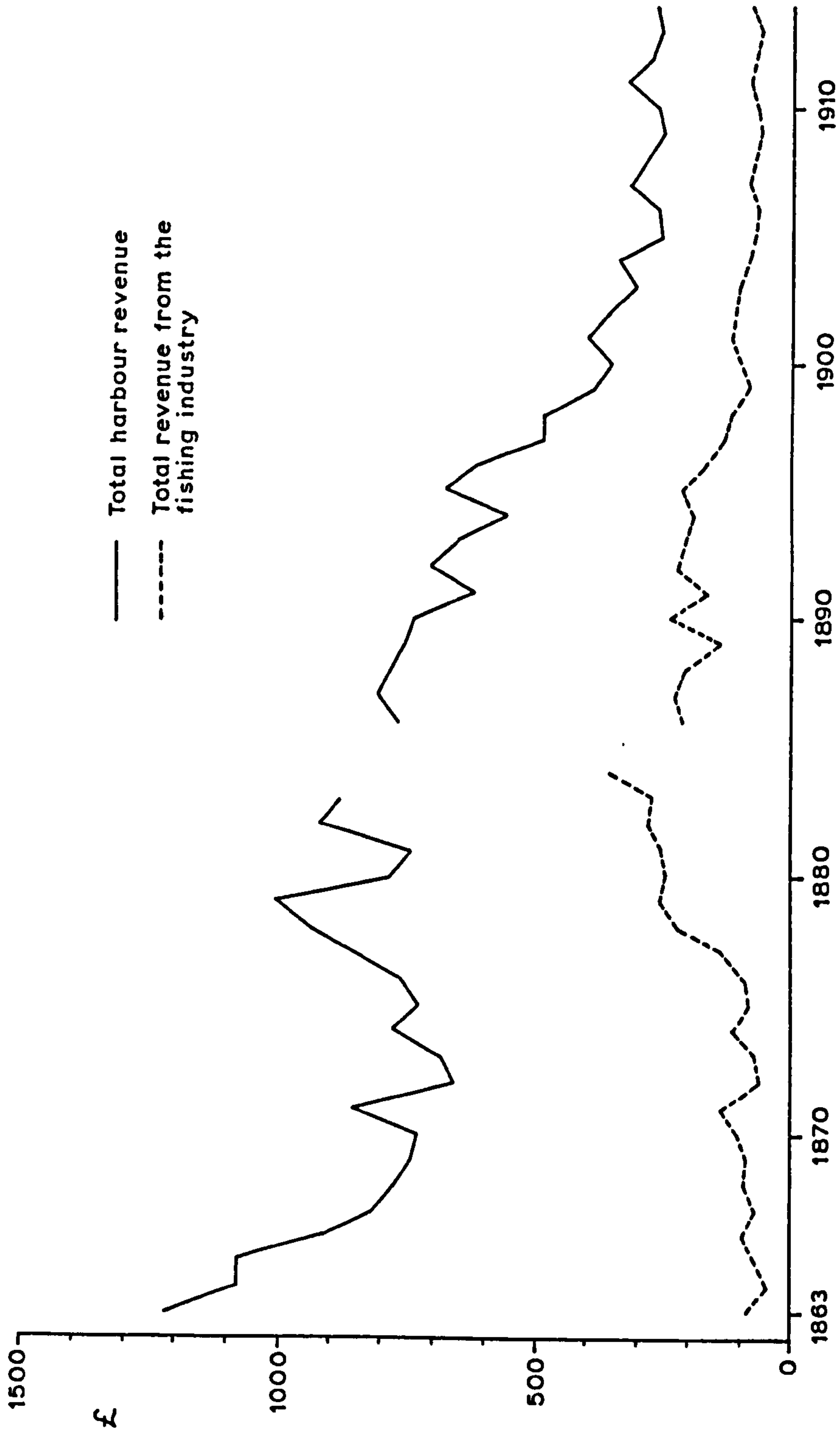
1. S.C. on Tidal Harbours, 1846 XVIII, Appendix 209.

2. S.C. on Tidal Harbours, 1846 XVIII, Appendix 212.

3. S.C. on Tidal Harbours, 1846 XVIII, Appendix 212.



Figure LXXXVIII. Whitby Harbour Revenue.



Source: Whitby Harbour Commissioners Ledgers.

conflict. After pressure from several collier owning interests - who said they might oppose any renewal of the passing toll - they were forced to prosecute several local shipbuilders. The problem was that the latter had encroached upon harbour accommodation by constructing walls within its boundaries to protect their works from the tide.<sup>1</sup>

However, the major shortcoming of these harbours which the Commissioners faced was that they were really lamentably unsuitable to act as refuge havens. In the first place, all three were bar harbours. That is they were virtually dry at low tide. Therefore, any vessel in distress had to hold off until there was a sufficient draught of water to attempt entry. At Whitby, the largest harbour, it was observed in 1834 that, except for the small stream of the Esk, the harbour was dry at low tide and even a small boat had to moor outside if it wished to remain afloat. There was also a bar of rock across the harbour upon which several vessels had broken their backs on trying to effect an entrance whilst the water remained insufficient for their draught.<sup>2</sup>

Conditions at Scarborough were little better, as Sir John Rennie, the eminent civil engineer, was to point out:

'Even under the most favourable circumstances, light vessels cannot enter before half flood; and if as frequently happens they should be taken aback with a north east wind at low water when off the port, they must be driven ashore or else run the almost equal risk of foundering by being compelled to keep the sea until the tide is flowed sufficiently to enable them to enter the harbour.'<sup>3</sup>

The situation at Bridlington was almost identical in similar circumstances.

Yet another problem that afflicted these harbours, even when the tide allowed entry, was that in many types of weather conditions, it was positively dangerous for sailing vessels to attempt entry. Once more, Scarborough was as dangerous as any:

'With all winds north of east (which are the most dangerous) vessels trying to enter the harbour keep close to the Castle Rock and the new outer pier, along which there sometimes rage a heavy sea; and then as they approach the pier end they are

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1. Yorkshire Gazette, 23rd July 1831.  
 2. S.C.Tidal Harbours, 1846 XVIII, Appendix 206.  
 3. S.C.Tidal Harbours, 1846 XVIII, Appendix 212.



met by an offsetting current from the Bay, which renders it very difficult for them to effect an entrance: the more so as they are compelled to bear almost directly against the wind or failing this they have no alternative but to run ashore below the Spa.' 1.

Quite often, at both Scarborough and Whitby, cables and hawsers were used in attempts to pull such vessels round into the harbour mouth and the teeth of the gale.

Once they did get into the harbour there were further problems. Not only was accommodation for larger vessels strictly limited at Scarborough and Bridlington but there were many complaints at all three harbours about the damage caused to craft by turbulent water. At Whitby for instance, it was often considered unsafe to moor below the bridge when storm conditions prevailed.<sup>2</sup> Large vessels which managed to gain entry might also be delayed for several days until a suitable combination of high tide and wind allowed them to make an exit.<sup>3</sup> As a result, journey times were often considerably lengthened.

Because these problems were not overcome, the discontent felt by many ship-owners about passing tolls turned, by the 1820s, into outright opposition. This usually reached a peak about the time that the harbour authorities applied to Parliament for renewal of their toll gathering rights. Though Whitby's tolls were renewed in 1827 for an indefinite period this was not usually the case.<sup>4</sup> Generally such rights were granted for a strictly prescribed number of years. Bridlington and Scarborough had renewed their toll acts in 1816 and 1823 respectively and both had to return to Parliament again after twenty one years. Bridlington's was renewed in 1837 despite fierce opposition but Scarborough's renewal bill was rejected in 1844. The legislation passed instead specified that the port's future income would have to be derived from vessels using the harbour.<sup>5</sup> As a result the harbour was in dire financial straits for a number of years.

The shipping interest largely remained critical of the passing tolls

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1. S.C. Tidal Harbours, 1846 XVIII, Appendix 212.
  2. S.C. Harbours of Refuge, 1836 XX Report, 48 and 84.
  3. S.C. Tidal Harbours, 1846 XVIII, Appendix, 212.
  4. S.C. on Harbours of Refuge, 1836 XX, Report, 12-14.
  5. 24 and 25 Vict. cap.47.

levied by the other two harbour authorities. They advocated instead a more effective and comprehensive system of refuge harbours which would provide deep water anchorages at all states of the tide. Three local sites were considered prime candidates during the nineteenth century. These were Hartlepool, Redcar and Filey. The capital outlay required for such projects would have been enormous. In the case of Filey this was estimated at £800,000 in the 1860s.<sup>1</sup> This alone was far in excess of total expenditure on Yorkshire's three main bar harbours during the nineteenth century.

The prospect of raising such a sum locally was remote and the shipping interest, though it welcomed the prospect of refuge harbours, was both unable and unwilling to foot such a bill through a passing toll. The hope of attracting state aid for such projects was considered to be a real possibility and MPs from various shipping towns often brought the issue to the attention of Parliament, particularly during the 1850s.<sup>2</sup>

Another select committee was asked to report on the matter in 1857.<sup>3</sup> This was followed by a Royal Commission. Its 1859 report recommended the construction of ten refuge harbours around the British coast, including one at Filey.<sup>4</sup> Lord Palmerston's ministry, however, felt unable to place public funds in the way of such developments and the refuge harbour plan was thus shelved.<sup>5</sup> Another of the royal commission's findings was accepted. This was that passing tolls should be abolished.<sup>6</sup> From 1861 all harbours on the Yorkshire coast were expected to be self supporting.<sup>7</sup>

To compensate for the removal of this traditional source of income, legislation was passed sanctioning loans at three and a half per cent interest to harbour authorities undertaking expansion or reconstruction. New scales were brought in in 1879 and the Board of Trade and Public Works Loan Commissioners had to decide on the viability of the projected work and the value of the

1. B.F.Duckham, loc.cit., 158.

2. Ibid., 153-4.

3. Ibid., 153-4.

4. Scarborough Gazette, 22nd June 1860.

5. Whitby Gazette, 9th June 1860.

6. B.F.Duckham, loc.cit., 163.

7. 24 & 25 Vict. cap 47.



security offered.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike the collier trade, the Yorkshire coast fishing trade had never been burdened with passing tolls or the like. Its only contribution to harbour revenues had been by payment of normal berthing dues. Small craft had even been exempt from these charges. Prior to the 1860s no dues had been paid by fishing vessels on landings. In the earlier part of the century this was probably fair in view of the use the industry made of harbours. Table XIV in Chapter three shows that most first class vessels had been owned at that time by Staithes or Filey, communities without harbours.<sup>2</sup> In general they were moored in their local bays or else were away visiting other ports. Even those craft based at Scarborough made little use of their harbour. The fish market, for example, was held on the sand by the outside of the West Pier where many of the boats were pulled ashore to land their catches. Prior to the 1830s and 1840s the principal use made of the harbours by the fishermen was for fitting out, repairs, or laying up their large vessels during the winter months. Because the fishing industry made so little actual use of Scarborough Harbour when the authorities there were empowered to charge a new series of dues by Act of Parliament in 1844, it had not been considered worth charging for the landing of fish<sup>3</sup> and this was after a marked expansion of activity at the port during the previous decade.

The fishing industry was, of course, to continue to expand during the following decades. Inevitably, this led to a greater use of harbour facilities at Whitby and Scarborough in particular. Initially, both ports were able to cope adequately with the increased demands placed upon them. To some extent these extra calls for quay and mooring space offset the decline in the amount of coal and timber landed.<sup>4</sup>

Towards the end of the 1850s both of these ports were becoming increasingly congested during the peak weeks of the summer herring season. They found

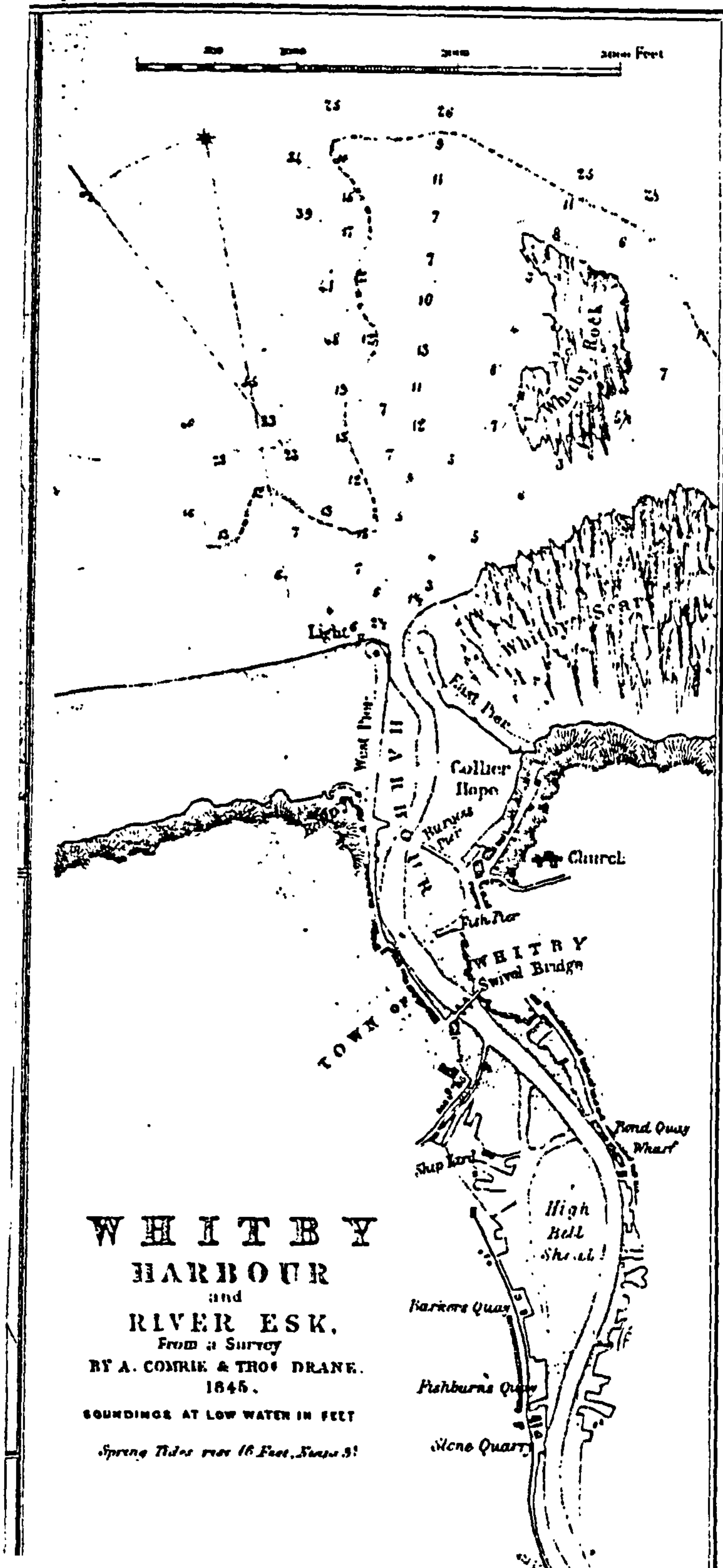
1. S.C. on Harbour Accommodation, 1883 XIV, Report IV.

2. See Chapter Two.

3. Scarborough Public Library (hereafter S.P.L.) Scarborough Harbour Commissioners' Minutes, 26th August 1869.

4. S.P.L. Scarborough Harbour Commissioners' Minutes, 26th August 1869.

FIGURE IXC : Whitby Harbour 1845





it increasingly difficult to cope with the growing number of vessels arriving and the large volumes of fish they landed. By this time the fishing interest at Scarborough was sufficiently well established as to be able to bring pressure to bear on the Harbour Commissioners in pursuit of demands for additional landing and packing space.<sup>1</sup> By 1860 the shortcomings were often of considerable inconvenience to both trade and town alike. One particular bone of contention was that, as we have noted, all fish landed had to be carted up the main thoroughfares in order to reach the station and by that date the quantities were considered by some to be a major nuisance. A not dissimilar situation existed at Whitby. There the distance between the usual landing points and the station created a variety of hazards. The problem was particularly acute when really large landings of herrings coincided with a tight deadline for train departures from the station for inland markets. The result was often a furious, heavy and sometimes dangerous traffic of carts through the narrow and crowded streets, 'caused by the anxious efforts of the drivers to get to and from between station and pier as fast as possible'.<sup>2</sup>

It was obvious to most contemporary observers that further development of the fishing trade at both ports would be choked off unless there was increased expenditure on harbour facilities. There were several constraints in the path of such developments which added to this problem before the 1860s. At Whitby, so long as the passing tolls remained the largest single source of income, the primary need was to maintain the harbour to a standard suited to its role as a refuge haven. Furthermore, at Scarborough the Commissioners could not expect any increase in fish landings brought about by harbour improvements to bring in extra revenue directly because, of course, fish had not been included in the list of dues they were authorised to collect.<sup>3</sup> Without any potential increase in revenue, the ability of the Commissioners to respond to demands for increased capital expenditure was markedly limited, as indeed it

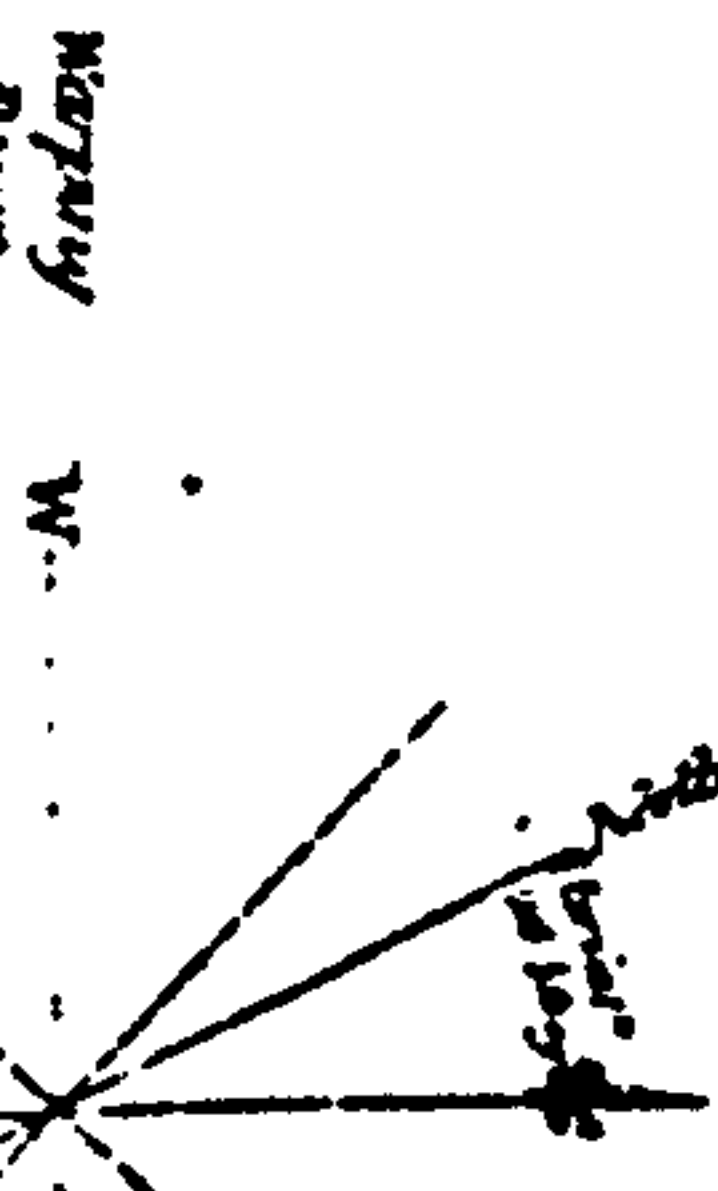
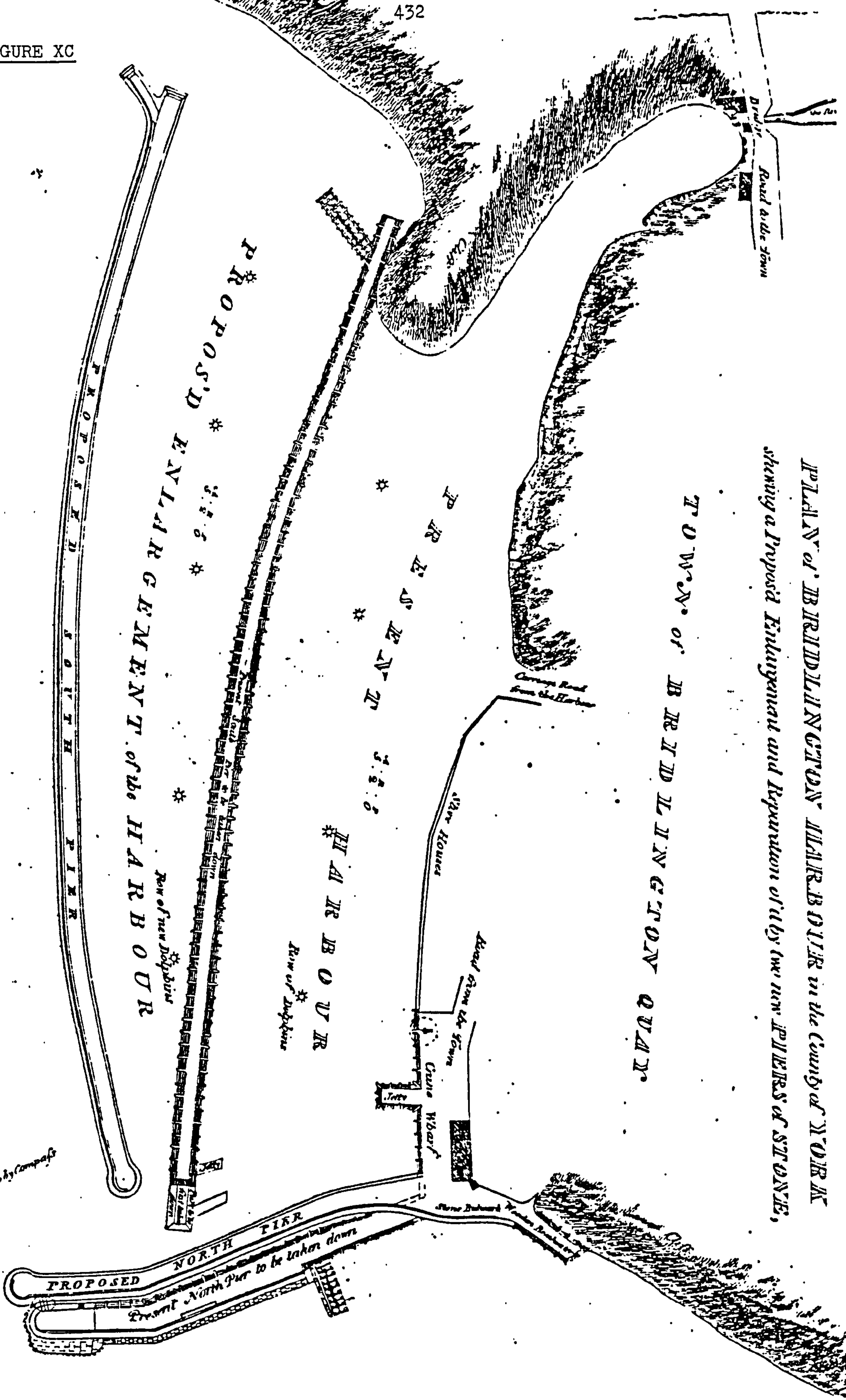
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1. S.P.L., Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Minutes, 30th August 1869.  
 2. Whitby Gazette, 1st September 1860.  
 3. S.P.L., Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Minutes, 28th August 1869.

