

Extracts from 19th century newspapers relating to poaching and policing the salmon fisheries

POACHING – At a special meeting of magistrates for this district held on Monday last, William Patterson, Prideaux Patterson and Prideaux Patterson, three fishermen residing at Spittal, were charged with taking from a salmon net set at Goswick fishing station on the 27th ult., a salmon fish of the value of six shillings, the property of Mr. Alexander Crossman and others. Mr. Weddell appeared for the prosecution and Mr. Weatherhead for the defence. Thomas Hayes, the overseer of the fishery, stated that he saw three men approach very near to the net, and afterwards on examining it saw marks indicating that a fish had been taken out of it. He then followed defendants to the Cove near Holy Island, and on coming up to them demanded the fish. They at first denied having one but after leaving, one of them ran after witness and produced the fish from under his jacket. Mr. Weatherhead addressed the court for the defence. He called attention to the omission on the part of the prosecutor to prove his right to fish at the place referred to, and contended that the charge could not in consequence be sustained. The court coincided and the parties were discharged although the magistrate, J. D. Selby Esq., said he had no doubt of defendants being guilty and they had made a narrow escape from punishment.

Berwick Advertiser
16th May 1846

DEPREDAATION - In the course of Monday night and Tuesday morning last, some persons broke into the Shield for the Hallowstell Fishery, and stole therefrom 19 grilse and trout, and 2 salmon. An active search is at present going on but as yet we believe the depredator has not been discovered, nor any trace of its stolen property obtained.

Berwick Advertiser
10th October 1846

EXTENSIVE SEIZURE OF FOUL SALMON – Two boxes containing 3 cwts 2 qrs of salmon, directed to be left at the house of Mr. Robert Weatherburn, fishmonger, were seized by Mr. Mitchell, Superintendent of Tweed Fisheries, at the station on Saturday morning. The salmon had been caught at Innerleithen, and traced to their destination. They were tendered for acceptance to the party to whom they were addresses, but he declined to accept them. They were in a very bad state, and quite unfit for human food. They were intended for the Parisian market, where a similar cargo had been sent the week before, but we understand that the French Customs house will not admit salmon from Britain until the season opens.

Berwick Journal
19th January 1856

SALMON POACHING - On Monday evening last, the Tweed water-bailiffs apprehended a man named William McAdam, at Sandstell, with a net in his possession. McAdam offered great resistance, but was conveyed on board the Commissioners' steamer, which was in attendance to co-operate with the bailiffs. He was fined £1 7s for having a salmon net illegally in his possession, and as a second charge of offering forcible opposition to the bailiffs was fined £8 7s. The Commissioners' steamer is frequently assaulted with volleys of stones from the Spittal fishermen, but by the precautions taken by erecting netting, etc., the bailiffs on board the vessel are completely protected.

Berwick Journal
8th October 1859

RIOTS AT SPITTAL - There was a rather serious riot at Spittal, at the mouth of the Tweed, on Monday night. The day had been stormy which had the double effect of bringing large quantities of salmon from the sea into the river, and of preventing the procession of the white fishing. So, nearly the whole village of Spittal turned out, not merely to a man, but to a woman, to engage in salmon-poaching. Eight boats were manned, and were supported by the populace on shore, all armed with slings. They not only drove thirteen water-bailiffs over to the Berwick side, but gave chase, captured the bailiffs' boat, and sunk her. The men were disguised in their wives' bed-gowns, and there is likely to be some difficulty in identification.

Berwick Journal
15th October 1859