

## Extracts from 19<sup>th</sup> century local newspapers relating to the human cost of sea-fishing

**CALAMITOUS OCCURRENCE AT THE HERRING FISHING** – We regret to have to record this week an accident of a peculiarly distressing nature which has taken place on this part of the coast, in addition to others, involving the loss of property to a greater or less extent, caused by the state of the weather, and tending at once to cripple the exertions of those engaged in that important branch of the industry, the herring fishing, and to cast around them the gloom of affliction arising from the loss of relatives and friends. On Friday evening last, although the sky was overcast the weather was yet so fine that it was scarcely possible to anticipate the slightest damage to the boats engaged in the fishing, and all of them at the various stations on this part of the coast, put out to sea as usual, while some, as in the distressing case more immediately under notice, were encouraged by the apparently settled calmness of the night to risk their floats nearer to the rocks than is their practice. The aspect of the weather continued unchanged till about twelve o'clock, when a tremendous gale sprung up from the north-east, placing the lives of the boats' crews in the greatest jeopardy. Most of them hauled their nets, many of which being full of herring, were lost in the hurry and confusion consequent upon the exertions of the fishermen to escape the danger. One of them, however, the *Jebus* of Eyemouth, having unfortunately taken up a perilous position near the shore at Marshall Meadows, from which the crew were unable to extricate themselves, and consequence was that the whole on board, five in number, perished. The details of the accident have not of course been ascertained; but it is supposed that while the crew were in the act of hauling their nets and before they could set sail, the boat had been caught by the gale, and driven amongst the rocks, where it has capsized. The crew consisted of Thomas Dougal, the skipper, aged 52; John Dougal, his son, aged 15; George Dougal sen'r and George Dougal jun'r, his nephews, both aged 38; and John Grieve, a labouring man, aged 24. The body of the boy and one of the Dougals, who it is thought had attempted to swim ashore, were found on the beach on the following morning and conveyed to Marshall Meadows barn. The body of the other George Dougal was recovered during the day and the other two found entangled amongst the nets in the water. By this lamentable occurrence three widows and seventeen children have been left in destitute circumstances. Thomas Dougal has left three sons and two daughters, the youngest about five years old; George Dougal has left a widow and five children, the youngest four months; the other George Dougal has left a widow, at present pregnant, and seven children, the youngest eighteen months old; and John Grieve has left a widow without children. We are happy to learn that a subscription has been opened for the relief of these destitute families, and that Thomas Bowhill Esq., agent for the Commercial Bank in Eyemouth, has kindly undertaken to receive contributions. A case of more wide-spread distress has not occurred in this neighbourhood in connection with the herring fishing for a very long period, and as there is no class of persons whose industrious habits and excellent moral characters render them more worthy of succour under their distresses than the fishermen and their families, it is earnestly to be hoped that it will meet with the liberality from the public which its truly sorrowful nature demands.

*Berwick & Kelso Warder*  
11th September 1841

**ACCIDENT AT SEA** – This forenoon, about 11 o'clock, as the fishing boats belonging to the Greenses were returning from the fishing ground, one of them was struck by a sea, which filled her and caused her to capsize. The crew were thrown in to the water, but succeeded in getting on to the bottom of the boat, where they remained until they were taken off by another boat, which was about a mile astern of them, the crew of which saw the incident take place. The men who were taken off were in a very exhausted state, but after landing and restorative measures having been resorted to, we are glad to learn they are all recovering. All the fishing lines belonging to the unfortunate crew, we are sorry to say, were lost. The names of the men are Christopher Jameson, Henry Manuel, Henry Burgon and John Burgon.

*Berwick Advertiser*  
15th July 1853

**FEARFUL LOSS OF LIFE - WRECK OF FISHING BOATS** - The greatest calamity that ever befell the fishing industry of this coast overtook it on Friday, when many of our brave fishermen, exposed to the violence of a hurricane seldom equalled for severity, went down to a watery grave. From the details which have come to hand, it appears that the loss of life at sea, more particularly among the crews of fishing boats, has been of the most lamentable description; and daily most melancholy additions are being made to the doleful tales. So far as the facts are at present known, there is every reason to believe that above 100 fishermen and others have perished on the Berwickshire coast, the calamity having fallen with terrible effect on the fishing stations of Eyemouth, Burnmouth, Cove, Coldingham and Dunbar, besides other places further afield.

*Berwick Journal*  
20th October 1881

**EYEMOUTH - 20 OCTOBER 1881** - Of the forty-five boats which formed the winter fishing fleet twenty have been lost, while nearly one half of the sea-fishing population perished in the storm. It will thus be many years before the town recovers from the calamitous results of Friday's gale. The remaining crews will have to be rearranged so as to man and work the remaining boats: young lads who have lost fathers and brothers will be obliged to fill their places as best they may; and in order to prevent the industry from collapsing, some of the herring boats used in the summer will probably have to be utilised till those which have been lost can be replaced. It is expected that some of the boats will go to sea on Saturday morning should the weather prove favourable, a number of the men being anxious to resume their employment. There is no doubt that this will be a movement in the right direction, as nothing could be more dispiriting and demoralising than continued inactivity on shore under the present distressing circumstances, whereas the resumption of their active duties would leave the men no time to brood over their misfortunes, as they are only too prone to do on shore.

*Berwick Journal*  
20th October 1881