FIGURE XC

PLAN of BRIDDLINGTON HARBOUR in the County of WORRE showing a Proposed Enlargement and Repurposing of the two new PILEERS of STONE,

TOWNSHIP of BRIDDLINGTON QUARRY





was at the other two Yorkshire coast harbours.

### Developments at Scarborough

Any plan to expand facilities for the fishing trade at Scarborough had to take account of its other role as one of the most fashionable resorts in England. This was to be further emphasised by the visits of the Prince and Princess of Wales in both 1870 and 1871. To a certain extent the dual roles of major fishing port and fashionable resort were incompatible. The inclusion of such a large number of clergy and gentry amongst the Commissioners' ranks ensured that the latter's interests would not be disregarded. Indeed, any attempt to expand the harbour's area was likely to arouse opposition because it would encroach upon another of the town's assets, its beach.<sup>1</sup>

Yet another factor to be considered was the relationship between Harbour Commissioners and Town Council. The latter wanted control over the harbour whilst the former guarded their powers jealously. The relationship between them was at best uneasy and at worst hostile. The Town Council usually opposed the Harbour Commissioners' attempts to alter their powers with a view to gaining some advantage. This inevitably created difficulties and made reconstruction plans more expensive for parliamentary approval was normally required and this became costly when argument impeded the passage of legislation. This made the Harbour Commissioners reluctant to embark upon major expansion schemes.

Because the fish trade was not represented amongst the Harbour Commissioners ranks<sup>2</sup> their pressure for improvement came mainly from outside. It usually took the form of petitions, deputations or letters to newspapers. Such means induced the Commissioners to make available the previously unused west face of the West Pier. The width of the pier approaches were also widened to make a larger area available for fish packing.<sup>3</sup>

Such improvements, though welcome, went only part of the way towards coping with demands being placed upon the harbour. It is evident that from the 1860s, many vessels sought to avoid the congestion by anchoring in the bay and dis-

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1. Scarborough Gazette, 1st December 1897.

2. S.P.L., Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Minutes, 23rd November 1880.

3. S.P.L., Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Minutes, 30th August 1860.







charging onto the beach with the aid of small boats. The practice proved popular. By the middle of that decade it was noted that whilst not less than a hundred boats were entering the harbour each week in the herring season<sup>1</sup> up to three hundred would be in the bay at the same time.<sup>2</sup>

In 1865 the harbour commissioners embarked upon a new venture. They purchased the steam tug Kate from North Shields for £1,112.<sup>3</sup> This was expected to be a considerable asset. The profits it would earn from towing and salvage would benefit the revenues. Additionally, the availability of a steam tug for towing fishing boats to and from the harbour was expected to attract more visiting fishermen.<sup>4</sup> The Kate was retained until the 1880s when the craft was replaced by the Alexandria. Though neither lived entirely up to expectations they proved valuable assets to the port's fishing industry and the Alexandria remained until 1901.

After 1860 there was considerable dissatisfaction regarding the Harbour Commissioners' willingness or ability to do more for the fish trade. They were petitioned in January 1868 by one hundred and twenty persons praying for more accommodation for the trade.<sup>5</sup> The following month James Sellers and Henry Wyrill, the main smackowners, attended the port and harbour committee meeting to press the case still further. The nub of the problem was that any comprehensive programme of expansion,<sup>6</sup> reconstruction and dredging would cost much money. The harbour revenues, however, would not be sufficient security for the necessary loan. If dues were charged on fish landings then reconstruction could be undertaken but to introduce these would require a new and costly Private Act of Parliament.

This February deputation did persuade the Harbour Commissioners to accept their proposal that leading engineers should be invited to put forward plans

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1. S.P.L., Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Minutes, 20th February 1864.
  2. S.P.L., Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Minutes, 12th January 1865.
  3. S.P.L., Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Minutes, 31st August 1865.
  4. S.P.L., Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Minutes, 12th January 1865.
  5. S.P.L., Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Minutes, 31st January 1868.
  6. Scarborough Gazette, 7th March 1868

and estimates. In the event, twenty one designs were submitted and C.W. Whittaker was awarded a prize of £10 for the most acceptable.<sup>1</sup> A temporary downturn in interest allowed the matter to be shelved for several years but pressure was renewed by the fishing interest in 1876. A new Act of Parliament was obtained allowing the levying of dues on fish landings as well as the reconstruction of the harbour.<sup>2</sup>

To the surprise of the Commissioners, the dues brought in far more than was expected. In 1875 the fish trade had estimated total income from the fishing for the harbour at about £750,<sup>3</sup> with the new charges. For 1879 this was actually £1,487.<sup>4</sup> Despite their new income and power the Commissioners proved slow to implement their improvements and little progress was made in 1878. The fish trade were angered by such procrastination. Sellers and Wyrill refused to pay their dues until work commenced and were taken to court over the issue.<sup>5</sup> Work finally started in the spring of 1879.

The reconstruction took until 1882 to complete. It included the widening and lengthening of the West Pier whilst the remnants of the old Island Pier were removed. A comprehensive programme of dredging was also carried out. Total cost was £19,700. Shortly after completion, in response to further fish trade pressure, the West Pier sheds were extended and in 1886 the fish salesmen's offices were erected, which exist to this day (1984).<sup>6</sup>

This reconstruction, in many respects, mirrored the zenith of Scarborough's fishing fleet. By the mid eighties decline was underway. Though the herring trade revived in the next decade it was dominated by outsiders whilst the port's own fleet languished. These increased herring dues compensated for the fall in income from other fishing activities but total income did not really show any tendency to grow. Saddled with repaying the developments of 1879-1886 there was little revenue available for further expansion, though a few

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1. Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Minutes 22nd August 1868.
  2. Scarborough Gazette, 7th March 1878.
  3. Scarborough Harbour Commissioners, Minutes, 7 August 1875.
  4. Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Accounts 1879.
  5. Scarborough Gazette, 16th May 1878.
  6. S.P.L., Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Minutes, 30th August 1886.



modest improvements were made. Income fell away after 1900 and financial constraints became so acute that the harbour was unsuccessfully offered for take over to the North Eastern Railway in 1903.<sup>1</sup>

For much of the period under discussion, the Scarborough fishing industry appears to have thrived in spite of its harbour's shortcomings. It remained difficult and sometimes dangerous to enter. After the 1850s it seems to have failed to keep pace with the expansion of the fishing industry. Congestion and dissatisfaction were inevitably the product. Compared with Grimsby and Hull the provisions made for the trade were decidedly modest. Unlike those two ports the harbour authority was composed in the main of individuals with little knowledge of maritime commerce. Although reforms to its composition were effected in 1834 and 1876 it was not until 1900 that the non-elected Commissioners were finally outnumbered by individuals appointed by the Town Council and other interested parties.

Despite such drawbacks, the trade at Scarborough developed more strongly than that of its Yorkshire coast rivals. In spite of its shortcomings it was probably still more immediately suitable than the harbours at Whitby and Bridlington Quay. However, in view of the additional problems facing its fish trade after 1880, the possession of only a small tidal harbour was a further factor in Scarborough's declining importance as a year round fishing station.

### Whitby

By the time Whitby lost its passing toll revenue in 1861 it had emerged as a major herring centre. Its harbour authority set about replacing lost revenue by catering more carefully for the needs of this trade. A new fish quay was constructed that very year with a staith some seven hundred and fifty feet long and twenty five feet broad.<sup>2</sup> This was situated above the bridge. Being nearer the station it reduced fish traffic in the streets. The Act which provided for its construction allowed the levying of a wider range of tolls.<sup>3</sup>

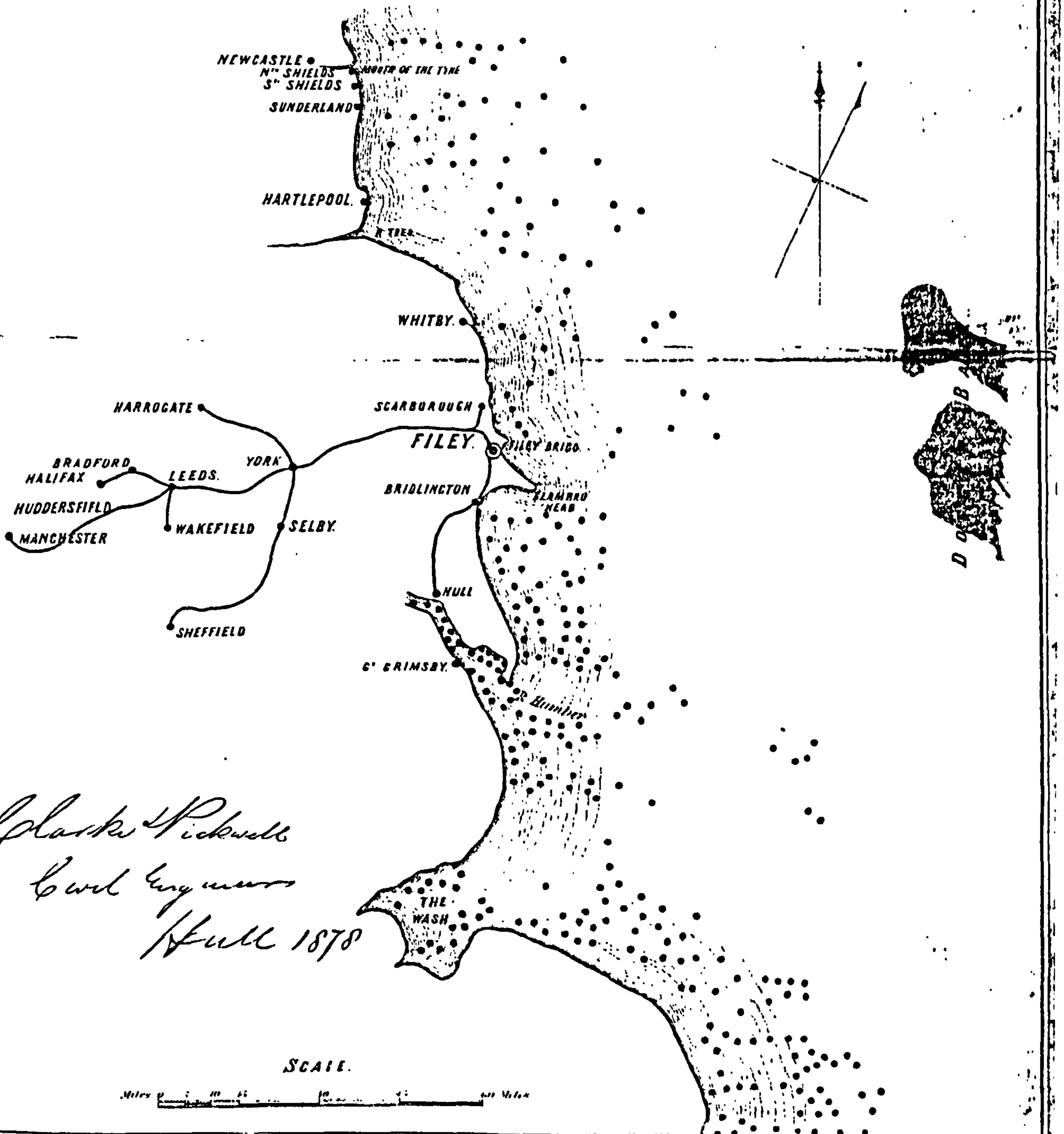
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1. Scarborough Post, 23rd October 1903.
  2. Whitby Gazette, 1st September 1860.
  3. N.C.R.O., Whitby Harbour Commissioners Report, December 1860.

# FILEY FISHERY HARBOUR.

## Map or Chart,

Shewing relative position of DOGGER BANK, and EAST COAST PORTS.

NOTE.— Each Black dot shows the position of a Casualty that occurred during 1875-6: in that year the number of Vessels lost or damaged on the Coasts and in the Seas of the United Kingdom, was 454, and the loss of Life, so far as can be ascertained, 178.



*Charles Pickwell  
Civil Engineer  
Hull 1878*

SCALE.

Miles 0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50



Initially, the scheme benefitted the herring fishery. For many years it could cope with even peak season demands. In return the visiting herring trade made a much fairer contribution to the cost of harbour maintenance. Despite this, Whitby was unable to establish a first class all year round fishing fleet at this time. If anything it seems to have been more difficult a harbour to enter than Scarborough and larger fishing craft appear to have been reluctant to use it in winter. Though the open boat fishery was successful there the new fish quay-designed primarily for larger vessels - often remained unused when the herring fishery was out of season.

Though the herring trade was a lucrative source of income, the harbour's revenue never approached the levels they had reached when the passing toll was levied. An estimate of income from that source before 1861 was of about £3,600 annually.<sup>1</sup> During the rest of the nineteenth century total annual income never surpassed £1,219<sup>2</sup> and was often much lower. Finances were aggravated by the fall in other commercial and coasting activities at the port thanks to competition from the railways. By the eighties the harbour was dangerously dependent upon just the herring fishery. At the same time the funds at its disposal were so limited that even routine maintenance such as dredging was difficult to afford.

The expansion of the herring fishery during the seventies put pressure on the new fish quay and it was soon unable to cope with peak season landings. Petitions were received by the Harbour Commissioners from visiting herring fishermen calling for further improvements.<sup>3</sup> Though this body's composition had been reformed late in the decade and was more representative of the maritime interest the lack of revenue made it difficult to respond effectively. An ambitious reconstruction scheme was drawn up but came to nought due to lack of security for the requisite £40,000 loan.<sup>4</sup> By the mid eighties the harbour, both silted up and congested could be a hazardous place. The likelihood of

1. S.C. on Tidal Harbours, 1846 XVIII, Report, 20.

2. See Figure XC.

3. Whitby Times 4th April 1879.

4. S.C. on Harbour Accommodation, 1883 XIV, Appendix 341.

vessels sustaining damage whilst moored there was so high that a number of insurance companies which covered craft from the south west refused to allow them to use the harbour except at their own risk.<sup>1</sup>

Little was done to improve the condition of the harbour throughout the nineties because the Commissioners were hamstrung by a lack of finance. On January 1st, 1906, its jurisdiction was transferred to the Urban District Council.<sup>2</sup> Under this new management renovation was finally got under way in the following years. Amongst the improvements soon planned were the deepening of the channel to maintain a depth of at least seven feet at low water, the construction of a new fish quay from Scotch Head to the Coffee House and an extension of the piers. By the close of the following year the Board of Trade had approved the scheme in outline and the works had commenced.<sup>3</sup> The various improvements were carried out progressively during the following few years.

Though the effects of these improvements on the fortunes of the Whitby fishing industry were less than dramatic, they do appear to have helped stimulate some further development for, as we have noted in Chapter Fifteen, a number of steam craft were acquired for the port in the years immediately preceding the Great War.

#### Bridlington Quay

In many respects, the situation of the harbour at Bridlington Quay appeared outwardly attractive to the nineteenth century sailing fishermen. When working off the Dogger Bank the smacks could, with a fair wind, make that place within eight hours whilst it would take twelve to reach Grimsby.<sup>4</sup> In other circumstances, the advantage of being able to despatch fish to inland markets by rail would have been sufficient to encourage the development of a sizeable first class fishing fleet. Furthermore, unlike Scarborough, a direct harbour rail link was originally provided. Yet another factor apparently in its favour

1. Whitby Gazette, 19th September 1885.

2. Whitby Gazette, 28th December 1906.

3. Whitby Gazette, 7th December 1906 and 31st December 1909.

4. H.U.B.J.L. DDLG5/6 Draft Representation to the Commissioners of Bridlington Harbour from the Fishery Trade, 1876/7.



was that it was still possible to make the harbour when prevailing winds ruled out most chances of reaching Whitby or Scarborough. However, other more adverse factors counterbalanced these apparent advantages.

For much of the nineteenth century, the condition of the harbour and its dearth of even basic facilities meant that its potential remained unfulfilled. Even though the North Pier had been completely rebuilt by the 1850s and a totally new South Pier constructed, greatly increasing potential accommodation, it was still far from being an ideal haven. The eminent Victorian engineer, Sir John Coode, recalled that as late as 1863 the entrance was so wide and in such a position that the fetch into the harbour was right from the coast of Holland. This had caused disastrous effects on a number of occasions:

'The consequence was that before the harbour was improved, vessels have gone into Bridlington Harbour with a comparatively small amount of damage and receive here more injury whilst waiting to be repaired than they incurred at sea.' 1

To rectify this basic design fault, and as an attempt to make the harbour more attractive to commercial and fishing craft after the loss of the passing tolls, the Bridlington Harbour Commissioners applied to Coode for his advice. His suggestion was that a great improvement could be made with a simple extension of the North Pier by 112 feet. The estimate for this construction, using conventional materials was £10,000. Even with a possible loan from the Public Works Loan Commissioners, this was beyond the Harbour's limited means. Coode therefore suggested that if concrete was used to replace stone for the outer facing then the cost could be drastically reduced. After some initial reluctance the Commissioners finally agreed. Concrete blocks instead of stone were used for the outer facing. This was the first time this material was used externally in such a construction and the move proved successful. The total outlay on the extension was limited to £7,900.<sup>2</sup>

From this time forward the harbour afforded a much greater degree of protection. This was sufficient of an inducement to encourage its greater use as an occasional or even seasonal landing point for first class fishing vessels.

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1. S.C. on Harbour Accommodation, 1883, XIV, Minutes of Evidence, q 1450.

