

Whitehills & District Community Council



Commerce & Fishing - Part 1

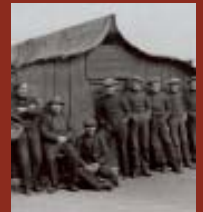
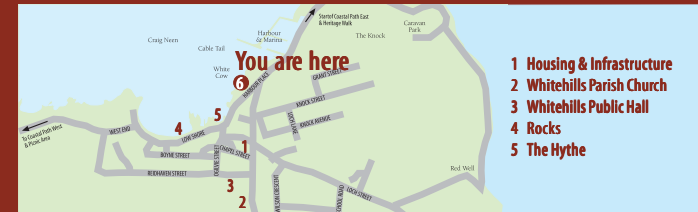
The 19th and the early part of the 20th century gradually showed a general improvement in the prosperity of Whitehills – the fishing industry was a major player in this.

Early years saw line fishing as the most common method by which the men of the village made their livelihood. The work was hard, with little reward for their labours, but through their endeavours they survived, bringing benefits not only for themselves and their families, but to the community as a whole.

Their small boats carried a crew of three or four, each man had three lines of 300 hooks, and it was said that if all the fleet's lines were tied together they would stretch to the Shetland Isles. Each of the 300 hooks were baited by the womenfolk, using mussels bought in bulk from mussel farms in the north, which were stored in shallow pools along the shore known as "scaups", and were gathered daily as required. In the summer mackerel and herring were used.

Small businesses sprang up and offered villagers services they had only dreamed of. Whitehills, in the early 1900's, had four bakers, numerous grocers and general merchants, joiners and carpenters, plumber, painters and decorators, two butchers, shoemaker, chemist, hairdressers, draper, blacksmith, tailors and a seamstress, along with a post office, and branches of national banks, the latter setting up following the rising wealth generated by the success of the fishing industry.

Two major fish processors provided work for a large number of men, while the number of small processors, mostly women who travelled throughout the rural area of Banffshire and beyond, were in double figures. These women, known as "cadgers", bought their fish from the local fleet, then processed and smoked their purchases before taking their products in baskets and creels to towns, villages and farms on a daily basis.



*Main pictures:
Top: Downie's
Bottom: Looking down the
New Road (now called
Boyne Street)*

1. The Auld Boat
2. The Old Harbour
3. Whitehills Fishmarket

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Commerce & Fishing - Part 2

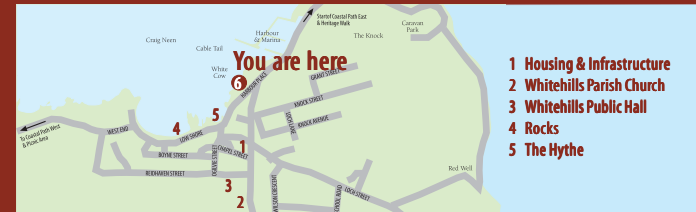
The "cadgers" were transported by horse drawn lorries to Ladysbridge Station from where they travelled to Tillynaught Junction to board trains to Dufftown, Keith and other inland destinations. They were expert in bartering, arriving home with eggs, butter, cheese and, on occasion, the odd bottle of whisky!

By the 1940's line fishing had decreased with many fishermen investing in larger boats and pursuing seine net fishing, bringing greater catches and rewards. This type of fishing was introduced to the Moray Firth by a fleet of Danish boats and although meeting strong criticism from local fishers, it was recognised as the way forward.

Following seine netting came trawling which is now established around the coasts of Scotland with fleets of large vessels carrying modern technology to assist in the search for shoals. While a number of men from Whitehills are still engaged in fishing, the larger boats now in use contributed to the demise of Whitehills harbour as a commercial port. Better markets had to be found resulting in Whitehills boats moving to larger ports in the north east and west coasts.

Herring fishing was also pursued in the early years of the 20th century, first by sail boats and then steam drifters, with a number of these vessels owned and operated by men from the village.

The boats sailed to various ports around Britain as the shoals of herring moved on a seasonal basis. In summer, the boats sailed to the Orkney and Shetland Isles, while winter fishing saw the fleet move south to Lowestoft and Yarmouth, accompanied by large numbers of local women gutting and packing herring for export to Germany and Russia. Others would move to west coast ports, while Fraserburgh and Peterhead attracted large fleets of herring drifters. With the introduction of diesel engines, the steam drifter gradually disappeared from the fishing scene.



Main picture:
Mending nets
1. Making creels
2. On board a fishing boat
3. The Whitehills Lifeboat