

Extracts from 19th century local newspapers relating to “white herring” curing

DUNBAR SEPTEMBER 2 – The fishing since Monday has been unprecedentedly heavy – not for years has the take been so great – every boat is laden to the gunwales and some are making two trips within 24 hours. It is estimated that there were brought into harbour yesterday 6000 crans, and today is nothing behind. This is independent of the many boats that are plying to Fife. Should it continue through the week as productive as at present, both salt and barrels will be wrought up. As it is, several curers are not packing up in barrels but rousing in vessels, leaving the sorting for greater leisure. The fishing ground is about 3 miles west of the harbour, and is said to extend 3 miles in length and one mile in breadth. Selling prices today 5s per cran.

Berwick Advertiser
5th September 1846

FISH CURING PREMISES TO BE LET

To be let with Entry at Martinmas next

Those premises situated at the North Burn, Eyemouth, consisting of a Red Herring House, Close and Shades, previously occupied by Mr. John Dickson, Fishcurer.

Apply to Mr. Grieve, Eyemouth

Berwick Advertiser
31st March 1838

TO FISH CURERS

CURING STATION to be LET

Apply to Mr. Ralph Pringle, Newton-by-the-Sea

Berwick Advertiser
11th July 1846

HERRING FISHING - BERWICK – Our herring fishing seems now to be over for this season. The average quantity obtained by each boat has been about 100 crans. For this take the fishermen have been out to sea about 40 times and the weather has never prevented their going, a circumstance that very rarely occurs. The highest boat has fished about 200 crans, but many have not about 50. We regret to learn that there has been a great loss of nets. Last night two boats went out, but as they went south we have not yet heard what success they have met with. Two others have sailed to the Yorkshire coast to see what can be done there. We are very much surprised that the fishermen do not all muster and give the fishing one more good trial before washing up their nets: in some former years, even at a later period than this our boats have got as high as 100 crans each. This week two small cargoes have been brought here from Holy Island station, and several from Dunbar. One of the latter cured by Messrs Kelly and Sawyers, and bought by one of our curers in a roused state, has turned out excellent fish and will we trust remunerate the purchaser. Pickled herrings are selling at 21s per barrel.

Berwick Advertiser
12th September 1846

HERRING FISHING BERWICK - The herring boats have been regularly at sea since our last report and the harbour is now a scene of great activity. A few of the vessels are now being towed to the fishing ground by steam tugs. The herrings are improving in quality but many of them are small. On Friday and Saturday last week the catches were large, the total quantity landed each day being 1,400 and 1,200 crans. Some more merchants have arrived and curing is now being conducted with vigour.

Berwick Advertiser
5th August 1887

HERRING FISHING STATISTICS – Last week 190 boats were fishing in this district, 50 of which were engaged at Eyemouth, 82 at Berwick, 22 at North Sunderland, 14 at Craster, and the remainder at the other stations. This total number of boats is 45 less than the number employed in similar week of last year. At the various stations there was a fair fishing for the week, especially at Berwick and Eyemouth, where the daily average varied from 20 to 77 crans. The catch for the week of 7,054 crans, and for the season 10,290 crans, against 20,400 crans for last year to similar date. Of the season's catch 4,044 crans were landed at Eyemouth, 97 at Burnmouth, 3,784 at Berwick, 1,123 at North Sunderland, 200 at Beadnell, 171 at Newton, 594 at Craster, 35 at Boulmer, 150 at Amble. Quality very indifferent during the week; greater part of the herrings consisting of soft oily matties unfit for curing purposes. An occasional shot of fine herring was, however, secured; particularly one of nearly 80 crans caught by a Burnmouth boat inshore off Marshall Meadows, and which was delivered to Messrs Boston at Spittal. Such was the inferior character of most of the catches during the week that some hundreds of crans were sold at 1s to 2s per cran and sent to the manure works at Berwick and Eyemouth, a most disheartening circumstance to the fishermen. For the better classes of herring, prices at the various stations varied from 6s to 12 s per cran, still very poor for the fishermen. During the current week the herrings have advanced to from 8s to 16s per cran; the largest takes and best quality being got from one-half mile to 3 miles offshore between Burnmouth and Berwick, all these takes being of particularly fine quality.

Berwick Journal

HERRING FISHING STATISTICS – Although the weather during the week ending September 22nd was fine and favourable for fishing, the fleet of 144 boats employed at present in this district met with very little success. Although they were pretty regular at sea, only a rare shot of 10 to 60 crans was daily obtained by them. The total catch for the week is only 933 crans, 520 of which were landed at North Sunderland, 65 at Berwick, 256 at Eyemouth, and the remainder at the other stations. The catch consisted mostly of matties and spent; prices were, however, high – from 10s to 20s per cran, being the general rates. As in the preceding week the boats were fishing off the Farne Islands, but it seems that the shoals of herrings have left the grounds there and as there are now no indications of herrings being on any part of this coast, the fishermen at the various stations are busy drying their nets and dismantling their boats preparatory to forming new crews for prosecuting the local haddock fishing and the herring fishing at Yarmouth and Lowestoft. It is understood that a good many boats will leave Eyemouth, Burnmouth and Coldingham for the herring fishing at the English ports named, as it appears that a better price will be obtained for the herrings landed there than for some seasons past, there being at present a good demand for herrings for not only the Continent but also for the manufacturers into reds to supply home and foreign requirements. About 11,000 barrels of herrings have been exported direct from this district to the Continent and to Ireland, about 8,000 of which went abroad and nearly 3,100 to the latter country; there are still about a dozen cargoes of herrings to ship from the district. The total catch in the district for the season is now 39,400 crans against 46,200 last year.

Berwick Journal
27th September 1888