2. S.C. on Harbour Accommodation, 1883, XIV, Minutes of Evidence, qq 1490-2.

Nevertheless, it was still burdened with too many disadvantages to emerge as any sort of real rival to Scarborough's position as the premier fishing port on the Yorkshire coast. The major drawback was the lack of depth,<sup>1</sup> and the Commissioners did not have the resources to carry out even a modest programme of dredging. As late as 1883, the maximum depth of water at neap tide was eleven feet but by that time the larger fishing vessels had long drawn up to twelve feet of water. Because of this lack of draught even smacks and yawls of smaller dimensions could experience problems.<sup>2</sup>

A constant danger around the neap tide time was that fishing vessels entering the harbour and mooring well inside on one tide might find there was insufficient depth to get out on the next. As a result, they would be deprived of a night's fishing. On one occasion in the mid 1870s, about thirty yawls had landed at the harbour, probably because of weather conditions, on one tide. When the next arrived they were unable to put to sea for want of earnings and wasted £100 worth of bait.<sup>3</sup> In such situations the loss of potential earnings could also be great. One native of the town, Captain Frank Shaw, complained to the Commissioners of an occasion when he was unable to get his yawl afloat and out to sea. The two vessels moored below him just managed to make it and made £25 apiece from the night's fishing.<sup>4</sup>

It was therefore not surprising that many skippers did not add to their problems by using Bridlington Quay. For several decades prior to 1876, it was rare for more than one or two first class yawls to be stationed permanently there. Even locals who owned such craft often felt obliged to use other harbours. Robert Crawford of Bridlington Quay, for example, was forced to use Scarborough and other places except at spring tides because his yawl was one of those which drew too much water to gain entry easily.<sup>5</sup> Yet another disadvantage of the harbour was the lack of suitable quay space for the fishing and the merchant trades. Almost every observer of Bridlington Quay during the first eight decades of the nineteenth century comments upon this fact.

1. This had been noted by Simon Goodrick's Report on the harbour in 1814 (B.J.L., DDLG 5/53) and was still a problem at the time of the 1883 Select Committee.

2. B.J.L., DDLG 5/62 1876/7.

3. B.J.L., DDLG 5/62 1876/7.

4. B.J.L., DDLG 5/62 1876/7.

5. B.J.L., DDLG 5/62, 1876/7.



FIGURE XCIII: Extracts: Return from Harbour Authorities 1883 and 1903

## Bridlington: Statement of Income

Year Ending 26/7	£
1864	795
1865	582
1886	604
1867	674
1868	590
1869	558
1870	613
1871	526
1872	476
1873	557
1874	690
1875	827
1876	764
1877	780
1878	708
1879	703
1880	836
1881	940
1882	803
1883	743
1884	725
1885	609
1886	999
1887	789
1888	823
1889	875
1890	805
1891	720
1892	718
1893	807
1894	944
1895	985
1896	951
1897	975
1898	967
1899	961
1900	1020
1901	1016

Source: Return from Harbour Authorities 1883 and 1903

This unsatisfactory state of affairs prompted a variety of local persons to concert their efforts with the aim of forcing some improvement. Representations were made to the Commissioners in 1877 about the harbour's poor condition and an attempt was made to induce them to formulate a plan that would make the harbour more suitable for a first class fishing fleet. The Commissioners, lacking finance, could only meet them half way. They constructed a timber jetty that year to replace the decayed stone one. However, it was to take them until 1883 to draw up a comprehensive dredging programme.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, Bridlington Quay's first class fishing fleet grew for several years after 1876. Though perhaps due in part to such improvements it was largely due to problems facing the fishing trade elsewhere. Scarborough's continued congestion, the introduction of new landing charges there, and dissatisfaction with the pace of that port's improvement plans prompted several craft to move.<sup>2</sup> The failure of attempts to provide even basic facilities at Filey prompted the migration of further vessels and their crews.<sup>3</sup>

Many of these newcomers merely used Bridlington Quay as a mooring base. Most took to landing their catches at Grimsby where higher prices were usually obtained. Bridlington had few fish merchants so competition for catches was limited. So despite the harbour's modernisation over the century its fishing trade remained in essence one conducted by open boats. The harbour authorities remained strictly limited in their ability to maintain or improve quay facilities due to their chronic shortage of revenue.

#### Other Stations

Whatever their drawbacks, the three ports dealt with above all at least had the advantage of possessing a harbour. The other fishing communities along the Yorkshire coast lacked this basic accommodation<sup>4</sup> and yet, as we have seen, several possessed at one time or another large yawls and luggers of the type one would normally associate with harbour ports. For much of the period under discussion, Staithes and Filey both had sizeable fleets of such craft whilst

1. Return from Harbour Authorities, 1883 XIV, 15.

2. S.P.L., Scarborough Harbour Commissioners Minutes, 22nd February 1877.

3. R.C. English & Welsh Sea Fisheries, 1878/9, 1879 XVII, Minutes of Evidence p.110.

4. Staithes Harbour works were not constructed until the 1930s.



lacking man made harbours.

Both overcame their disadvantages in a number of similar ways. During the winter months, when the dangers of storm and wreckage were most acute, their fleets were traditionally laid up in the harbours of Scarborough or Whitby.<sup>1</sup> For part of the year, other harbours were utilised. For example, as we have noted, from September to November both fleets followed the herring fishery out of Yarmouth. When fishing from their home stations they had often remained on the fishing grounds for four or five days and only returned on the weekend to land their catches. Their craft were of such robust design that they could lie safely in some of the heaviest seas.<sup>2</sup> When the craft were not in use on the weekend they could usually be moored in either Filey or Runswick Bays with comparative safety.<sup>3</sup> Despite these precautions disaster still sometimes struck. One such calamity affected the Filey fleet in 1822 when two unoccupied vessels were dragged from their moorings and wrecked.<sup>4</sup> A similar disaster of much larger proportions was to strike the same fleet in 1860. In June of that year a tremendous storm blew up one morning when twenty two yawls were riding at anchor. Thirteen of them were wrecked, ten having gone on to the rocks at Speeton. One man lost his life and the damage was estimated to be in the region of £10,000. Half the town was said to be ruined.<sup>5</sup>

Had Filey possessed an adequate harbour and associated facilities then she would have been well placed for exploiting the North Sea Fisheries as the town was situated on one of the closest landward points to the Dogger Bank. One major hope, which survived well into the 1880s, was that eventually the projected harbour of refuge would be built in the bay. The provision of a safe anchorage would undoubtedly have stimulated a further expansion of the town's fishing trade. Concern about the shortcomings of local harbours, as well as the absence of Government finance for the projected refuge harbour, prompted private enterprise to take the initiative. In 1864 the Filey Fishery Company

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1. G.Young, op.cit., 820-3.

2. Captain Washington's Report on the Loss of Life and Damage to Fishing Boats on the East Coast of Scotland in the Gale of 19th August 1848, 1849 LI, Appendix 22.

3. R.C. on Harbours of Refuge, 1859 X, Minutes of Evidence, qq 22,228; 22,241 and 22,250.

4. R.H.E., AF1/6, 4th March 1823.

5. Whitby Gazette, 9th June 1860.

was formed. Its directors included General Sir J.M.Frederick Smith, K.H., MP, a member of the 1859 Royal Commission on Refuge Harbours. Other eminent individuals included railway company directors and support was forthcoming from a number of local MPs and gentry.<sup>1</sup>

The company aimed to construct a harbour that would be accessible to fishing vessels at all states of the tide. It was intended to be complementary to the proposed harbour of refuge and would form the inner harbour should construction take place. The promoters sought to raise £100,000 capital in 10,000 shares. Outline permission was obtained and the scheme's backers were optimistic about its chances of financial success. The new harbour's revenue was expected to be in the region of £12,000 per annum. The bulk - about £10,000 - would come from fisheries alone.<sup>2</sup> In retrospect these estimates seem hopelessly optimistic for the total revenue of the three main Yorkshire coast harbours would be most unlikely to have made half that figure at this time.

In the event insufficient financial backing was attracted and within a few years the whole project had foundered. More modest proposals were put forward in 1876/7 but these met with the same fate.<sup>3</sup> The last hopes of any large harbour scheme seem to have disappeared in the 1880s with the failure of proposals to use convict labour to build a refuge harbour.<sup>4</sup> Like so many communities along the Yorkshire coast, the only facilities which have ever been provided at Filey have been those designed for inshore activities. By the early twentieth century this had become the predominant occupation at all the smaller stations.

Though Bridlington Quay, Scarborough and Whitby are usually thought of as fishery harbours this was patently not the reason for their development up to almost the middle of the nineteenth century. Their construction to that time was due largely to finance derived from the passing toll. When left to raise

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1. H.C.R.O., DDHU 3/16, 1864.

2. H.C.R.O., DDHU 3/16, 1844.

3. H.C.R.O., DDHU 3/23, 1877/8.

4. S.C. on Employment of Convicts in the United Kingdom, 1882 XXXIV, Report, 12-13.



revenue from their own commercial activities they found it difficult to undertake capital projects on anything like the same scale as was formerly the case.

The fishing industry was to outstrip the harbour authorities' willingness or ability to expand facilities. Though greater provision was made for the trade between the 1860s and 1890s at all three, this was in general modest when compared with the outlay on fishing facilities at Hull and Grimsby.<sup>1</sup> The only real advantage that the Yorkshire ports possessed over those on the River Humber was that of closer proximity to many traditional nineteenth century grounds. This became relatively less important towards the end of the century as attention was drawn increasingly to grounds much further afield and steam reduced sailing times. Given the problems afflicting all branches of the fishing industry after 1880, it is perhaps not surprising that the harbour problem was a significant factor in the decline of the Yorkshire coast fishing industry.

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1. At Hull, for example, the fishing fleet had gained the use of a considerable portion of the newly constructed Albert Dock in 1869. In 1883 it moved into St Andrews Dock which was for its exclusive use. At Grimsby, the Railway and Dock Company had always been careful to promote the fishing industry's interests. See, for example, E. Gillett and K.A. MacMahon, A History of Hull (Oxford 1980) 308-314.

CONCLUSION

It is evident that over the period covered by this thesis the English, indeed British, fishing industry, taken as a whole, underwent a process of expansion and transition commensurate with the transformation of the national economy from an agrarian to an industrial base. In its case, however, the decades of most rapid growth were those following 1850.

As the story of the Yorkshire coast illustrates, the catalyst of rapid change for many sectors of the fish trade was not so much the construction of the railway system as the adoption, by the various company managements after mid century, of through traffic arrangements and rates sympathetic to the transportation of such unique and perishable commodities. Though there was an immediate transfer to the railways of many inland consignments of fish following the establishment of the first through rail links, and a swift decline in the old export orientated dry curing activities, it is notable that the really marked expansion in landings and overland traffic was a feature of the decades following 1850 along the Yorkshire coast. Indeed, it was during the twenty or so years following mid century that fresh fish first became a national article of cheap mass consumption in most areas away from the coast.

There had, of course, been a perceptible expansion along the Yorkshire coast in the decade or so preceding the construction of connections with the emerging national rail network but this was based partly on a revival of the local summer herring fishery and improved seaborne connections with centres of population following the arrival of steam packets on coastal shipping routes. Such developments were quite limited compared with what was to come.

In the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the distortions of supply and demand caused by wars make the overall position less clear but it seems likely that there was marginal expansion nationally though little real growth was sustained along the Yorkshire coast. The fishing stations which really benefitted appear to have been those with relatively good access to London. Thus the fisheries only played a minor role in provisioning the rising populations of industrial areas and the constraints of the existing systems of



transportation were . the principal reason. . Fresh fish needed fast transport and this was expensive. The only fish that could be conveyed cheaply was that which had been heavily cured and could be thus transported by slow cart or boat. This found little favour, partly because of the conservative nature of the English palate but largely because of the extreme variability of contemporary curing standards.

Yet despite fresh fish being deemed a luxury on many inland markets, by virtue of transportation costs, the range and nature of the markets supplied with quality fish by the Yorkshire coast communities in the later eighteenth centuries was considerable. Wealthy customers as far away as Lancashire were supplied with fish that had been transported by horse pannier through day and night to ensure it arrived in a relatively attractive condition. Other areas of the coast also seem to have adopted means of moving fresh fish swiftly to the quality end of the inland market as well.

The marked expansion of activity which was such a feature of the decades following 1850 was at first experienced by most of the fishing communities along the Yorkshire coast, but from the sixties onwards expansion was increasingly concentrated on Scarborough which alone seems to have possessed the essential blend of enterprise, capital, port facilities and location to foster the development of a successful smack based trawling industry. During its rise to overwhelming prominence it abandoned the traditional patterns of capital ownership which were a feature of the Yorkshire coast and adopted systems more compatible with those of the new industrial Britain. Many other communities which could not or would not adopt this mode of taking fish languished. Whitby, like its more prosperous southern neighbour, did manage to continue expanding its importance during the decades 1850 to 1880 as a seasonal base for the visiting herring fleets. Though its inshore fishing industry had at first expanded considerably during these years, attempts to establish a major first class fishing fleet at the port met with little success.

Much of the expansion undertaken during the thirty years after mid century was achieved with less than adequate harbour facilities. Though improvements

were undertaken at both Scarborough and Whitby they were still relatively modest thanks to a lack of finance. Indeed, an ambitious plan to build a new harbour for the fishing industry foundered through lack of financial backing. The poor condition of Whitby harbour by the eighties was to a large degree responsible for the scale of its decline as a herring landing port whilst the onset of steam fishing at Scarborough exposed the inadequacy of its port facilities as a base for a large fleet of such craft. This shortcoming, together with a number of costly mistakes made by its vessel owners in the first years of steam fishing, helped bring to an end a vigorous period of unparalleled growth. The final twenty or so years covered by this thesis saw Scarborough reduced to the level of a relatively minor trawling port whilst the deep water centres of Aberdeen, Hull and Grimsby continued to expand.

The difficulties experienced by the Yorkshire coast after 1880 were compounded by overfishing, which was a particularly severe problem on grounds frequented by the inshore fishermen, and by the collapse in herring prices after 1883. The latter was accompanied and partly caused, locally at least, by increased competition from Scottish craft which came south in ever increasing numbers during that decade. The local industry seemed unable to respond effectively and their interest in the herring fishery fell considerably. Indeed, over that decade and almost down to the Great War there was a long term decline in all branches of the Yorkshire coast industry.

Rapid expansion before 1880 was not limited to Britain. It appears to have affected most of the nations bordering the North Sea and brought in its wake a host of problems which forced a somewhat reluctant British government to increase its interest in the fisheries after the 1870s in particular. Over the entire period covered by this thesis we witness a considerable tidal range of state involvement in the industry. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the State openly contrived, by means of bounties and other incentives, to encourage the growth of the British fishing industry. . Yet at the same time it felt obliged through the Salt Laws and Licensing System to impose some restrictions on the individuals carrying out this trade in order to protect its



revenue. From the 1820s onwards restrictions and incentives alike were rapidly dismantled as the free market philosophy gained ever more influential adherents in government and economic circles. So far as the fisheries were concerned the statutory zenith of laissez faire arrived with the passage of the 1868 Sea Fisheries Act and its commitment to unrestricted activity. This merely legalised a situation that had existed on the Yorkshire coast since the Board of British Fisheries had relinquished control over the district in 1850.

From the eighties onwards the tide of State involvement was most definitely rolling in again. This reversal of trends was caused by two factors in particular. Firstly, there was the already stated need to secure better codes of conduct amongst all nationalities of fishermen in the increasingly congested North Sea. From that decade onwards the foundations of future international cooperation in that field were laid down. Secondly, the State was increasingly drawn into the industry's activities by a growing belief amongst influential interests that overfishing was a real and increasing problem. A basis for collection of statistics on fish landed was formulated which was to be gradually refined and improved. Additionally, machinery for overseeing and regulating inshore fisheries was set up whilst the basis for future international scientific discourse and cooperation was also created. Perhaps the greatest shortcoming of the State at this time was its failure to push through far reaching measures of a conservationist nature.

The lack of any really comprehensive conservationist policies by Britain which could have embraced the major fishing grounds outside the traditional territorial waters sowed the seeds which grew into many of the fishing industry's major problems in the later twentieth century. For although the trawling interest had clamoured in the later 1880s, and for a few years after, for greater regulation of the North Sea grounds, it lost enthusiasm for the cause when it was no longer dependent on its traditional sources, thanks to the opening up by steam trawlers of the waters off first Iceland and then other northerly nations. Obviously, an interest in working close to the shores of foreign countries was not altogether compatible with supporting a policy of extending

British control over areas of the North Sea. The long term drawbacks of such a stance are now revealed for fishing ports such as Hull and Grimsby as the northerly countries have extended their territorial waters and gradually excluded the British at a time when the latter have been unable to adopt a wholly similar course thanks to the advent of the Common Fisheries Policy.

Such problems were still well in the future at the end of the period covered by this thesis though the North Sea grounds were becoming progressively less important to the operators of steam trawlers. Indeed, much of the vigour had departed from many of the Yorkshire coast fishing communities that relied solely on its waters for their yield. Though harbour ports of Bridlington Quay, Scarborough and Whitby were important regional fishing centres and pockets of traditional activity still existed at almost all of the smaller stations there is little evidence of the resilience which was such a marked feature of the decades prior to 1880. Indeed, the resurgence of the harbour ports in the middle of the twentieth century was still very much in the future at the time this thesis closes.



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- II Biography of Henry Wyrill
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- IV Comparative Fishing Vessel Data
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APPENDIX I: Biography of James Sellers

Prior to the 1850s, most individual enterprises contained within the fishing industry were small in scale. Each concern specialised in either catching or shore based activity, but rarely in both. The owner was usually as skilled in all its processes as any employee. Even the more complex ownership structure of some of the larger decked vessels contained within it at least one practical fisherman. After this date, at Scarborough in particular, there was a steady expansion in the scale of some firms' operations, involving a fair degree of vertical and horizontal integration. This seems to have been a reflection of the continued growth of activity, which by this time was being further stimulated by the larger and wider marketing opportunities made available by the railways.

One of the most important entrepreneurs involved in these developments was James Sellers. Though born at Malton about 1822, he was no newcomer to the fishing industry. He and his father before him had followed the occupation of fish carrier to that place before the opening of the railways.<sup>1</sup> After 1845, the carrying trade by road was lost to this new method of transportation. However, he was able to exploit the new opportunities it created to establish commercial connections in many areas of the country and become a very successful fish merchant and salesman. He earned his living mainly by selling the fish landed by Scarborough and Filey vessels.

The problem of raising the initial capital to acquire his first vessels were overcome in a number of ways. His early acquisitions were second hand and consequently cheaper to purchase than if they had been new. Secondly, by utilising the existing methods of purchase and ownership, he was able to avoid having to find all the required capital himself or immediately. The first vessel he took an interest in was the 'Happy Return'. She was a smack which had been built at Brixham in 1829 and was formerly registered at Dartmouth. Her acquisition followed the traditional pattern of ownership of many of the larger fishing vessels of the Yorkshire coast. Sellers undertook the purchase in company with Robert Craven, mariner, and Jefferson Winthorp Ward, shipowner,

both of Scarborough.<sup>2</sup> By the end of 1857, however, he had been able to buy both of them out and was the sole owner.<sup>3</sup> He did not wait until he owned this smack outright to extend his interest in the catching sector. Indeed, in 1853 he bought on mortgage, a smack called the 'Lion', which had been built in Rye in 1849, and had formerly operated from Ramsgate. The Lion was probably one of several vessels previously owned by John Shapley of Ramsgate and sold off by his widow Fanny about this time. Sellers was able to discharge his mortgage with Fanny Shapley by the end of 1857.<sup>4</sup> In 1856 he again extended his interest in the catching sector, whilst minimising his initial outlay. This time, he took a share in a new Scarborough built yawl, in company with four Filey fishermen.<sup>5</sup> Unlike the previous two acquisitions, the Ebenezer was not a trawling vessel, but engaged in line fishing and drifting operations.

By the end of 1859, some indication of the scale and success of his enterprises can be gauged by the fact that in the previous two years he had been able to purchase outright a new smack and a yawl. Indeed, the fact that another yawl built for him in the above mentioned year was lost within a few months did not prevent him buying a replacement.<sup>6</sup> By the end of the 1850s he had, at a conservative estimate, an interest in the catching sector amounting to about £1800.

During the sixties he continued to expand the catching side of the business by continuing to acquire both trawling smacks and net and line vessels. By 1869 he owned, either partly or wholly, a fleet of 18 vessels.<sup>7</sup> These were based on Scarborough and Filey and consisted of seven which carried out drifting and lining operations according to the season, five trawlers, and six which could both trawl and drift. At a conservative estimate, the value of this fleet must have been in the region of about £8000.

