

Extracts from 19th century local newspapers referring to cadgers and curers

THE HERRING FISHING – For about a fortnight past herrings caught north from Berwick have been sold by cadgers in the town and neighbourhood at 6d a dozen. On Wednesday morning, three north-country boats, two hailing from Buckhaven, arrived in the harbour with fair takes for the time of year – ranging from about 1 up to 9 or 10 crans. The prices were from 28s to 29s – the shyness of merchants to invest kept the fishermen from holding out against these low figures. Only one home buyer purchased. Cadgers bought up freely, and sold again at 5d and 6d per dozen. The quality of the fish meshed at present is only middling. Those brought to port on Wednesday were much mixed, the majority being small, rather soft and immature looking, and comparatively useless for anything else but immediate consumption. Yesterday morning five boats attempted to reach the harbour, but, owing to the excessively high wind blowing from the north-west, they were unsuccessful, and had to lie outside till late in the day; consequently the fish they had sold at moderate prices. None of the Berwick or Spittal fishermen have yet made a trial, but the promising success of their northern brethren will doubtless incite a few of them to make a start on an early day. Only one boat is launched preparatory to being equipped for the season, but a number of others are quite ready for launching.

Berwick Journal
5th June 1868

HERRING FISHING, BERWICK - The fishing this week has presented an improvement compared with any preceding week since the commencement of the season, although it has fluctuated considerably, and cannot be said to have realised the expectations encouraged by the success of the corresponding period in former seasons. On Monday morning the average of the boats might be about ten barrels; on Tuesday it grew to fourteen; and on Wednesday it was as high as twenty three, being the best night's fishing since the commencement of the season; but on Thursday a reversal was experienced, the take averaging scarcely a barrel a boat. The price is now about 12s. Last year at this time nearly all the boats had made up their complement of 200 barrels, the number with which each boat supplied the merchant by contract; but this year very few, if any, have reached that amount; and considering the advanced period of the season, there is little hope that the deficiency will be compensated by future success. During the present week there have been in Berwick Bay, on average, about sixteen boats each morning. This morning (Friday) there has been an excellent fishing – most of the boats having between twenty and thirty barrels, while some have about forty, and in one instance of which we have heard, fifty barrels. Price 12s.

Berwick & Kelso Warder
4th September 1841

THE HERRING FISHING – This enterprise still continues unproductive, and prospects on our coast were scarcely ever less promising than at present. The strong easterly winds and slight in the sea on Tuesday would, it was thought, have a beneficial effect upon the fishing by rousing the herring from the bottom. After Monday night no boats put to sea till Wednesday evening, and on Tuesday morning, contrary to expectation, most of them returned clean. Prices are good. The few fish caught are of excellent quality, and are generally retailed by cadgers at 8d per dozen. A greater number of boats are now engaged, and before another fortnight passes, the whole fleet will be ready for sea.

The following are the returns:-

		Boats out	Highest	Price per basket
July	5	14	2 baskets	15s
	6	24	1 basket	15s
	7	NONE		
	8	25	1 basket	15s

Berwick Journal
10th July 1868

THE HERRING FISHING - Almost an entire cessation of the herring fishing has taken place during the past week, only a few boats having ventured out a night or two since the setting in of the NE winds, and these have met with no encouraging success – not such as to induce a greater number of boats to cast their nets even once more before going into winter quarters, the fishing is therefore now considered closed for 1868. The majority of the Scotch boats have taken advantage of the favourable winds to proceed home – most of them having had a good average fishing – and very few now remain in Berwick harbour. In the course of a few days our own boats will be dismantled, nets and other gear stored, and the boats taken to their usual strand above the railway bridge. A retrospective note of the season’s fishing may be given in few words. A goodly number of the boats have fished exceedingly well; two at least have a total of about 200 crans; a quota have had middling fishing, and the remainder will barely cover expenses. The total catch has amounted to 7,781 crans – an excess over that of 1867 of 1,966 crans. The average number of boats fishing nightly has been 75; to which the total catch gives an individual average of about 104 crans – an increase over that of 1867 of 23 crans. Prices have maintained a good average – 17s 6d per basket being the highest, and 12s per cran being the lowest price given during the season. About two-thirds of the gross catch has been sent away fresh to the English markets – the remainder being purchased by curers, cadgers and private individuals, and more than one half of the 6,450 crans landed at Berwick have been brought to harbour by strange boats. The quality of the fish has been very good, and only on five or six mornings has the quality been so inferior that merchants were not over anxious to purchase. Upon the whole the fishing has been a fair average one as compared with past years, and but for a grievous intermission of several nights, through unsettled weather, when the season was most productive, the average catch would have been higher by several crans than it is. Comparatively speaking, very little gear has been lost or damaged; and the only damage to boats was in the case of a Spittal craft, which was run into by a schooner near Holy Island. Compared with some of their brethren stationed on the north coast, the fishermen of Berwick have in many respects great cause for congratulation and thankfulness. Subjoined is the report for the past week:-

	Boats out	Best catch	Prices per cran
September 11	80	18 crans	15s to 24s
13	2	-	15s to 24s
14	1	6 crans -	
16	5	1½ baskets	

Berwick Journal
18th September 1868

HERRING FISHING – The season for this fishing of our coast has now been brought to a close, and its result is exceedingly gratifying and pleasing. It has extended over nine weeks – fully an average duration. The number of boats engaged has been fully equal to that of former years, namely eighty, equally divided between the Greenses and those at Spittal. If we set down the average of their earnings for the season at £110 each boat, and this sum we feel fully warranted in stating, we arrive at a grand total of £8,800 gained by the fishermen alone, exclusive of course of the earnings of the workers on land and the dealers in the fishing wholesale and retail. The quantity of herrings disposed of in a green state has been beyond all precedent and this mode of sale will for the future in all probability be the rule and not the exception of the market. The quantity of barrelled herrings in the hands of curers is not very large, and we may safely estimate it at 5,000 barrels of red and 700 barrels of white, the prices of which per barrel are now quoted at 18s for red and 22s for white. With the exception of the annoyances caused to our fishermen by the presence of the French boats in the early part of the season, sad cases of loss in nets in some instances thereby sustained, and which might have been avoided if our government had acted with the promptitude the occasion required, and such as was evinced by the French government in their own behalf, not a casualty has occurred to mar the satisfaction which so prosperous a season’s fishing occasions.

Berwick Advertiser
1st October 1853