At the same time, his activities in other directions continued to expand. He extended his operations to Whitby: by 1864 - and probably earlier - he was one of the principal fish merchants operating there during the herring season.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, he continued to play a major role in the summer and autumn fishery there throughout the seventies. In the same year he also was becoming involved in the importation of fish. He engaged four smacks that May to ship in Norwegian



mackerel to this country.<sup>9</sup> These fish were packed in ice to retain their freshness and the first consignment was unloaded in Sunderland Dock.<sup>10</sup> By the early seventies he was already engaged in the importation of ice in conjunction with a fellow smackowner, Henry Wyrill. This was shipped in by schooner from Scandinavia to Scarborough.<sup>11</sup> Both merchants built up this trade to such an extent that they utilised three warehouses<sup>12</sup> and supplied the surrounding country districts as well as the fish trade requirements.

His business activities probably reached their zenith about 1881. By that time he owned - wholly or in part - 16 trawlers of from 36 to 72 tons valued at about £5000.<sup>13</sup> He played a leading part in the development of the fleet system at Scarborough, and when that port sent out its own fleet for the first time in 1880 nearly half of the 41 vessels were owned wholly or partly by him.<sup>14</sup> He was responsible for the construction of a purpose built steam trawler but was much more cautious about converted paddle tugs.<sup>15</sup> As some of the early steam fishing enterprises were financially unsuccessful at Scarborough this may have helped him to avoid the severe financial difficulties that afflicted some of his colleagues in the mid 1880s.

After about 1882, his operations began to contract somewhat - in line with the general trend at Scarborough. His operations at Whitby ceased in 1882<sup>16</sup> and by 1883 he was sending only ten vessels fleet on the Dogger Bank grounds.<sup>17</sup> However, he was able to survive the mid 1880s fishing trade depression but died in early 1887.<sup>18</sup>

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18. Ibid., 12th May 1887.



APPENDIX II: Biography of Henry Wyrill

Like Sellers, Wyrill was one of the most important entrepreneurs connected with the Yorkshire coast fishing industry of this time. Unlike him, however, he commenced his working life as a seaman and then became a practical fisherman. His first vessel was a ten year old yawl, purchased jointly with John Skelton, gentleman, of Scarborough in 1845.<sup>1</sup> Six years later he purchased a second hand Yarmouth built lugger, which was skippered by Thomas Appleby, who also held a quarter share in it.<sup>2</sup> He diversified his catching effort by moving into trawling in 1854. He bought the smack 'Fox' built at Bridport 33 years previously.<sup>3</sup> His next addition was in 1858, when he became the joint owner of a newly built two masted lugger.<sup>4</sup> By the end of the fifties, he held an interest in four vessels. In the next decade, he consolidated his position, owning by 1869 shares in seven vessels, three of which were trawlers.<sup>5</sup>

It was about 1863 when Wyrill began to develop the scale of his shore based activities and he soon became one of the most influential fish salesmen at the port. Several of his ventures were undertaken in conjunction with Sellers; including the development of the Norwegian ice trade in the 1870s.<sup>6</sup>

Like Sellers, his activities appear to have reached their zenith around 1881. In that year he became part owner of a steam trawler; the converted paddle tug Tuskar. Unlike Sellers, he did not stay solvent during the mid 1880s and in 1885 was declared bankrupt in June 1885.<sup>7</sup> The bankruptcy was annulled on 4th August, and all property was vested in several persons, probably mainly near relations.<sup>8</sup>

References

1. Scarborough Register of Shipping July 1845.
2. Ibid., January 1851.
3. Ibid., July 1858.
4. Scarborough Register of Fishing Vessels 1869.
5. Scarborough Gazette 1st January 1886.
6. Scarborough Gazette 11th June 1885
7. Scarborough Register of Shipping 8/7/1853.

APPENDIX III: Reconstructing Details of the Yorkshire Coast Fishing Fleet  
from the Custom House Shipping Registers

Although separate registration of fishing vessels was introduced in 1869, and proves a valuable guide to the size of fleets working from bases in each Custom Port area, the information contained in the registers is of a relatively limited nature. It is possible to glean much more data from the Shipping Registers compiled at each Customs House around the coast from the 1780s.

Custom House Shipping Registers were introduced principally as a means of making the Navigation Laws more effective by providing the State with information about craft owned and operated from each port. The system proved of such value that it not only outlived the repeal of the Navigation Laws, but was actually reformed and refined on several occasions during the nineteenth century. Indeed, it is still in use today (1984). The information contained within each registry proved useful in at least three different ways. Firstly, registration of this type provided a means of identification. Secondly, it provided the owner or owners with an instrument of title. Lastly, registration of this type provided the State with a means of gauging quite accurately the strength of its mercantile marine.

Basically, all first class vessels were required to be registered under the first Act of 1786 (26 Geo III cap 60). A first class vessel was defined as one over 15 tons burthen. Amongst the information provided on each craft were details of ownership, including the number of individuals with a share, together with their profession and place of abode. They were split up into subscribing and non-subscribing owners. Basically, the difference being that the non-subscribing owners had not taken part in the registration procedures at the Custom House because they either lived a long distance from the place, or were ostensibly too ill to attend. Other invaluable information included the name of the ship's master, together with details of its mode of construction, rig, number of masts and its dimensions. The time and place of construction and often the builder's name was also provided. If the craft had previously been registered at another port, then this information was also laid down. Finally,



at the Yorkshire Custom Houses, details of the vessel's fate were usually recorded, together with appropriate dates.

Registration commenced at most ports in September 1786 but it was to take more than a year for all craft then in existence to be accounted for. The original system was reformed with the passage in 1824 of 4 Geo IV cap 41. The principal change brought in by this Act was the division of the ownership of a vessel into 64 shares. The proportion owned by each individual had subsequently to be recorded. A further Act of 1826 (6 Geo IV cap 110) made re-registration under the 1824 legislation compulsory but in practice, most craft based in the Yorkshire Customs Port area had already undertaken this step.

The next major reform took place in 1836 (5 & 6 William IV cap 56) under which a new system of measurement and assessing tonnage was introduced. Henceforward, new craft were expected to be measured by the new rules but existing craft could retain the old measurement if their owners found that they had a lower and more financially advantageous tonnage figure under that method. The system was further modified in 1855 (17 & 18 Victoria cap 89). This basically introduced a more sophisticated registry and took greater cognisance of steamship details.

In addition to the original registers, details of subsequent ownership transactions are also given. These are entered sometimes at first on the original registration sheet but usually in the back of the registry or in a special transactions registry. Thus all details of changes affecting a ship whilst it remained registered within a Customs Port area were expected to be recorded. Once it was re-registered in another Customs Port area, however, further information regarding the craft ceased to be recorded in the original registry. The 1855 Act though, also gave craft an official number which could help trace their movements from port to port.

Thus all craft, apart from those in the Royal Navy, regardless of usage and over the prescribed tonnage are recorded. Northway, in his study of the Devon fishing industry, devised a quite accurate method of picking fishing vessels out from others in the registers. He was not really able to identify a fishing vessel by its rig, etc., as the trawling smacks on that county's coasts

differed little from craft involved in commercial trading. Instead he was able to locate fishing craft by first identifying the local fishing family names which remained associated with the industry for considerable periods of time.

When dealing with the Yorkshire coast registers, the task has been somewhat easier for several reasons. In the early years of registration many Customs officials helpfully called the craft they were describing in their entries, fishing vessels. Secondly, prior to the 1840s, most first class fishing vessels employed along the Yorkshire coast were of a rig and construction unique to themselves. For example, all were lugger rigged and possessed two, or more often three, masts requiring a large crew. If they were turned over to coastal trading in later life then they were converted into one masted sloops which could be worked by a smaller crew. Furthermore, the fishermen owning a share in these craft were usually identified as such when their occupation was noted, rather than as master mariners which seems to have been the custom in some other districts.

The introduction of fishing smacks after 1840 provides little extra problem either, for there were very few small craft of quite the same design along the Yorkshire coast. In any case, at first at least one of their owners was nearly always a fisherman and his occupation recorded. Again the local Customs officials have been helpful for when the fishing vessel registers were opened in 1869, the registration number assigned to them has been entered also in the vessel register if the craft was then still in existence.

Once a fishing vessel has been identified, it is possible not only to glean details of its ownership and construction at the time of its first registry but also to work out the length of its life whilst based in the Customs Port area. Its existence can be traced through various transactions until its registration was closed by virtue of either re-registration elsewhere, being broken up for scrap, or being wrecked. Every fishing vessel, once identified, can be dealt with in a similar fashion and when all such data is collated, details of fleet size can be built up. Occasionally, however, details of when a craft's registration was closed are missing and in such cases, it has been



assumed that the craft remained registered for five years after its last mention.

In addition, as we have noted in Chapter Fourteen, it has been possible to go somewhat further than Northway and build up a systematic analysis of new registrations with regard to such aspects as ownership structures and place of construction. During a vessel's life on the register, it could be subject to little or no change in its ownership details. Alternatively, its registration record might contain details of several changes. In many cases these alterations are far from easy to quantify. This might result from a lack of clarity, because the clerks found it difficult to fit all the details accurately into the limited space available in the registration document or transactions register, or because some changes were of a limited or temporary nature. Therefore, the details which can be most accurately analysed are those given at first registry. First registry, in this case, is defined as the first time a craft has been registered at the Custom House because it is newly built or, if second hand, has been transferred in from elsewhere. However, it also includes craft whose original registry was closed because they transferred to another Customs Port area but returned at a later date. In other words, all ownership and construction details analysed refer to fishing craft transferring into a Customs Port area and being registered there but do not include subsequent changes which may have occurred.

All of these first registrations have been split up into five year periods commencing 1825-9 followed by 1830-4 and so on up to 1889. For each of these periods, it has been possible, as can be noted in Chapter Fourteen, to build up a clear picture of the ownership structure of fishing vessels joining the fleets of Whitby and Scarborough Custom Houses.<sup>1</sup>

A similar analysis of the pre-1825 registry runs into difficulties because of the absence of share proportions which show the fraction of a craft owned by

1. The procedure, apart from building up a picture of the fleet's size, was not carried out for craft registered at Bridlington Quay Custom House as registrations were few and far between and there were never more than a handful of craft based there at any one time during the period under question.

each individual with an interest. To arrive at an estimate of the original ownership structure, therefore, it has been necessary to assume that each vessel was divided equally between the number of owners recorded. If there were two owners, for example, then it has been assumed that each possessed a 50% share. If there were four then each has been assumed to possess 25%. In this way, it has been possible to build up data for the opening years of 1787-8 for the whole fleet. Again, when all were registered in 1824/5, another analysis of the whole fleet was possible, this time with actual rather than estimated information on share data.

The whole system appears to be a relatively accurate way of locating fishing vessels and their details if we compare the picture we have built up with other surviving data. One of the few other possible guides to the size of the Yorkshire coast fishing fleet in the late eighteenth century comes from the licenses which were periodically issued to fishing craft exempting their crews from impressment. The data for 1790 shown in Figure IV during which impressment protection was issued to vessels along the Yorkshire coast again shows a relatively close relationship with the statistics produced by my analysis.

After 1869 it is possible to compare my estimates of the size of the fleets based at each Customs Port area with the data provided from the separate registration of fishing vessels. As can be seen from Appendix IV, the figures are extremely close for these periods. Indeed the discrepancies probably result from the fact that on occasions the Custom Houses were not informed of a vessel's loss or scrapping until a few years after the event. Under my analysis of the shipping registers, I have been able to remove such craft from my figures in the year these changes occurred whereas Customs officials will have included them in their returns until officially notified.

The relevant Customs Port areas which have been studied are, respectively, Whitby, Scarborough, Bridlington and partly Hull. The latter will be dealt with below, but the Whitby Registry covers boats not only from the main port but also those stationed at other communities under its jurisdiction, namely Staithes, Robin Hoods and Runswick Bays. Similarly, Scarborough's includes



craft working out of Filey whilst Bridlington's also covers those owned at Flamborough. Above Staithes the coast was part of the Stockton Customs Port area but none of the communities along the Yorkshire section contained such craft during the period under review.

One problem which had to be overcome concerned the Bridlington Custom House Register. This Custom House was suppressed in 1847 and became part of the Hull area. Henceforward, all entries and transactions were made in the Hull Custom House vessel registers. Therefore, it has been necessary to utilise these also when building up the picture of the craft based at Flamborough and the Quay.

An observer of modern fishing fleets may criticise the registry system of analysis by pointing out that not all craft based at a particular port are registered there. This is obvious even from the most casual glance round a harbour such as Whitby where we can recognise on the hulls of locally owned and based craft, the registration marks of various port areas. In short, today, it is less easy to relate registration to base of operations. Even in the early nineteenth century, it appears that a number of merchant ships owned by Whitby men were registered at London. However, this was due to the fact that London was the main base from which they operated. Such a practice was less common with the fishing industry. Whilst craft were merely seasonal visitors no change of registration appears to have been made. However, during the period under review, once a permanent move had been decided on the vessels appear to have been swiftly re-registered. Indeed, we can note many craft such as the Alpha which had its registry transferred to Bridlington from Scarborough when it moved to the former's Quay in 1879 and then had it changed back again on its removal to Scarborough in 1884. Further, there was also a monetary incentive behind registry for local craft appear to have paid less dues than those based elsewhere at the three harbour ports so it was worthwhile registering a craft locally when it was acquired as soon as possible.

One set of data which has not been produced from the Yorkshire coast registers is that regarding the tonnage of the fishing fleet. Whilst it may be

possible to extract this information from some of the other surviving port registers, the entries of tonnages at these Custom Houses are somewhat confusing and difficult to make clear, particularly after the new measurement system was allowed to run alongside the old in 1836. Indeed, the fact that the criteria for defining a vessel's tonnage altered at that time will tend to distort somewhat the picture of long term changes in tonnage registered at a port. To compensate, however, I have been able to assess the hull length of craft newly registered at the port and this indicates clearly that vessels were increasing in size considerably over the period under review.



APPENDIX IV:Comparative Fishing Vessel Data

	Analysis of Shipping Registers		Annual Statements of Trade and Navigation			
	Whitby	Scarborough	Whitby tons	Scarborough tons		
1868	23	112				
1869	22	110				
1870	22	109				
1871	22	110	20	723	113	4300
1872	21	111	20	723	109	4230
1873	21	112	19	692	112	4380
1874	21	115	19	692	115	4450
1875	19	120	17	619	115	4670
1876	19	128	17	619	123	5192
1877	18	129	17	598	124	5441
1878	18	138	19	645	134	6091
1879	19	124				
1880						

	Analysis of Shipping Registers			P.R.O.ADM 7/38 Protection for Fishing Vessels		
	Whitby	Scarborough	Bridlington	Whitby	Scarborough	Bridlington
1784				32	9	8
1788	19	11	4			
1789	20	13	5			
1790	20	12	5	23	7*	4

\* This figure excludes Filey Vessels.

APPENDIX V: Bridlington Register of Shipping Extracts

Date of Registration	Name of Vessel	When & Where Built	Fate
1824	Mary	Scarborough 1802	Broken up by February 1843
1824	Prospect	Scarborough 1802	Broken up by 30 Sept. 1826
1825	Good Intent	Scarborough 1807	Converted to Schooner probably for coastal trading 1835
1834	Hope	Scarborough 1825	Sold to merchants from Hilderthorpe and probably ceased fishing in 1844
1834	Mayflower	Hartlepool 1830	Lost 21 March 1846
1835	Isabella	Scarborough 1815	Rig altered probably for coastal trading and re-registered at Scarborough 1839
1837	Dove	Whitby 1834	Re-registered Lynn May 2845;
1838	Rover	Scarborough 1838	Re-registered Scarborough 1846
1838	Produce	Scarborough 1838	Re-registered Scarborough 1849
1838	Andrew Marvel	Scarborough 1838	Re-registered Hull 1853
1839	Luck's All		
1841	Endeavour	Scarborough 1841	Re-registered Boston December 1842
1842	George	Whitby 1835	Re-registered Lynn May 1845
1846	Labourer's Increase	Whitby 1830	Lost Hornsea about September 1860

All further entries are Bridlington Quay and Flamborough owned craft entered in Hull Register after Bridlington Custom House was suppressed.

1849	Scarborough	Scarborough 1818	Wrecked October 1851
1851	Endeavour	Scarborough 1841	Re-registered Boston December 1852
1854	Perseverance	Southtown Yarmouth 1828	Lost Barmston Beach 1861
1856	George & Mary	Ipswich 1817	Lost October 1859
1857	Endeavour	Scarborough	Registry closed July 1882
1858	Sisters	Hull 1858	Re-registered Scarborough 1864
1858	Jane & Ann	Hull 1858	Re-registered Scarborough 1864
1858	Diligent	Scarborough 1858	Re-registered? 1864
1860	Northumberland	Sunderland 1857	Still registered 1893
1875	Betsy	Hastings 1886	Converted to hulk by end of 1886
1887	Charity	Scarborough 1867	Lost, registered with Bridlington owner 1912
1877	Monarch	Scarborough 1870	Re-registered Scarborough 1870
1877	William & Mary	Scarborough 1867	Re-registered Scarborough 1891
1877	Charles Wesley	Scarborough 1877	Lost January 1895



APPENDIX VI: Scarborough Register of Shipping Extracts

Date of Registration	Name of Vessel	When & Where Built	Fate
14 Sept 1786	Happy Return	Scarborough 1777	Lost in 1806
14 Sept 1786	Providence	Scarborough 1773	Re-registered Whitby 1802
14 Sept 1786	Endeavour	Scarborough 1784	Re-registered Bridlington 1787
15 Sept 1786	Christopher and William	Scarborough 1772	Re-registered elsewhere 1794
15 Sept 1786	Endeavour	Scarborough 1773	Re-registered probably as coasting trade vessel Whitby 1801
15 Sept 1786	Endeavour	Scarborough 1773	Lost 1790
15 Feb 1787	John & Elizabeth	Scarborough 1769	Rebuilt 1788
15 Feb 1787	Herring	Scarborough 1787	Broken up 1804
19 Feb 1787	Robert & Mary	Scarborough 1787	Altered to a schooner presumably for coastal trading 1820
25 June 1787	Good Intent	Scarborough 1765	Re-registered probably as coasting trade vessel Whitby 1797
19 July 1788	Ark	Scarborough 1788	Re-registered Morton 1801
12 July 1788	Providence	Scarborough 1788	? after 1821
1 Jan 1789	John & Mary	Scarborough 1761	Broken up 1792
4 June 1789	Friends	Scarborough 1789	Re-registered Whitby, August 1800
18 Feb 1791	Endeavour	Scarborough 1791	Rig altered to sloop probably for coastal trading 1808
27 July 1792	Endeavour	Scarborough 1792	Transferred to new register 1825
8 Feb 1793	Elizabeth	Scarborough 1793	Converted to brigantine in 1824 probably for coastal trading
14 June 1793	Thomas & Ann	Scarborough 1793	Re-registered? 1813
8 Feb 1798	Elizabeth's Success	Prize taken from French 1797	Re-registered Kirkwall 1804
11 Sept 1801	Zephyr	Scarborough 1801	Transferred to new register 1825
10 Sept 1802	Prospect	Scarborough 1802	Re-registered Bridlington 1805
4 Feb 1803	George & Mary	Scarborough 1788	?
25 Feb 1803	Providence	Scarborough 1803	Vessel lost May 1822
12 Sept 1803	Herring	Scarborough 1803	Re-registered April 1820
23 Jan 1804	Good Intent	Scarborough 1783	Lost?
21 Feb 1804	Happy Return	Scarborough 1804	Vessel broken up about July 1823
12 Jan 1807	Robert & Mary	Scarborough 1807	Rig altered to sloop probably for coastal trading 1809
7 Jan 1807	Friends	Scarborough 1789	Re-registered? 1825
11 Sept 1807	Joseph & Hannah	Whitby 1793	Re-registered Whitby 1814
15 Feb 1812	Two Friends	Scarborough 1812	Altered to sloop 1823, probably for coastal trading
12 Sept 1814	Mary	Scarborough 1814	Lost after 1822
12 Sept 1814	Thomas	Scarborough 1814	Lost 1815
21 Jan 1815	Willing Mind	Scarborough 1815	Wrecked Filey Bay April 1822
4 Jan 1815	Isabella	Scarborough 1815	Re-registered Whitby 1818
18 Feb 1815	Dunns	Scarborough 1815	Transferred to new register 1824
23 Aug 1815	Hope	Scarborough 1815	Re-registered? 1825
30 Aug 1817	Diligence	Scarborough 1817	Transferred to new register 1825
20 Jan 1818	Mars	Scarborough 1818	Transferred to new register 1825
21 Feb 1818	Ranger	Scarborough 1818	Re-registered? 1825
21 Feb 1818	Union	Scarborough 1818	Transferred to new register 1825
26 March 1818	Scarborough	Scarborough 1818	Transferred to new register 1825



## Scarborough Register of Shipping Extracts (continued)

Date of Registration	Name of Vessel	When and Where Built	Fate
26 Sept 1818	Chace	Scarborough 1818	Transferred to new register 1825
21 Sept 1818	Joseph & Hannah	Whitby 1793	Transferred to new register 1825
15 Sept 1819	Isabella	Scarborough 1819	Transferred to new register 1825
14 April 1820	Herring	Scarborough 1820	Transferred to new register 1825
20 Sept 1822	Zephyr	Scarborough 1821	Transferred to new register 1825
19 April 1825	Perseverance	Scarborough 1815	Lost between Scarborough & Whitby 1828
1 Sept 1825	Union	Scarborough 1818	Wrecked off Filey April 1830
5 Sept 1825	Chace	Scarborough 1818	Re-registered Whitby March 1849
8 Sept 1825	Mars	Scarborough 1818	Re-registered Newcastle June 1845
6 Sept 1825	Isabella	Scarborough 1819	Wrecked Cayton Sands 25 Sept 1851
8 Sept 1825	Mars	Scarborough 1818	Re-registered Newcastle 24 June 1845
16 Sept 1825	Zephyr	Scarborough 1801	Re-registered Whitby 1850
12 Sept 1825	Herring	Scarborough 1820	Re-registered Whitby 1849
9 Sept 1825	Diligence	Scarborough 1817	Re-registered Newcastle 1825
16 Sept 1825	Joseph & Hannah	Whitby 1797	Broken up 1830
19 Sept 1825	Scarborough	Scarborough 1818	Re-registered Hull 1849
31 Dec 1825	Endeavour	Scarborough 1792	Re-registered Hull 1857
31 Dec 1825	Providence	Scarborough 1822	Re-registered Lynn 28 Feb 1848
28 Feb 1828	Isabella	Scarborough 1815	Re-registered Bridlington 1835
18 Sept 1830	Flora	Scarborough 1830	Uncertain after 1855
20 July 1833	Integrity	Scarborough 1833	
19 March 1834	Two Friends	Scarborough 1834	Wrecked at Castle Foot after breaking adrift in Scarborough Harbour 1847
22 March 1834	Providence	Scarborough 1834	Wrecked 1843
17 April 1834	Better Luck Still	Scarborough 1834	Uncertain after 1835
29 April 1834	New Prospect	Scarborough 1834	Uncertain after 1841
21 May 1834	Aquila	Scarborough 1834	Re-registered Hull 1841
3 June 1834	Elizabeth		Unknown
3 June 1834	Reliance	Scarborough 1834	Re-registered Boston 1846
19 July 1834	Integrity		Re-registered Aberdeen 1846
24 July 1834	Providence	Scarborough 1834	Re-registered Whitby 1846
15 July 1834	Francis & Mary	Scarborough 1834	Re-registered Whitby 1842
23 May 1835	Lucks All	Scarborough 1835	Re-registered Bridlington 1839
18 July 1835	Water Witch	Scarborough 1835	Re-registered Lynn 1843
26 July 1835	Morning Star	Scarborough 1835	Re-registered Cley, 1852
21 July 1835	Perseverance	Scarborough 1835	Lost in R.Humber 1849
9 Oct 1835	Happy Return	Scarborough 1835	Sold to Scotland after 1848
22 March 1836	Happy Return	Scarborough 1836	Re-registered Yarmouth 1849
7 May 1836	Reaper	Scarborough 1836	Wrecked 1845
21 June 1836	Diaden	Scarborough 1836	Wrecked 1841
19 July 1836	John & Elizabeth	Scarborough 1836	Wrecked 1851
12 Sept 1836	Mary Ann	Yarmouth 1806	Re-registered Stockton 1847
21 July 1837	Emulous	Scarborough 1837	Sunk entering Scarborough Harbour in a gale off land 1844
20 March 1838	Ebenezer	Scarborough 1838	Re-registered Yarmouth June 1862
4 June 1838	Fidelity	Scarborough 1838	Re-registered West Hartlepool 7 Feb 1861
14 July 1838	Via Maria	Scarborough 1838	Lost 12 January 1848
20 July 1838	Integrity	Scarborough 1838	Re-registered Cley 1 May 1844
20 July 1838	Integrity		Re-registered Yarmouth 21 Sept 1843
26 July 1838	Three Brothers	Scarborough 1838	Re-registered Lowestoft 21 June 1862
26 July 1838	Jerome	Scarborough 1838	Wrecked attempting to enter harbour 24 February 1862
6 March 1839	Lucks All	Scarborough 1838	Re-registered Hartlepool 26 June 1857



## Scarborough Register of Shipping Extracts (continued)

Date of Registration	Name of Vessel	When & Where Built	Fate
16 May 1839	Rising Sun	Scarborough 1839	Lost with all hands in gale 2 Nov. 1861
12 Sept 1839	Forager	Grimsby 1834	Re-registered Ramsgate 1842
7 Feb 1840	Happy Return	Scarborough 1840	Foundered at sea 18 Oct 1854
18 March 1840	Two Friends	Scarborough 1840	Re-registered Gt Yarmouth 21 March 1867
2 April 1840	Willing Mind	Scarborough 1840	Re-registered Whitby 2 Nov 1875
21 May 1840	Faith	Scarborough 1840	Wrecked Thornwick Rocks Dec 1858
30 May 1840	Charity	Scarborough 1840	Wrecked Scarborough 1860
15 July 1840	Pearl	Scarborough 1840	Wrecked on Yarmouth Beach 12 Nov 1852
16 July 1840	Three Brothers	Scarborough 1840	Foundered at sea 18 Oct 1854
16 July 1840	Hope	Scarborough 1840	Wrecked Port Mulgrave 1875
23 July 1840	Robert and Mary	Scarborough 1840	Used as a coal warehouse by 1886
26 July 1840	Sarah	Scarborough 1840	Re-registered Hull 1842
28 May 1841	Undaunted	Scarborough 1841	Re-registered Lynn 26 June 1860
26 June 1841	Paragon	Scarborough 1841	Wrecked on Redcar rocks 9 Oct 1884
12 July 1841	Friends	Scarborough 1841	Re-registered Sunderland 18 May 1866
13 July 1841	Thomas & William	Scarborough 1841	Uncertain after 1877
4 Oct 1841	Two Brothers	Scarborough 1841	Re-registered Wells 29 March 1866
6 Jan 1843	Three Brothers	Scarborough 1843	Unknown after 1845
23 Aug 1843	Vigiland	Scarborough 1831	Unknown after 1861
12 Feb 1844	Diamond	Scarborough 1844	Broken up 6 November 1
27 Jan 1845	John Wesley	Scarborough 1845	
22 Aug 1845	Ino	Scarborough 1845	Lost Filey Bay 28 May 1860
28 Jan 1846	Rover	Scarborough 1838	Broken up Scarborough 1873
19 April 1847	Sea Drift	Whitby 1842	Lost off Staithes 28 Dec 1886
15 Sept 1848	York	Scarborough 1848	Re-registered Hull 1871
13 Sept 1848	Charles Wesley	Whitby 1848	Wrecked Filey 28 May 1860
17 May 1849	Produce	Scarborough 1838	Re-registered Hartlepool 6 Aug 1858
12 July 1849	Concord	Scarborough 1849	Wrecked nr Filey 28 May 1860
15 April 1850	Robert Caston	Scarborough 1850	Lost Filey 28 May 1860
14 May 1850	Eliza	Plymouth 1847	Re-registered Lowestoft 10 Oct 1863
9 July 1850	Blanche	?	Foundered 19 November 1868
24 July 1850	Providence	Brixham 1811	Lost in or about April 1869
2 Oct 1850	Zephyr	? 1801	Re-registered Whitby 1850
31 Jan 1851	Prince Albert	Yarmouth 1840	Lost off Scarborough 23 Nov 1867
6 March 1851	Rover	Cowes 1793	Wrecked Boston Deeps 25 Sept 1853
9 Aug 1851	Gipsy Queen	Redbridge 1848	Re-registered Great Yarmouth 25 Aug 1865
16 Dec 1851	Briton	Rye 1841	Re-registered Gainsborough 29 Oct 1857
20 Feb 1852	True Abstainer	Sandwich 1847	Re-registered Sunderland after 1855
22 May 1852	Fox	Torquay 1813	Re-registered Hartlepool 7 Aug 1856
15 Sept 1852	Speedwell	Yarmouth 1809	Re-registered Lynn
15 Oct 1852	Happy Return	Brixham 1829	Wrecked South of Scarborough Spa 4 Jan 1857
1 Feb 1853	True Blue	Rye 1840	Foundered at sea 1 July 1856
13 Sept 1853	Lion	Rye 1849	Wrecked near Bridlington 5 Sept 1861
14 Sept 1853	Sir George Seymour	Plymouth 1851	Re-registered Hull 1856
11 Oct 1853	Seagull	Ramsgate 1847	Re-registered Grimsby Oct 1857
11 Oct 1853	Ranger	Hull 1844	Lost at Sea
17 Oct 1853	Rainbow	Sandwich 1847	Re-registered Yarmouth
28 Feb 1854	Undaunted	Lynn	Re-registered Lynn 3 July 1860
25 March 1854	Maria	Brixham 1829	Re-registered Hartlepool
20 July 1854	Emma	Scarborough 1854	Sunk Rattray Head 22 Sept 1890
12 Dec 1854	Telegraph	Sandwich 1854	Re-registered Hull 15 Oct 1858
16 March 1855	Agenoria	Brixham 1825	Re-registered Yarmouth
19 Sept 1855	Welcome	Rye 1845	Re-registered Hull 1858



## Scarborough Register of Shipping Extracts (continued)

Date of Registration	Name of Vessel	When & Where Built	Fate
20 Nov 1855	British Rover	Findsbury Kent 1816	Lost Dunbar Bay 26 Oct 1859
14 July 1856	Olive Branch	Scarborough 1856	Broken up 24 November 1904
27 Aug 1856	Reindeer	Brixham 1846	Broken up 1879
30 Sept 1856	Ebenezer	Scarborough 1856	Re-registered Hull 1879
2 Oct 1856	William and John	Scarborough 1856	Broken up 1901
16 Jan 1857	Integrity	Scarborough 1857	Re-registered Hull 3 Feb 1879
11 March 1857	Spirit of the Age		Lost all hands 8 April 1865
13 April 1857	Jackall	Rye 1857	Broken up 5 Nov 1900
17 June 1857	Storm	Brixham 1840	Re-registered London 30 June 1864
20 June 1857	Magnet	Whitby 1857	Broken up Middlesborough 1893
24 June 1857	Gleaner	Scarborough	Broken up at Yarmouth Sept 1890
10 July 1857	Brothers	Scarborough	Re-registered Hull 13 Feb 1879
16 July 1857	Welcome Home	Whitby 1857	Re-registered Hull 27 Dec 1878
23 July 1857	William Smith	Scarborough 1857	Re-registered Wick 5 Sept 1878
24 July 1857	Richard Thomas	Scarborough 1857	Broken up Scarborough 1892
31 July 1857	Zillah & Rachael	Scarborough 1857	Lost at Filey 1860
15 Sept 1857	Hope	Whitby 1857	Lost under Speeton Cliff 28 May 1860 vessel riding by both her anchors driven out of Filey Bay by the hurricane blowing
23 Sept 1857	Amelia	Scarborough 1857	Re-registered Lowestoft 13 Sept 1904
3 Feb 1858	William Clowes	Scarborough 1858	Re-registered Hull 3 Jan 1879
15 March 1858	Decision	Whitby 1858	Broken up 1901
8 April 1858	Lioness	Scarborough 1858	Wrecked Whitby 1895
8 April 1858	Faith	Scarborough 1858	Stranded at Stornaway a total wreck 4 March 1907
19 May 1858	Blue Jacket	Scarborough 1858	Re-registered Hull 3 Jan 1881
14 June 1858	Tiberius	Scarborough 1858	Re-registered Kings Lynn 27 April 1900
18 June 1858	Abstainer	Whitby 1858	Lost at sea 1865
18 June 1858	Thomas & Ann	Scarborough 1858	Re-registered Rye 13 May 1902
8 July 1858	Morning Star	Great Yarmouth 1858	Broken up 19 March 1888
8 July 1858	Shimmer of the Sea	Great Yarmouth 1858	Broken up 12 Jan 1887
8 July 1858	Mary Anns	Scarborough 1858	Stranded three mile south of Scarborough 9 Dec 1874
8 July 1858	Norfolk Lass	Scarborough 1858	Lost all hands off Flamborough Head 21 Dec 1862
14 July 1858	Refuge	Scarborough 1858	Unknown
16 July 1858	Sarah	Scarborough 1858	Re-registered Hull 23 Dec 1879
17 Aug 1858	Meloria	Scarborough 1858	Broken up Scarborough 3 Dec 1890
21 Sept 1858	Prosperity	Scarborough 1858	Loss off Scarborough 18 Oct 1869
9 Oct 1858	Prosperous	Scarborough 1858	Broken up by 1914
2 Feb 1859	Native	Walberswick? 1850	Lost 9 Nov 1859
8 Feb 1859	Fiducia	Scarborough 1859	Sold to Norway 1905
21 March 1859	Yorkshire Lass	Hull 1858	Sold to Norway 1891
22 June 1859	Trio	Scarborough 1859	Lost about 14 May 1845
2 July 1859	Denison	Rye 1859	Lost in cyclone near Saltdun 4 Aug 1904
30 July 1859	Admiral Hope	Scarborough 1859	Broken up 1880
8 Oct 1859	Sarah	Scarborough 1840	Broken up Newport Pembrokeshire 30 April 1890
29 June 1860	Good Samaritan	Scarborough 1860	Re-registered Whitby 15 Sept 1899
7 July 1860	Temprance Star	Great Yarmouth 1860	Wrecked in Embleton Bay 24 June 1902
7 July 1860	Wanderer	Great Yarmouth 1860	Foundered in North Sea 1882
10 July 1860	Brothers	Whitby 1841	Foundered off Harker Rocks 23 June 1899
14 July 1860	Rachel & Ann	Scarborough 1860	Sold as store ship 29 Mar 1912
27 July 1860	Hope	Portland 1853	Re-registered Wells probably same year
18 Aug 1860	Amity	Hull 1860	Re-registered Hull 31 Dec 1880
1 Sept 1860	Zillah & Rachael	Scarborough 1860	Broken up nr North Summercoats 1903



## Scarborough Register of Shipping Extracts (continued)

Date of Registration	Name of Vessel	When & Where Built	Fate
10 Sept 1860	Five Brothers	Scarborough 1860	Stranded Scalby Ness 15 Dec 1898
22 Sept 1860	Edith	Sunderland 1857	Unseaworth 1891
28 Sept 1860	Diligence	Scarborough 1860	Re-registered Hull 18 Dec 1879
29 Sept 1860	Wear	Sunderland 1857	Re-registered Leith 4 Oct 1893
13 Oct 1860	Fox	Bridport 1821	Stranded Redcar 29 Jan 1870
12 Jan 1861	Daring	Worthing 1859	Re-registered Great Yarmouth 10 March 1865
2 Feb 1861	Hope	Scarborough 1861	Lost off Flamborough Head 14 Oct 1874
13 Feb 1861	Dauntless	Worthing 1857	Broken up Scarborough Harbour 31 Dec 1869
18 March 1861	Capernaum	Scarborough 1860	Lost 26 May 1894
2 April 1861	Indiana	Whitby 1861	Broken up 9 Dec 1908
4 April 1861	Providence		Lost 1863
3 June 1861	Vivid	Yarmouth 1861	Wrecked Scarborough Sands 19 Mar 1888
28 June 1861	Concord	Scarborough 1861	Broken up 1902
6 July 1861	Rambler	Hull 1861	Loss off Scarborough 28 Dec 1869
13 Aug 1861	Good Intent	Scarborough 1861	Broken up 1913
19 Aug 1861	Galilee	Scarborough 1861	Unknown
28 Aug 1861	Perseverance	Scarborough 1861	Wrecked on Redcar Rocks 17 Nov 1865
7 Oct 1861	Mary & Ellen	Scarborough 1861	Broken up 2 Nov 1916
20 Jan 1862	Diligent	Scarborough 1859	Broken up 1902
1 Mar 1862	Hope		Re-registered North Shields 1875
10 Mar 1862	Mary Ann	Scarborough 1862	Wrecked Donna Nook 2 Dec 1893
7 April 1862	Charles & Sarah	Hull 1862	Lost with all hands 21 Nov 1862
3 June 1862	Charity	Scarborough 1862	Lost Caistor Sands 21 Jan 1872
6 June 1862	Peasor	Scarborough 1862	Stranded Scarborough 28 Mar 1862
7 June 1862	Garibalch	Scarborough 1862	Lost off fishing grounds 5 Nov 1878
9 June 1862	Temperance Pledge	Scarborough 1862	Broken up at Yarmouth 13 March 1900
17 June 1862	Queen of England	Scarborough 1862	Lost North Sea 12 Dec 1883
22 July 1862	Contrast	Hull 1862	Sold to Dakar (French West Africa) 11 Sept 1899
12 Aug 1862	Sir George Seymour	Plymouth	Re-registered Grimsby or Hull 12 Jan 1867
29 Sept 1862	Admiral Mitford	Scarborough 1862	Broken up 1917
16 Sept 1862	Alarm	Rye 1842	Re-registered Great Yarmouth 20 Dec 1904
11 Feb 1863	Fox	Yarmouth 1842	Re-registered Great Yarmouth 30 March 1865
8 Aug 1864	Speedy	Eyemouth 1863	Lost near R Coquet 22 April 1868
10 Feb 1864	?	Hastings 1827	Re-registered Grimsby 27 Oct 1864
29 April 1864	Sisters	Hull 1858	Foundered after collision March 1875
30 April 1864	Spray	Scarborough 1864	Re-registered Hull December 1879
12 May 1864	Jane & Ann	Hull 1858	Re-registered Hull 1879
29 June 1864	Zipporah	Whitby 1841	Re-registered Leith 28 March 1873
3 Oct 1864	Two Sisters	Brixham 1857	Re-registered Yarmouth 20 Feb 1899
17 Oct 1864	Sally & Hannah	Whitby 1841	Converted to coal warehouse 5 Feb 1887
26 July 1865	Scarborough King	Whitby	Foundered all hands 12 Nov 1879
25 July 1865	General Lee	Scarborough 1865	Foundered all hands 28 Oct 1880
29 July 1865	Unexpected	Scarborough	Re-registered Lowestoft 30 Dec 1901
14 Aug 1865	Idas	Blackwall Middx 1820	Sold abroad 12 July 1869
29 Aug 1865	K.L.	Scarborough 1865	Run down off Scarborough 28 Mar 1867
13 Dec 1865	Victor	Scarborough 1865	Lost all hands 30 Jan 1877
5 April 1866	Canton	Deptford 1823	Foundered of May Island 5 Feb 1869
27 June 1866	Eliza	Scarborough 1866	Re-registered Hull Dec 1879
9 July 1866	Eye of Providence	Whitby 1866	Broken up 1912
9 July 1866	Thomas & Margaret	Whitby 1856	Lost 2 March 1881



## Scarborough Register of Shipping Extracts (continued)

Date of Registration	Name of Vessel	When & Where Built	Fate
16 July 1866	George Peabody	Scarborough 1866	Re-registered Hull 1879
17 July 1866	Maid of the Mill	Scarborough 1866	Registry cancelled 5 Feb 1887
19 July 1866	Tranquility	Scarborough 1866	Broken up 1915.
5 Aug 1866	Intrepid	Scarborough 1866	Lost in North Sea 12 March 1883
2 Feb 1876	Thomas & May	Scarborough 1867	Loss off Grimsby 13 Oct 1900
7 Feb 1867	June & Elizabeth	Scarborough 1867	Re-registered Hull Dec. 1879
15 Feb 1867	Rezonic	Scarborough 1867	Re-registered Whitby 1900
21 March 1867	Fox	Hull 1844	Sold abroad 1872
23 April 1867	Ruby	Brixham 1854	Foundered 14 Oct 1881
21 May 1867	Young Alfred	Whitby 1867	Run down and sunk 12 Dec 1881
23 May 1867	Commodore	Brixham 1853	Re-registered Ramsgate 4 June 1877
24 May 1867	William and Mary	Scarborough 1867	Re-registered Hull 15 Dec 1877
29 May 1867	Felicity	Scarborough 1867	Re-registered Hull 31 Dec 1878
28 June 1867	Choice	Rye 1861	Re-registered Stornoway Sept 1900
5 July 1867	Charity	Scarborough 1867	Re-registered Hull 23 Nov 1877
11 July 1867	Elizabeth and Emma	Scarborough 1867	Wrecked nr Robin Hoods Bay 28 Oct 1880
5 Aug 1867	Gratitude	Whitby 1867	Lost North Sea 2 Dec 1872
8 Aug 1867	Alpha	Scarborough 1867	Re-registered Hull 1879
17 Aug 1867	Achilles	Brixham 1856	Wrecked Newbiggin Rocks 2 Sept 1898
20 Oct 1867	William and June	Brixham 1811	No longer seagoing 28 Dec 1897
15 Nov 1867	Fibrous	Scarborough 1867	Loss off Scarborough Feb 1868
24 Feb 1868	Star of the East	Scarborough 1868	Condemned 9 Oct 1886
11 Nov 1868	Young Alice	Scarborough 1868	Run down off Lowestoft 16 Mar 1890
19 June 1869	Mary	Scarborough 1869	Re-registered Dundee 9 June 1900
4 Aug 1869	Progress	Whitby 1869	Foundered after collision 25 Jan 1876
10 Sept 1869	Maiden Queen	Yarmouth 1858	Stranded Scarborough 6 March 1883
20 Oct 1869	John & Elizabeth	Plymouth 1846	Turned into coal hulk 6 Oct 1882
23 Feb 1870	Monarch	Scarborough 1870	Re-registered Hull 1877
3 Feb 1871	The Pollis	Scarborough 1871	Lost all hands 30 Jan 1877
11 Jan 1871	Enterprise	Scarborough 1871	Lost North Sea 13 Dec 1883
15 March 1871	Mary Jane	Scarborough 1871	Re-registered Hull 11 Feb 1881
13 Jan 1872	Elizabeth & Susannah	Scarborough 1871	Wrecked back of Scarborough Outer Pier 1 Feb 1884
6 Mar 1872	Dazzler	Rye 1862	Re-registered Yarmouth 16 Aug 1877
10 April 1872	Two Brothers	Grimsby 1836	Re-registered North Shields 11 April 1876
20 July 1872	Providence	Scarborough 1872	Broken up July 1909
1 April 1873	Maude & Florence	Scarborough 1873	Stranded Whitby Rock 22 Feb 1891
10 Nov 1873	Evelyn & Maude	Scarborough 1873	Missing 16 Nov 1893
30 Dec 1873	Violet	Scarborough 1873	Broken up 14 June 1899
23 April 1874	Clara Ellen	Scarborough 1874	Stranded Whitchells Banffshire 20 March 1914
14 July 1874	Uncle Tom	Brixham 1860	Broken up Jan 1899
8 Sept 1874	Annie	Rye 1861	Re-registered Yarmouth 1887
9 Oct 1874	Foxhound	Scarborough 1874	Lost 13 January 1881
19 Oct 1874	Choice	Rye 1861	Re-registered Stornoway 1900
16 Jan 1875	Prize	Sandwich 1866	Re-registered as Sunflower in North Shields July 1887
27 Jan 1875	Olive Branch	Whitby 1858	Broken up Scarborough 1901
1 Mar 1875	Ruby	Whitby 1863	Re-registered Whitby 8 Nov 1912
15 April 1875	Zipporah	Whitby 1841	Wrecked Runswick 30 Aug 1881
25 June 1875	Gauntlet	Hull 1863	Wrecked nr Filey 28 Oct 1881
15 Oct 1875	Thomas Stratton	Rye 1871	Re-registered Grimsby 6 July 1877
19 Oct 1875	Ruby	Brixham 1854	Foundered 14 Oct 1881
23 Oct 1875	James Clay	Brixham 1865	Wrecked Port Nockle 24 June 1895
22 Mar 1876	Two Sisters	Brixham 1857	Re-registered Yarmouth 20 Feb 1899
26 June 1876	Bonny Craft	Rye 1860	Re-registered Whitby 5 April 1884



## Scarborough Register of Shipping Extracts (continued)

Date of Registration	Name of Vessel	When & Where Built	Fate
1 Setp 1876	Brittannia	Scarborough 1876	Sold to Norway 11 May 1907
7 Sept 1876	Confidence	Rye 1861	Sold to Norway 2 Feb 1891
13 Sept 1876	Lady's Page	Grimsby 1869	Broken up Filey 1890
24 Oct 1876	Express	Lowestoft 1876	Foundered in North Sea 22 Feb 1884
18 Nov 1876	Ada	Grimsby 1876	Re-registered Grimsby 1st Sept 1881
27 Nov 1876	James and Ellen	Sandwich 1876	Stranded Cayton Bay 31 Oct 2899
5 Dec 1876	Cornelia	Scarborough 1876	Lost 6 March 1883
9 Jan 1877	Arethusa	Grimsby 1876	Re-registered Hull 15 Nov 1883
16 Jan 1877	Ocean	Middlesborough 1877	Run down 4 March 1877
5 Feb 1877	Spy	Whitby 1877	Re-registered Leith 18 April 1899
5 Feb 1877	Acacia	Scarborough 1877	Sold to Denmark 1 Sept 1904
5 June 1877	Edith	Grimsby 1877	Lost North Sea about 6 Mar 1883
12 June 1877	Charles Wesley	Scarborough 1877	Re-registered Hull 15 Dec 1877
24 July 1877	Elizabeth & Frances	Scarborough 1877	Re-registered Hull 16 Jan 1879
7 Aug 1877	Toilers of the Ses	Grimsby 1877	Lost at Heligoland 11 Jan 1899
11 Oct 1877	Three Friends	St Ives 1877	Sold to Norway 1 May 1894
23 Oct 1877	Crown	Scarborough 1877	Run down and sunk 29 Dec 1893
21 Nov 1877	Masterpiece	Scarborough 1877	Re-registered Irvine 5 Aug 1902
12 Dec 1877	Good Design	Sandwich 1877	Re-registered Whitby 1897
12 Dec 1877	Beaconsfield	Peterhead 1877	Transferred to Gloucester? 4 Nov 1902
18 Jan 1878	Rhoda	Brixham 1858	Broken up Feb 1890
23 Jan 1878	Fiery Cross	Hull 1868	Re-registered 14 July 1890
29 Jan 1878	Admiral	Burton Stather 1869	Broken up 27 March 1885
21 Feb 1878	Northern Belle	Middlesborough 1878	Run down February 1891
22 Mar 1878	Lily	Scarborough 1878	Re-registered Grimsby 4 Jan 1902
25 April 1878	Sir Frances Crossley	Rye 1873	Sold to Denmark 15 April 1905
26 April 1878	Nymph	Brixham 1858	Sold to Norway 10 Dec 1890
25 Sept 1878	Alexandra	Hull 1866	Foundered about July 1885
28 Sept 1878	Vigilant	Scarborough 1878	Broken up before 2 Oct 1913
3 Oct 1878	Unity	Hull 1865	Condemned sold to foreigners 5 Jan 1898
26 Nov 1878	Smilox	Galampton, Devon 1865	Broken up 28 May 1888
26 Nov 1878	Escort	Rye 1865	Broken up 18 May 1888
30 Dec 1878	Nil Desperandum	Sandwich 1878	Lost 1894
30 Dec 1878	Emma Walker	Goole 1872	Wrecked Sunderland 9 Nov 1900
25 Feb 1879	Wellesley	Grimsby 1871	Re-registered Kings Lynn 18 June 1898



APPENDIX VII: Whitby Register of Shipping Extracts

Date of Registration	Name of Vessel	When & Where Built	Fate
19 March 1787	Speedwell	Scarborough 1769	
8 May 1787	Two Friends	Scarborough 1787	Converted to sloop for coastal trading 1796 and lost in 1801
17 May 1787	John and Mary	Scarborough 1769	Re-registered Scarborough
18 May 1787	Friendship	Scarborough 1770	Rebuilt in 1795
28 May 1787	John	Scarborough 1784	Lost in 1804
2 June 1787	Three Brothers	Scarborough 1774	
Aug 1787	Two Brothers	Staithes 1773	Lost about 27 May 1811
18 Aug 1787	Trial	Whitby 1784	Lost sometime after 1799
18 Aug 1787	Sally	Whitby 1787	Re-registered Aldborough Jan 1810
18 Aug 1787	Brotherly Love	Staithes 1770	Broken up about October 1803
18 Aug 1787	Thomas & James	Staithes 1777	
18 Aug 1787	Good Intent	Staithes 1766	Re-registered Hull 18 Aug 1810
18 Aug 1787	Blessing	Staithes 1775	Vessel lost in 1793
18 Aug 1787	Four Brothers	Hartlepool 1773	Lost?
18 Aug 1787	Three Brothers	Staithes 1772	Re-registered Bridlington 4 Feb 1796
20 Aug 1787	Friends Glory	Staithes 1777	Converted to sloop probably for coastal trading 1810
3 March 1788	Brothers	Whitby 1788	1811
10 April 1788	Friends	Scarborough 1788	Converted to sloop probably for coastal trading 1796 and lost after 1805
2 June 1788	Thomas & Jane	Staithes 1777	Converted to sloop probably for coastal trading 1800 and captured by enemy
25 July 1788	John and Mary	Whitby 1788	Lost after 1796
3 Sept 1788	Delight	Whitby 1788	Lost?
29 Aug 1789	Speedwell	Whitby 1789	No longer fishing after 1819
7 March 1791	Brothers	Whitby 1791	Lost?
5 Feb 1793	Good Intent	Hartlepool 1767	Converted to sloop probably for coastal trading 1802 and lost in 1809
4 March 1793	Good Intent	Whitby 1793	
10 April 1795	Friendship	Scarborough 1795	Re-registered Newcastle 1825
21 June 1799	Mary & Ann	Scarborough 1795	Transferred to new register 1824
8 Aug 1800	Friends	Scarborough 1789	Re-registered Scarborough 1807
9 March 1801	Venus	Prize taken 1800	Re-registered Scarborough 1805
7 May 1801	Friends Adventure	Portrack nr Stockton 1801	Re-registered Scarborough 1816
4 March 1802	Betsy	Whitby 1802	Transferred to new register 1825
4 March 1802	Providence	Scarborough 1773	
6 March 1802	Happy Return	Whitby 1802	Lost with all on board after 1813
9 March 1802	Eleanor & Ann	Whitby 1802	Re-registered? 1825
29 March 1802	Brotherly Love	Scarborough 1802	Re-registered Scarborough 1809
11 Sept 1802	Trial	Whitby 1802	Transferred to new register 1824
4 Sept 1802	Nelly	Scarborough 1802	Transferred to new register 1824
27 Jan 1803	Elizabeth and Sally	Whitby 1803	Lost?
22 Aug 1814	Joseph and Hannah	Whitby 1797	Re-registered Scarborough 1825
25 Feb 1815	Friends	Scarborough 1789	Altered probably for coastal trading 1825
16 March 1815	Richard and Sarah	Whitby 1815	Lost April 1815
12 Aug 1816	Mary and Ann	Scarborough 1816	Transferred to new register 1825
8 Aug 1817	Two Brothers	Scarborough 1817	Transferred to new register 1825
18 Feb 1818	Isabella	Scarborough 1815	Transferred to new register 1826
10 April 1818	Four Brothers	Scarborough 1818	Transferred to new register 1825
7 Aug 1818	Hannah and Margaret	Scarborough 1818	Transferred to new register 1825
9 Sept 1818	Mulgrave	Whitby 1818	Transferred to new register 1825



## Whitby Register of Shipping Extracts (continued)

Date of Registration	Name of Vessel	When & Where Built	Fate
16 March 1819	New Speedwell	Scarborough 1819	Transferred to new register 1824
20 March 1819	Countess of Mulgrave	Whitby 1819	Converted to a sloop, presumably for coastal trading same year and lost with all hands
15 Sept 1819	John and Mary	Scarborough 1819	Transferred to new register 1825
23 March 1820	Agenoria	Scarborough 1820	Transferred to new register 1825
29 Aug 1820	Sally & Susamah	Scarborough 1820	Transferred to new register 1825
20 Aug 1820	Elizabeth	Whitby 1821	Altered presumably for coastal trading 1824
20 March 1824	Nelly	Scarborough 1802	Re-registered Newcastle 4 April 1839
24 March 1824	Brothers	Whitby 1811	Re-registered Sunderland 27 March 1837
21 March 1824	Three Brothers	Scarborough 1805	Re-registered Newcastle 27 Aug 1829
4 May 1824	Friends Adventure	Scarborough 1805	Re-registered Newcastle 5 July 1836
5 May 1824	Ann	Whitby 1803	Lost sometime after 16 April 1836
6 Sept 1824	New Speedwell	Scarborough 1819	Broken up Robin Hoods Bay 27 Nov 1848
17 Sept 1824	Nancy	Scarborough 1814	Lost 1840
18 Sept 1824	Mary & Ann	Scarborough 1799	Lost by 1835
21 Sept 1824	Trial	Whitby 1802	Re-registered Newcastle 21 Aug 1829
22 Sept 1824	Brothers	Scarborough 1805	Vessel foundered 1857
5 March 1825	Four Brothers	Scarborough 1818	Re-registered Sunderland 24 July 1831
5 March 1825	Hannah and Margaret	Scarborough 1818	Lost on rocks off Whitby Harbour 1 Feb 1855
5 March 1825	Mulgrave	Whitby 1818	Re-registered Berwick 4 Aug 1841
7 March 1825	John & Mary	Scarborough 1819	Re-registered Hartlepool 4 Feb 1853
8 March 1825	Agenoria	Scarborough 1820	Re-registered Berwick 11 Aug 1841
12 March 1825	Mary & Ann	Scarborough 1816	Loss off Staithes in 1860s
12 March 1825	Prudence & Hannah	Scarborough 1803	Re-registered Sunderland 1 June 1841
9 April 1825	Duke of York	Kent 1794	Re-registered Boston 5 June 1867
11 June 1825	Diana	Scarborough 1816	Lost - date unknown
11 June 1825	Two Brothers	Scarborough 1817	Lost August 1851
11 June 1825	Sally & Hannah	Scarborough 1820	Re-registered Hartlepool 29 Nov 1845
11 June 1825	Betsy	Whitby 1802	Lost 1851
13 June 1825	Jane	Scarborough 1806	Lost - date unknown
12 Sept 1825	Providence	Scarborough 1803	Broken up April 1839
25 Feb 1826	Isabella	Scarborough 1815	Re-registered Scarborough 28 Feb 1828
2 Aug 1828	Mary & Ann	Scarborough 1828	Lost 1835
30 Aug 1828	Laurel	Scarborough 1828	Re-registered Newcastle 11 April 1840
24 April 1829	Friends	Scarborough 1829	Re-registered Berwick 24 Sept 1846
13 April 1830	Isaac & Isabella	Scarborough 1830	Lost in River Wear 31 July 1891
19 Sept 1831	Friends	Scarborough 1831	Broken up 1879
4 Sept 1830	Labourer's Increase	Scarborough 1830	Re-registered Bridlington 2 Mar 1846
20 Sept 1834	Dove	Whitby 1834	Re-registered Bridlington 7 June 1837
6 May 1835	Dart	Whitby 1835	Lost Runswick Bay 13 Jan 1872
12 June 1835	Friends Adventure	Whitby 1835	Re-registered Hartlepool 6 Jul 1860
12 March 1836	Thomas & Margaret	Whitby 1836	Re-registered Gt Yarmouth 5 July 1864
5 March 1838	Providence	Whitby 1838	Foundered at sea 31 July 1864
24 Oct 1838	Frances	Staithes 1838	Lost 31 March 1850
1 Aug 1839	Mary & Ann	Scarborough 1839	Lost 2 June 1859
18 Feb 1841	Brothers	Whitby 1841	Re-registered Scarborough 10 Jul 1860
18 June 1841	Good Intent	Whitby 1841	Re-registered Scarborough 18 Sept 1863
28 June 1841	Zipporah	Whitby 1841	Re-registered Scarborough 28 June 1864
22 Sept 1841	William & John	Whitby 1841	Cancelled 25 March 1863
23 Sept 1841	Sarah & Ann	Whitby 1841	Re-registered West Hartlepool 12 June 1863
23 Sept 1841	Sally and Hannah	Whitby 1841	Re-registered Scarborough 28 Sept 1864
14 March 1842	Sea Drift	Whitby 1842	Re-registered Scarborough 19 April 1857



## Whitby Register of Shipping Extracts (continued)

Date of Registration	Name of Vessel	When & Where Built	Fate
15 July 1843	Sea Flower	Whitby 1843	Wrecked Blakeney Harbour 18 May 1880
20 July 1843	Rising Sun	Whitby 1843	Re-registered West Hartlepool 1 April 1865
5 July 1845	Luck's All	Whitby 1845	Re-registered Sunderland 14 Mar 1865
25 Sept 1845	Success	Whitby 1845	Foundered 10 miles off Staithes 12 Feb 1894
11 July 1849	King William	Cowes 1798	Re-registered Exeter 3 Oct 1849
28 Sept 1849	Friends	Whitby 1849	Lost Haisbro Sand 27 Nov 1854
13 March 1851	Friends Goodwill	Brixham 1828	Lost near Sunderland 25 Sept 1854
19 April 1854	Brittania	Dartmouth 1815	Lost near Dover 16 April 1856
27 March 1854	Blossom	Brixham 1783	Re-registered Berwick 16 July 1859
25 April 1854	Elizabeth & Ann	Yarmouth 1809	Run down off Redcar with crew 6 Oct. 1855
18 July 1856	Thomas & Margaret	Whitby 1856	Re-registered Hartlepool 19 Oct 1865
20 Sept 1856	Gem of the Ocean	Whitby 1856	Wrecked off Whitby Sands 10 Dec 1876
17 Feb 1857	True Love	Whitby 1857	Re-registered Lynn 11 Dec 1871
18 Feb 1857	Challenger	Whitby 1857	Re-registered Scarborough 10 Oct 1889
27 July 1857	Two Brothers	Whitby 1857	Re-registered Great Yarmouth 23 Apr 1863
21 Sept 1857	Blue Jacket	Whitby 1857	Re-registered Rye 30 July 1890
29 Sept 1857	Fox	Torquay 1813	Re-registered Sunderland 1861
10 Feb 1858	Olive Branch	Whitby 1858	Re-registered Scarborough 26 Feb 1865
1 July 1858	Princess Royal	Whitby 1858	Wrecked near Rosedale Harbour 27 January 1895
15 July 1858	Dependant	Whitby 1858	Re-registered Kings Lynn 15 May 1903
21 July 1858	Race Horse	Whitby 1858	Lost around 24 Jan 1897 (employed as merchant vessel)
14 Feb 1859	Rose of England	Whitby 1859	Broken up 1907
22 July 1859	Venus	Whitby 1859	Re-registered Scarborough 6 Jan 1898
7 Dec 1860	Richard	Plymouth?	Lost 1862
26 June 1861	Prosperity	Whitby 1861	Employed as a lighter on R. Tees from about 1889
21 Sept 1861	William Clowes	Whitby 1861	Re-registered Scarborough 7 Nov 1889
20 Feb 1862	Sally & Hannah	Whitby 1841	Re-registered Scarborough 28 Sept 1864
29 July 1862	Refuge	Whitby 1862	Re-registered Lowestoft 6 Oct 1897
14 March 1863	Good Intent	Whitby 1863	Re-registered Scarborough 4 Jan 1898
19 Sept 1863	Ruby	Whitby 1863	Re-registered Scarborough 27 Feb 1875
11 Feb 1865	Chace	Scarborough 1818	Lost off Hornsea 29 Jan 1869
21 Feb 1867	Anns	Whitby 1867	Broken up in 1892
12 July 1867	Confidence	Whitby 1867	Wrecked off St Mary's Island, North- umberland 26 June 1898
26 July 1867	William Ash	Whitby 1867	Re-registered Scarborough 19 Oct 1906
21st July 1867	Marys	Whitby 1867	Lost on Souter Point nr Sunderland 27 April 1876
24 July 1871	Lily	Scarborough 1871	Run down off Flamborough Head 10 Oct 1897
30 Dec 1876	Arcana	St Ives 1869	Wrecked Seaham 1877
12 July 1878	Richards	Scarborough 1878	Lost around 28 Oct 1889
11 Feb 1879	True Love	St Ives 1879	Broken up 4 Oct 1909

Source: Whitby Custom House Shipping Register



APPENDIX VIII: Number and Tonnage of Ships Built at Whitby 1823-1832

	Ships	Tonnage
1823	9	1,564
1824	14	3,186
1825	21	4,193
1826	16	3,254
1827	17	3,270
1828	13	2,904
1829	13	3,419
1830	3	905
1831	10	2,018
1832	2	732

Source: S.C. on Manufactures, Commerce and Shipping 1833

APPENDIX IX: List of Steam Fishing Vessels Registered at Scarborough 1882

Name	Gross Tonnage	Registered Tonnage	Remarks
1. Dandy	126	34	
2. Tuskar	97	14	
3. Spurn	67	6	
4. May	67	10	
5. Patriot	91	18	
6. Star	79	11	
7. Pioneer	112	68	
8. Star o'Tay	101	30	
9. Flying Sprite	105	6	
10. Admiral	92	20	
11. Prince Consort	115	24	
12. Flying Sylph	116	8	
13. Knight of the Cross	169	78	
14. Kingfisher	68	36	
15. Young Squire	41	21	
16. Flying Squall	116	17	
17. Express	71	28	
18. Isle of Ely	71	14	
19. Cormorant	39	27	Yacht with fishing certificate
20. Lord Clyde	115	3	
21. Farn	(Not registered under Merchant Shipping Act)		Pleasure boat and trawler
	( Under 10 tons )		
22. Fire King	121	34	

Source: Board of Trade Report on Relations between Masters and Men, 1882 XVII.



APPENDIX X: Return of the Quantity of Fish in Tons forwarded by the North Eastern Railway Company from the under-mentioned Ports and Places in each of the years ending 31 December from 1853-1864 inclusive

	1853	1854	1855	1856	1857	1858	1859	1860	1861	1862	1863	1864
	Herring	Herring	Herring	Herring	Herring	Herring	Herring	Herring	Herring	Herring	Herring	Herring
	Other	Other	Other	Other	Other	Other	Other	Other	Other	Other	Other	Other
	Tons	Tons	Tons	Tons	Tons	Tons	Tons	Tons	Tons	Tons	Tons	Tons
Berwick	-	203	201	197	274	316	541	331	238	238	424	538
Tweedmouth	-	-	531	641	4	500	453	390	692	509	551	569
Beal	-	-	-	10	104	37	6	31	42	17	33	49
Chathill	-	995	902	247	155	279	1099	1132	1173	1189	1568	1388
Christon B	-	156	255	227	3	141	203	295	283	264	307	331
Loughoutan	-	90	64	109	98	172	284	457	543	446	614	550
Bilton	-	11	9	27	86	42	47	33	44	32	58	77
Warkworth	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	5	3	-	1	-
Ackwington	-	93	140	74	151	88	47	38	79	67	83	78
Longhirst	-	-	139	163	531	110	52	53	68	58	58	20
Tynemouth	-	285	306	121	40	107	85	181	259	105	151	31
Sunderland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hartlepool	-	-	506	-	392	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Whitby	-	-	-	-	-	-	338	1670	3502	-	-	-
Scarborough	1832	2193	2459	-	2068	-	5793	3975	6371	-	-	-
Grosmont	205	297	301	-	309	-	283	318	472	-	-	-
Hull	-	1586	2368	-	3922	-	3742	5535	5664	-	-	-
Bridlington	-	-	-	-	-	87	2	103	88	131	23	82
Morton	-	146	155	64	503	85	68	58	27	47	47	40
Filey	-	809	903	992	63	1136	1028	986	1295	1562	1282	1434
						245	253	236	245	255	296	339

Source: R.C.Sea Fisheries 1863-6, 1866

APPENDIX XI: Return of Quantity of Fish conveyed inland by Railway in the years from 1880 to 1885. From returns made to the B.O.T. by the Various Companies

Railway Co. Port	Quantity of Fish - Tons					
	1880	1881	1882	1883	1884	1885
N.E.R.						
Hull	18,301	20,144	18,929	15,922	16,942	19,576
Scarborough	9,787	9,285	9,239	7,359	9,118	10,562
Tynemouth	6,174	7,091	5,727	5,241	8,183	7,150
Whitby	3,885	3,686	3,681	2,516	3,753	2,451
Berwick	1,041	1,023	1,556	1,686	2,478	1,375
Hartlepool East and West	567	967	1,509	1,665	1,783	1,731
Newcastle	285	309	411	703	598	774
Filey	1,103	885	899	806	642	437
Sunderland	749	825	765	461	705	682
Bridlington	1,046	686	582	541	659	687
Chathill	738	750	841	809	734	514
Newbiggin by the Sea	792	726	670	711	638	646
Little Mill	374	343	424	835	858	809
Flamborough, late Morton	557	617	511	578	289	352
Loftus and Grosmont	486	564	517	571	8	-
Beal	159	130	204	259	222	221
Longhoughton	210	226	263	305	149	73
Shields South	105	161	104	108	156	148
" North	12	7	-	8	10	12
Christon Bank	233	189	205	147	150	125
Acklington and Amble	167	160	150	187	129	21
Tweedmouth	101	97	163	101	70	38
Goole	44	31	20	47	46	54
Hornsea	27	38	22	36	41	49
Middlesborough .	19	37	36	48	23	19
Bilton	28	18	16	13	15	9
Coldstream	5	9	13	11	18	22
Redcar	22	43	33	28	6	10
Patrington	17	24	23	13	11	-
Warkworth	14	21	13	20	13	14
Withernsea	20	14	21	33	11	8
Blyth	55	7	3	6	1	-
Saltburn	2	3	2	1	1	-
Stockton	2	14	-	10	8	15
Widdrington	-	-	43	12	13	16
Staithes	-	-	-	51	454	436
Alnwick	-	-	-	-	78	108
Cullercoats	-	-	-	-	-	4
Robin Hoods Bay	-	-	-	-	-	3
Totals	47,177	49,144	47,421	40,736	48,482	48,062

Source: Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables



APPENDIX XII: Return of Fish Conveyed Inland by Railway

Port	1886	1887	1888	1889	1890	1891
Hull	17,196	16,213	16,703	19,771	24,846	32,290
Scarborough	12,032	13,705	11,602	10,218	10,341	8,350
Whitby	2,499	2,359	2,916	1,623	1,950	1,453
Staites	391	416	497	392	344	513
Flamborough	267	262	272	248	237	506
Bridlington	348	384	376	294	233	197
Filey	407	301	330	191	123	187
Withernsea	10	16	46	44	29	52
Hornsea	35	-	44	86	64	59
Robin Hoods Bay	19	20	17	19	17	22
Patrington	14	12	17	13	11	25
Saltburn	1	-	9	1	1	-
Hull (H&B)	3,473	6,717	7,855	9,267	11,076	13,459
Hull (MSL)	2,146	1,836	2,218	2,641	3,052	3,100
Grimsby	68,215	65,415	67,471	64,594	66,384	69,593
	1892	1893	1894	1895	1986	1897
Hull	35,413	36,075	36,156	37,128	41,661	39,744
Scarborough	10,642	13,473	13,407	12,987	11,971	9,441
Whitby	2,176	2,206	1,800	2,107	1,365	822
Staites	632	571	737	862	752	500
Flamborough	489	595	741	677	597	465
Bridlington	281	256	304	250	260	184
Filey	153	221	378	406	259	197
Withernsea	52	69	131	60	50	24
Hornsea	75	71	92	63	48	19
Robin Hoods Bat	19	25	16	31	25	32
Patrington	25	20	27	18	17	10
Saltburn	2	2	2	2	1	1
Hull (H&B)	13,908	14,639	17,522	18,738	20,249	21,525
Hull (G&C)	3,278	3,254	3,426	2,630	2,654	2,390
Grimsby	64,117	75,527	83,001	85,430	92,638	89,006

Source: Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables

APPENDIX XIII: Summary Statement of Total Quantity and Value of Fish Landed on English & Welsh Coasts during the years 1886-1895 (Except Shell-fish)

	East Coast		South Coast		West Coast	
	Cwt	£	Cwt	£	Cwt	£
1886 all	5,321,636	3,148,088	871,041	407,170	219,736	132,821
Herring	1,799,826	416,509	109,815	30,460	63,926	22,397
1887 all	5,157,678	3,216,655	624,914	404,010	228,889	158,293
Herring	1,471,987	392,066	82,670	27,617	50,473	22,109
1888 all	5,260,350	3,188,896	685,808	429,514	481,914	329,603
Herring	1,566,338	428,891	38,668	14,468	123,976	42,471
1889 all	5,223,635	2,918,239	652,471	503,919	588,458	440,231
Herring	1,736,953	415,414	48,983	15,959	137,322	37,984
1890 all	4,719,237	3,189,924	586,501	516,569	794,892	662,059
Herring	1,297,913	424,277	40,154	15,431	84,493	36,132
1891 all	4,670,646	3,445,639	595,705	489,016	699,725	556,363
Herring	979,816	424,338	87,637	28,359	139,004	50,784
1892 all	5,105,814	3,546,422	599,749	498,818	780,136	583,465
Herring	1,344,275	362,162	76,540	22,016	160,075	50,702
1893 all	5,320,596	3,820,924	560,590	490,402	697,448	515,974
Herring	1,295,515	355,782	28,524	8,948	97,716	37,797
1894 All	5,737,596	3,970,889	624,791	483,881	661,576	527,890
Herring	1,338,469	386,083	25,230	6,429	91,914	39,083
1895 all	5,991,331	4,106,802	587,936	496,887	684,328	525,400
Herring	1,307,554	376,555	22,876	6,903	106,271	33,701

Source: Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables



APPENDIX XIV: Statistics of Total Quantity and Value of Fish Landed on English and Welsh Coasts during years 1886-1901 together with average price of same

Year	Quantity Cwt	Value £	Average Prices		
			Per lb	Per Cwt	Per Ton
1886	6,412,433	3,688,079	1.23	11/6	11/10/-
1887	6,029,481	3,778,958	1.34	12/6½	12/10/10
1888	6,348,072	3,948,013	1.33	12/5¼	12/8/9
1889	6,464,564	3,862,389	1.28	11/11½	11/19/2
1890	6,100,630	4,368,552	1.53	14/3¼	14/6/3
1891	5,966,076	4,491,018	1.61	15/0¼	15/1/3
1892	6,485,699	4,628,705	1.53	14/3¼	14/5/5
1893	6,578,634	4,827,300	1.57	14/8	14/13/4
1894	7,023,963	4,981,960	1.52	14/2¼	14/13/9
1895	7,263,595	5,129,089	1.51	14/1½	14/2/6
1896	7,550,678	5,166,780	1.47	13/8¼	13/13/9
1897	7,946,108	5,568,978	1.50	14/0¼	14/-/5
1898	8,088,123	5,761,605	1.53	14/3	14/5-
1899	8,604,807	6,342,022	1.58	14/9	14/15/-
1900	8,600,061	6,610,268	1.65	15/4½	15/7/6
1901	8,647,805	6,523,523	1.62	15/1	15/1/8

Source: Sea Fisheries Statistical Tables

APPENDIX XV: Return of the Quantity and Description of Fish seized and condemned  
As Unfit for Food in the City or Port of London 1831-1833

Description of Fish	No. seized 1831	No. seized 1832	No. seized 1833
Salmon	3,310	8,150	664
Turbot	590	207	676
Cod	1,015	690	1,963
Soles	7,500	24,600	38,390
Herrings	2,030	3,000	1,448
Haddocks	635	6,700	6,783
Mackerel	32,050	92,410	4,027
Plaice, Maids Skate	61,245	19,950	124,160
Salt Fish	215	292	1,861
Whitings	870	400	1,500
Brill	650	180	413
Lobsters	27,340	6,025	8,653
Crabs	756	980	300
<b>Total</b>	<b>138,206</b>	<b>163,584</b>	<b>190,748</b>

	1831 Bushels	1832 Bushels	1833 Bushels
Periwinkles and Welks	88	523	437
Mussels	10	15	15
Oysters	35	50	None
Sprats	1,050	1,200	80
Shrimps	5	17	None
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,186</b>	<b>1,205</b>	<b>532</b>

	<b>Kits</b>
Salmon (pickled)	126
Total number of fish seized and condemned	492,538
Bushels of sprats and small shellfish	3,525
Kits of pickled salmon	126

John Goldham Yeoman of the Waterside, and Clerk of Billingsgate Market



APPENDIX XVI: Whitby Harbour - Revenue 1862-1918

	Revenue from fish landings			Total Harbour Revenue				Revenue from Fish landings			Total Harbour Revenue		
	£	s	d	£	s	d		£	s	d	£	s	d
1862	85	12	3				1893	208	16	5	653	3	10
1863	84	8	0	1,219	8	6½	1894	190	4	7½	556	2	11½
1864	47	1	4	1,091	8	7½	1895	219	2	0	681	18	8½
1865	74	12	11	1,090	19	3	1896	167	1	7½	711	0	3
1866	93	8	3	911	7	8	1897	123	4	7½	487	1	4½
1867	75	8	0	813	4	0½	1898	118	18	3	489	8	9
1868	98	18	7½	776	11	1½	1899	83	0	11	394	2	0
1869	88	16	3	747	7	1	1900	100	11	7	358	18	9
1870	104	17	7	732	4	8	1901	122	6	10	401	10	1
1871	132	8	8	854	7	10	1902	115	9	7	368	19	11
1872	65	15	4	657	-	3½	1903	104	10	6½	306	19	11
1873	73	18	3	687	18	10	1904	84	12	9	345	16	6
1874	116	6	11	778	2	0	1905	71	16	1½	256	0	8
1875	83	10	6	727	11	1½	1906	74	19	2	265	0	0½
1876	90	15	8	766	3	1½	1907	81	16	11½	325	3	10
1877	131	19	3	850	2	11½	1908	75	16	6½	287	11	6
1878	224	18	5	935	3	3½	1909	61	4	0	258	18	9
1879	259	1	3½	1003	9	5	1910	74	6	8	269	10	0½
1880	253	12	4	793	7	9	1911	69	17	2	469	13	1½
1881	252	10	3½	748	15	8	1912	55	15	10	443	5	11½
1882	286	8	1	923	12	0	1913	77	7	11	397	2	9½
1883	274	15	4	886	9	9	1914	71	2	11	209	9	7
1884	366	3	9				1915	70	19	2	217	8	2
1885							1916	132	13	1	346	7	0½
1886	214	0	3	775	13	3	1917	166	3	9	267	6	3
1887	230	17	2	807	9	4	1918	302	9	8½	382	13	3
1888	202	0	7½	790	0	11½							
1889	146	18	9	757	17	8½							
1890	244	14	1	747	4	1							
1891	164	11	10	621	6	1							
1892	223	8	8	707	0	1							

Source: Whitby Piers and Harbour Ledgers

APPENDIX XVII: Revenue: Scarborough Harbour 1864-1901

Year	Fish <sup>+</sup> £	Total* £
1864		825
1865		875
1866		850
1867		875
1868		875
1869		850
1870		775
1871		800
1872		700
1873		650
1874		725
1875		825
1876		925
1877		1750
1878		2525
1879		2325
1880	1350	2500
1881	1775	2975
1882	1700	3025
1883	1450	3000
1884	1350	2625
1885	1575	2800
1886	1525	3025
1887	1625	3200
1888	1575	3050
1889	1450	3075
1890	1525	3050
1891	1550	2950
1892	1350	2775
1893	1575	3050
1894	1525	2975
1895	1550	3175
1896	1525	3150
1897	1675	3125
1898	1500	3075
1899	1625	3050
1900	1300	2800
1901	1275	2775

\* Including dues on fishing boats

+ Dues on fish landed

Source: Scarborough Harbour Commissioners' Ledgers.



APPENDIX XVIII: Accounts of Knight of the Cross Steam Trawling & Fishing Co.Ltd.

## Receipts

1882	<u>Subscribed Capital</u>				2931	4	0
	<u>Sale of Fish</u>						
Feb 14	Fishing selling Statement nett receipts	"	"	"			
" 25	ditto ditto	17	11	9			
Mar 11	ditto ditto	15	6	2			
Apl 1	ditto ditto	30	9	4			
" 12	ditto ditto	9	13	11			
May 20	ditto in debt 22-3-2	"	"	"			
" 30	ditto ditto	11	3	1			
Jun 27	ditto ditto	3	4	0			
Jul 6	ditto ditto	3	12	10			
" 17	ditto in debt ditto 14-7-5	"	"	"			
Sept 11	ditto ditto	10	12	5			
" 30	ditto expenses partially deducted	24	6	1			
Oct 10	ditto ditto	16	14	10			
" 25	ditto Gross receipts	31	7	0			
" 28	ditto ditto	8	9	6			
Nov 1	ditto expenses partially deducted	14	11	11			
" 8	ditto ditto	30	12	2			
Dec 23	ditto fuss receipts	83	13	9			
1883							
Jan 24	ditto ditto	135	11	9			
" 26	ditto ditto	4	15	6	451	16	0
1882	<u>Cash on account of Fish sellings</u>						
Aug 26	Woodger	8	0	0			
Sept 2	ditto	12	0	0			
" 12	ditto	5	10	0	25	10	0
May 1882 to Feb 1883	<u>Sundry Small receipts</u>				9	15	9
1883 Feb.	<u>Damage done to company's vessel by St "Wild Rose"</u>				7	10	0
1882	<u>Coal Sold</u>						
1883	"Isle of Ely" Scarbro	1	0	0			
Feb	"Flying Sylph" ditto		9	0			
Mar	"Albatross" ditto		16	0			
Feb	F. Nugent Hartlepool	2	0	0	4	5	0
1883	<u>Stores Sold</u>						
June	Stores sold by Auction nett receipts	8	4	3			
July	T I Varey old copper	6	19	0			
Nov	I Wilson Old Trawl net	7	0	0			
	Greenwood & Greenwood Deed Box etc.	1	10	0			
	R Spencer wire rope etc	4	5	6	27	18	9
1883	Dec 30, 1883 Interest	2	10	0			
Dec	<u>Bank Interest</u> March 28, 1884 do	1	9	9	3	19	9
1882							
Nov	<u>Call on Shares</u> 64 shares call of £3 per share				192	0	0
1883							
June	<u>Sale of Company's Vessel "Knight of the Cross"</u>				800	0	0
					4451	19	3½

## APPENDIX XVIII (continued)

		<u>Expenditure</u>					
Purchase Money of Vessel					2550	0	0
<u>Outfit for Trawling</u>							
	Woodgers a/cs Rope & Net	110	0	0			
	" Wages & Sundries	46	14	1			
	" away buying vessel	9	5	9			
	" Sundries	7	16	6			
	Appleby & Brogden Engineers	86	0	0			
	Wilkinson "	2	6	4			
	Reynoldson "	2	9	6			
	Clark Chapman & Gurney New Winch	74	2	0			
	Walker Ship Carpenter	31	0	0			
	Edmond "	8	17	0			
	Ellis Ship Chandler	2	12	10	381	4	0
<u>Law Charges - Greenwood &amp; Greenwood</u>							
	Registering Company	29	4	3			
	As Soltr for Company	10	10	0	39	14	3
<u>Engineers a/cs</u>							
	Wilkinson	8	12	0			
	"	95	0	0			
	"	24	8	6	128	0	6
	Appleby & Brogden	56	14	9			
	" "	10	0		57	4	9
	T I Varey	3	1	0			
	"	3	2	0			
	"	2	2	0			
	"	20	0	0	28	5	0
<u>Ship Carpenters a/cs</u>							
	Edmond	5	10	0			
	"	27	0	0			
	"	3	7	7	35	17	7
	Frank				7	12	0
<u>Rope Merchants a/cs</u>							
	Woodger-						
	Newby	5	11	0			
	"	10	0	0			
	"	9	0	0	24	11	0
	Ellis				1	10	0
	Hick				1	2	9
<u>Coal Lister Blaumann &amp; Co.</u>							
	"	9	9	0			
	"	17	18	0			
	"	18	5	2			
	"	14	19	11	60	12	1
	Bannister & Co	19	0	8			
	"	20	17	6	39	18	2
	Rusco Castle				2	15	0
	Barnby				4	11	6
<u>Fish Salesmen's Commission</u>							
	Ellis	2	7	11			
	"		13	7			
	"	4	10	0			
	"	1	15	0			
	"	11	10	7	20	17	1
	Meadows				4	11	11
<u>Insurance. Total Loss Mutual Steamship</u>							
	Insurance Associat 2nd Call	11	8	0			
	1st call on Loss of Advance	22	16	0			
	2nd call on Loss of Advance	22	16	0			
	3rd call on Loss of Advance	15	4	0	72	4	0
Carried forward					3542	16	4



	Brought forward		3542 16 4
<u>Miscellaneous A/cs</u>	Bank Cheque Book	8 0	
	Riley Painter	10 6	
	Dennis Stationer	10 6	
	Hampson Inkeeper	2 17 0	
	Swift Ironmonger	4 9	
	Blakebough "	1 11 6	
	Burnett Plumber	5 1 0	
	Woodger Fishsalesman	15 14 6	
	" "	11 3 1	
	" "	3 12 10	
	" "	1 0 0	
	Eaman Butcher	4 13 0	
	Abbott "	1 14 6	
	Sellers & Wyrill Ice Merchants	1 17 6	
	North Eastern Railway Co	1 9 9	
	" "	13 7	
	Cape Painter	1 10 0	
	Burnett Plumber	4 10 0	
	Graham Auctioneer	6 14 4	
	Woodger Fishsalesman	2 0 0	
	Shipping Gazette	10 0 0	
	Jones Rope dealer	10 0	81 10 4
<u>Sundry Small a/cs</u>			10 9 4
<u>Ship Chandlers a/cs</u>	Ellis	10 6 2	
	"	13 0 0	23 6 2
<u>Working Expenses</u> -	Fishermen's shares Enginemen		
	Wages etc as per Secty cash book		
	26 August to 30 Sep 1882		46 2 3
	Fishermen's shares Enginemen		
	Wages etc as per Secty cash book		
	1 October 1882 to June 1883		196 3 5
<u>Secretary &amp; Directors</u> -	Secty. G.D.Smith	2 9 0	
	Secty. R. Spencer	15 10 1½	
	Expenses out of pocket Directr J Wilson	12 18 0	
	Directr H Butler	2 19 0	
	F H Shaw	3 6 0	37 2 1½
<u>Bank Charges</u>	Interest March to Dec 1882	1 18 7	
	" Jany to July 1883	8 3 0	
	Preparing bonds	2 4 2	12 5 9
<u>Woodger V Knight</u> of the Cross Co. Settlement of	claim of £83 18 9 claim	50 0 0	
	for money pd etc. Plts Soli.Charges	50 0 0	
	Dfts Soli. Charges	77 10 0	177 10 0
Yorkshire steam Trawling Award by Court		60 0 0	
& Fishing Co Ltd V Knight Plts Solic. Charges		30 0 0	
of the Cross Steam Trawling Dfts Soli. Charges		40 8 8	
& Fishing Co Ltd	"	4 19 8	
Salvage claim of £300 for	"	4 19 8	
Towing Knight of the Cross Bailfiff charges			
into Scarbro Harbour being in possession of vessel		23 5 0	164 3 1
Frederick Smith			
Frederick Hy Shaw	Balance in Bank		160 10 6
			<u>4451 19 3½</u>
Audited and found correct leaving a balance in the bank			
of 160-10/6 less the amount to be expended upon stamp fees,			
lithographing	required for final meeting and winding up.		

APPENDIX XIX: Table Showing Weight of Fish Varieties and the Value Realised by the Sailing Trawler "Angelus"  
1875-1892

Year	Plaice		Haddock		"Prime"		"Rough"		Total	
	Cwts	£	Cwts	£	Cwts	£	Cwts	£	Cwts	£
1875	585	300	727	419	80	223	26	24	1418	967
1867	531	254	781	387	53	149	21	20	1386	810
1877	434	228	589	286	146	408	18	17	1187	929
1878	250	152	394	207	106	298	33	31	783	787
1879	264	146	258	110	45	128	11	10	578	394
1880	279	153	343	138	87	242	36	34	745	568
1881	242	172	244	102	84	314	60	57	630	645
1882	308	212	488	147	104	398	70	68	970	819
1883	282	220	604	207	93	346	77	71	1056	844
1884	310	215	520	171	90	331	80	72	1000	789
1885	290	195	480	156	90	340	100	89	960	781
1886	282	209	520	206	80	280	110	91	992	787
1887	240	180	480	162	60	240	100	90	880	672
1888	200	192	400	120	35	175	60	54	695	541
1889	180	173	350	97	60	240	70	56	660	567
1890	210	184	400	125	50	233	60	58	720	601
1891	205	178	595	235	40	215	75	72	915	701
1892	164	184	479	192	27	148	50	47	720	571

Source: W Garstang The Impoverishment of the Sea.



APPENDIX XX: Table Showing Weight of Fish Varieties and the Value Realised by the Sailing Trawler "Thomas Stratton" 1875-1892

Year	Plaice		Haddock		"Prime"		"Rough"		Total	
	Cwts	£	Cwts	£	Cwts	£	Cwts	£	Cwts	£
1875	549	319	937	543	63	178	30	28	1579	1069
1876	601	318	894	471	50	133	31	32	1576	954
1877	422	224	573	310	80	232	17	16	1092	782
1878	239	141	403	188	62	182	27	26	731	538
1879	298	195	252	107	111	324	72	68	733	693
1880	249	151	228	64	79	221	46	44	602	480
1881	128	88	105	46	81	228	47	43	371	405
1882	411	283	741	277	87	250	95	89	1334	899
1883	274	234	648	320	123	345	90	85	1135	984
1884	260	155	530	180	100	360	95	93	985	789
1885	240	142	400	162	80	310	100	86	820	701
1886	220	182	500	200	65	211	90	83	875	677
1887	200	164	480	160	60	242	90	89	830	626
1888	180	172	360	108	45	225	65	59	650	565
1889	160	153	330	94	60	240	75	59	625	546
1890	200	172	450	150	50	231	70	69	770	623
1891	200	175	590	230	49	240	90	80	929	726
1892	126	134	374	140	28	160	29	27	557	460

Source: W Garstang, The Impoverishment of the Sea

APPENDIX XXI: Table Showing Weight of Fish Varieties and the Value Realised by the Sailing Trawler "Climax"  
1875-1892

Year	Plaice		Haddock		"Prime"		"Rough"		Total	
	Cwts	£	Cwts	£	Cwts	£	Cwts	£	Cwts	£
1875	506	317	1145	698	54	151	37	34	1742	1200
1876	565	361	993	513	53	150	36	34	1647	1058
1877	317	206	792	409	61	172	37	35	1207	822
1878	230	102	381	159	39	107	24	23	674	391
1879	292	156	859	327	71	199	37	33	1259	741
1880	344	219	373	177	49	137	41	39	807	573
1881	292	188	341	146	144	404	137	128	914	867
1882	420	300	870	314	100	280	92	86	1482	981
1883	347	243	675	249	131	368	68	54	1221	924
1884	320	225	620	201	130	366	70	54	1140	846
1885	290	198	510	172	110	390	80	58	990	818
1886	250	202	530	216	100	350	90	82	970	850
1887	225	168	480	160	80	320	80	75	865	723
1888	190	183	380	114	50	250	45	41	665	689
1889	190	176	350	98	70	249	60	54	670	577
1890	200	181	420	129	40	212	50	46	710	569
1891	200	174	590	233	55	252	70	64	915	723
1892	194	231	325	124	27	208	55	51	601	614

Source: W. Garstang, The Impoverishment of the Sea



APPENDIX XXII: Table Showing Weight of Fish Varieties and the Value Realised by the Sailing Trawler "Nyanza" 1875-1892

Year	Plaice		Haddock		"Prime"		"Rough"		Total	
	Cwts	£	Cwts	£	Cwts	£	Cwts	£	Cwts	£
1875	447	341	941	514	56	160	27	26	1581	1041
1876	709	339	896	512	46	131	46	43	1697	1025
1877	511	222	717	422	66	186	12	11	1306	840
1878	299	156	747	327	98	275	41	39	1185	797
1879	340	185	583	214	164	436	57	54	1144	890
1880	291	157	493	212	47	177	33	31	864	577
1881	295	155	430	202	27	102	35	33	787	492
1882	403	212	770	298	46	172	87	83	1306	764
1883	456	256	734	312	43	163	63	59	1296	790
1884	410	220	430	182	65	182	70	55	975	639
1885	300	160	520	168	80	308	75	62	975	698
1886	250	200	490	193	65	209	60	57	865	659
1887	220	168	460	152	50	195	80	73	810	588
1888	210	196	350	102	40	201	60	55	660	550
1889	180	161	340	89	65	249	70	71	655	571
1890	210	185	592	231	50	231	80	77	932	725
1891	208	183	586	228	46	235	80	76	920	722
1892	189	202	568	235	33	208	64	60	854	706

Source: W Garstang, The Impoverishment of the Sea

## APPENDIX XXIII: Flamborough Fishermen's Fun 1809

DONATIONS

	£	s	d
Thomas Thompson, Esq.	2	2	0
Mr John Thompson	1	1	0
Ralph Creyke, Esq. Collector	1	1	0
John Greame, Esq	1	1	0
The Rev Montague Heblethwayte, R.D.	1	1	0
Mr William Walmsley	1	1	0
Mr Doeg	0	5	0
Mr John Cotsworth	0	5	0
Mr Shuttleworth	0	10	0
Mr William Rawson	0	5	0
Mr George Bramwell	0	5	0
Mr Thomas Brambles	2	8	0
Mr William Major	1	4	0
Mr Richard Gray	1	4	0
Mr James Gray	1	4	0
Mr William Morris	2	8	0
Mr Samuel Matther	1	4	0

ANNUAL SUBSCRIBERS

	£	s	d
Walter Strickland, Esq	2	2	0
Mr John Dalēs	1	4	0
Mr Walter Dawson	1	4	0
Mr Samuel Vickerman	1	4	0
Mr James Spike	1	4	0
Mr Joseph Heward	1	4	0

MEMBER'S NAMES

Sept 7, 1809

1. Robert Leng
2. William Major
3. John Majör
4. Robert Major
5. Matthew Fell
6. Robert Pockley
7. Richard Pockley
8. William Woodhouse
9. Thomas Stork

Sept 7, 1810

10. Thomas Chodwick, sen.
11. Richard Duke
12. Aaron Thompson
13. John Pockley
14. John Hodson

Sept 5, 1812

15. William Leng

Sept 8, 1813

16. Benjamin Cross
17. William Chadwick

Sept 12, 1814

18. John Morris
19. Leonard Mainprise
20. Leonard Fell
21. George Stork
22. John Wharcup
23. Christopher Stork
24. William Creaser
25. John Cockcroft, sen.
26. William Stephenson
27. Samuel Woodhouse
28. Matthew Gibson
29. George Hodgson
30. John Cockcroft, jun.
31. William Duke
32. John Nicholson
33. Richard Major
34. Thomas Chodwick, jun.
35. Melchi Gibbon
36. William Cockcroft
37. Robert Robson



APPENDIX XXIV: A Return showing Rates Charged for the Conveyance of Goods  
from Leeds to Selby - distance 20 miles

	From 9/1834 to 9/1836	From 9/1836 to 1/1839	From 1/1839 Now
Fish per ton	6/8	8/4	6/8

Source: Communication by Railway S.C. 3rd Report with Minutes of Evidence  
1840 (474) Vol.XIII, Appendix 1

APPENDIX XXV: N.E.R. and M.S.L.R. Fish Rate Conference. Rates for Conveyance of Fish  
(August 1861 Revised January 1865)

From Whitby, Grosmont, Scarborough, Filey

Per Cwt Rate	Sender's Risk					Companies' Risk				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
London	1/6	1/6	2/-	2/-	2/9	1/11	1/11	2/6	3/5	3/5
Manchester	1/6	1/6	2/3	2/3	2/3	1/11	1/11	2/10	2/10	2/10
Birmingham	1/6	1/9	2/3	2/3	2/3	1/11	2/2	2/10	2/10	2/10
Bradford	1/-	1/3	2/-	2/3	2/3	1/3	1/7	2/6	2/6	2/10

From Marton, Bridlington, Patrington, Withernsea

Per Cwt Rate	Sender's Risk					Companies' Risk				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
London	1/6	1/6	2/-	2/6	2/6	1/11	1/11	2/6	3/2	3/2
Manchester	1/3	1/6	2/-	2/-	2/-	1/7	1/11	2/6	2/6	2/6
Birmingham	1/6	1/9	2/-	2/3	2/3	1/11	2/2	2/6	2/10	2/10
Bradford	0/9	0/11	1/9	2/-	2/-	0/11	1/3	2/2	2/2	2/6

From Hull and Grimsby

Per Cwt Rate	Sender's Risk					Companies' Risk				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
London	1/4	1/4	1/4	2/-	2/-	1/8	1/8	1/8	2/6	2/6
Manchester	1/2	1/4	1/6	1/6	1/9	1/6	1/8	1/11	1/11	2/2
Birmingham	1/2	1/4	1/6	2/-	2/-	1/6	1/8	1/11	2/6	2/6
Bradford	0/9	0/10	1/6	1/6	1/6	0/11	1/11	1/11	1/11	1/11

From North Shields

Per Cwt Rate	Sender's Risk					Companies' Risk				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
London	1/6	1/6	2/6	3/-	3/6	1/11	1/11	3/2	3/9	4/5
Manchester	1/3	1/9	2/-	2/9	3/3	1/7	2/2	2/6	3/5	4/5
Birmingham	1/6	1/9	2/6	3/3	3/6	1/11	2/2	3/9	4/5	4/8
Bradford	1/1	1/4	2/6	2/6	3/-	1/4	1/8	2/10	3/3	3/9

1. Thoroughly cured white herrings in brine, Whelks and periwinkles.
2. Thoroughly cured red herrings which cannot be injured by delay; Oysters, Limpets, Cockles and Mussels; Dried Ling and Cod, and all other fish, thoroughly salted or dried.
3. Herrings and Sprats in any state, including Bloaters and Kipperred herrings, except as provided for in clauses 1 and 2; Finnon Haddocks, kippered Salmon, and all other fish partially cured, smoked or dried; and crabs.
4. Salmon in ice in boxes, lobsters and shell fish, not otherwise classified.
5. Fresh fish of all descriptions not otherwise classified, including salmon in hampers and shrimps.

Empties returning over same ground returned free, station to station, at owners' risk.



## APPENDIX XXVI: Number of Fishery Apprentices Enrolled in Scarborough

1876	13
1877	8
1878	14
1879	10
1880	2
1881	2
1882	Nil

Source: Board of Trade Report on Relations between Masters and Men, 1882 **XVII**

APPENDIX XXXVII: Exports of Dried Cod from England

Year	Antigua	Berbice	Bilbao	Cape of Good Hope	Corona	Demarara	Grenada	Jamaica	Madeira	Naples	New Orleans	St Andrews	Santander	St Helena	San Sebastian	Seville	Vigo
1829	25	72	1405	40	801	3164	621	403	403	-	199	-	80	36	150	720	200



APPENDIX XXVIII: Amount of Cod, Ling or Hake cured in England and Scotland  
as recorded by the Board of British Herring Fisheries

Period	Total Qty of Cod, Ling or Hake cured			Total Qty Punched or Branded		Total Qty Exported	
	Dried	← Pickle →		Dried	Pickle	Dried	Barrels
	Cwts	Cwts	Barrels	Cwts		Cwts	
10/10/1821-5/4/1822				50,235½	4,919½	19,578	
Y/E 5/4/1823				54,573½	3,691	19,398	
Y/E 5/4/1824				63,590	5,437	23,098	
Y/E 5/4/1825				52,135	3,531	14,087	
Y/E 5/4/1826	69,136½	3,634¾	5,621	66,315¾	5,337	7,281	
Y/E 5/4/1827	95,161½	9,273	9,025	82,185¾	8,008	14,051	
Y/E 5/4/1828	82,515½	6,726½	6,142½	74,103¾	5,609½	13,208	
Y/E 5/4/1829	81,321½	5,786	6,819	73,500½	6,204	20,587	
Y/E 5/4/1830	101,914	5,652½	8,836½	92,314½	8,464	16,369	
Y/E 5/4/1831	37,674		2,950½	34,337½	2,459½	11,920	
Y/E 5/4/1832	50,293		3,779½	13,879¾	3,230	20,168	47
Y/E 5/4/1833	58,461½		6,467½	13,581½	4,393½	14,754	67
Y/E 5/4/1834	52,710½		5,522½	14,255½	3,829	16,298	24
Y/E 5/4/1835	44,152¾		3,767½	9,492½	2,235	10,632	24
Y/E 5/4/1836	38,040½		6,276	6,766	3,018	10,992	20
Y/E 5/4/1837	66,892½		7,273½	9,589½	3,206	10,195	11
Y/E 5/4/1838	84,996¾		10,303	9,259½	4,373	22,166	12
Y/E 5/4/1839	85,279¾		10,051½	23,936¼	5,093	26,701	150½
Y/E 5/4/1840	93,560¾		6,053	21,695½	3,205	29,656	24
Y/E 5/4/1841	91,494¾		9,480	21,029½	3,891	30,550	44
Y/E 5/4/1842	76,849		7,038½	13,283¾	2,164	25,293	
Y/E 5/4/1843	77,207½		6,431	10,030½	1,342	23,737	70
Y/E 5/4/1844	92,813½		5,123	20,810½	2,226½	35,476	4
Y/E 5/1/1845	83,919		1,726	17,940½	229	28,815	20
Y/E 5/1/1846	92,323		5,037	14,372½	935	29,352	
Y/E 5/1/1847	90,783¾		6,341½	12,387½	1,492	34,435	15

Source: R. H. E. Herring Fishery Commissioners' Minutes

APPENDIX XXVIII (Continued) Total Amount of Cod and Ling Cured in Yorkshire  
District 1821-1849

Year	No. Vessels	Bounty Vessels		Open Boats		Total
		Dried Cwts	Pickled Barrels	Dried Cwts	Pickled Barrels	
1820		4,649½				5,622
1821	17	2,388½		3,234	79	4,779
1822	39	4,325½		454½		5,370
1823	33	4,649½		721½	49	3,980
1824	35	3,327¾		653½		3,455
1825	32	2,967¼		488¼		3,996
1826	33	3,264		732¼		3,586
1827	25	2,263¼		1,323¼		3,423
1828	28	2,051¾		1,372¼		4,756
1829	30	2,903¾		1,853		
1830						
1831						
1832						
1833	31	3,768		1,731¾		5,499
1834	31	2,728½		1,304		4,032
1835	25	2,520		2,838¼		5,358
1836	23	2,368¾		3,133¾		5,401
1837	22	1,671		3,102¼		4,773
1838	18	910¾		2,178¼		3,088
1839	18	1,755		3,249		5,004
1840	17	1,884		3,249		5,133
1841	15	875½		2,391¾		3,266
1842	14	1,110½		2,191¾		3,301
1843	7	195¼		2,943¾		3,138
1844				1,246¼		
1845	5	252		1,065¾		1,317
1846	3	150¼		988		1,138
1847	3	19½		738½		757
1848	5	105½		141		246
1849	5	175¼		83		258

Statistics differ slightly from appendix XIX but overall trends are similar.

Source: R.H.E., Herring Fishery Commissioners Minutes



APPENDIX XXIX: Total Quantity of Cod and Ling Cured and Entitled to the  
Bounty and Total Including Amount Not Entitled 1825-1849

Whitby	No. of Fish	Total Qty Cured		Total Qty Entitled bounty or stamp	
		cwts Dried	pickle Cwts barrels	Dried	Pickle
1825	82,679	3,445½		3,396½	
1826	105,201	3,996½		3,996½	
1827	89,792	3,587		3,498½	
1828	82,829	3,431½		3,398½	
1829	117,638	4,756½		4,743	
1830	85,515	2,993½		2,964½	
1831	n/a	n/a		n/a	
1832	n/a	n/a		n/a	
1833	136,804	5,499		4,971	
1834	97,356	4,032½		3,247½	
1835	137,896	5,359		4,041½	
1836	137,694	5,402½		4,620½	
1837	118,796	4,773½		4,069	
1838	79,990	2,827		3,089	
1839	125,400	5,004		3,859	
1840	104,125	4,255¾		3,529½	
1841	68,999	3,067½		1,730½	
1842	95,372	4,054½		3,048½	
1843	34,915	1,441½		913	
1844	36,027	1,430		627½	
1845	33,506	1,317¾		499	
1846	28,832	1,138½			
1847	18,947	757½			
1848	15,955	638			
1849	45,105	1,804½		219½	

Source: R.H.E.Herring Fishery Commissioners' Minutes

APPENDIX XXX: Grimsby Fish Market Prices 1878-1890 taken 5 weeks from  
first Friday September

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	Soles per box New Pence	Plaice per box New Pence	Haddock per kit New Pence	Large Cod per score New Pence
1876	435	68	110	125
1877	444	59	45	125
1878	567	109	80	280
1879	468	75	80	97.5
1880	n.q.	n.q.	n.q.	n.q.
1881	588	66	100	150
1882	548	75	85	n.q.
1883	660	110		625
1884	501	55	28	250
1885	571	73	32	150
1886	540	89	28	200
1887	640	108	22	300
1888	820	117	35	300
1889	885	124	29	275

Source: Grimsby News