

Reference **BRO 10**

Covering dates 17TH - 20TH CENTURIES

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Berwick Salmon Fisheries Company Limited

**Archival
history**

The records of Berwick Salmon Fisheries plc were surveyed and listed by the Business Archives Council in 1983, who also compiled the short history attached. The order in which the Business Archives Council arranged the records has been retained, but as their references indicated shelf locations, these have been changed to running numbers. When the records were first deposited in 1988, after the Company's offices in Main Street, Spittal were sold items additional to the original list were found. These have been added to the first part of the list, with the references BRO.10/1/307 - 337. As yet (June 1988) the following items in the original list, have not been located: M/19 - 20; M/52; M/39

Source of acquisition Deposited by Mr K.M.Anderson, Company Secretary, Berwick Salmon Fisheries Company Limited, 1 Spittal, Berwick-upon-Tweed 13 April 1988.

Creators Berwick Salmon Fisheries Company

Administrative history:

BERWICK SALMON FISHERIES COMPANY LIMITED

Berwick Salmon Fisheries Co. Ltd had its origins in the Old Shipping Company which was in existence in 1766 consisting of a group of local men, mainly coopers, in Berwick upon Tweed, Northumberland, who held shares and drew dividends from a small fleet of sailing vessels engaged in the London, coastal and foreign trade. The vessels carried many commodities from and for its trading shareholders and large quantities of boiled and salted salmon. For the easier and cheaper acquisition of salmon, the company leased fishing rights on the Tweed and from 1786 fresh salmon was sent to London and elsewhere packed in ice.

The Union Shipping Company was formed in 1798 followed shortly after by the Commercial Shipping Company, both of which became serious competitors of the Old Shipping Company as they also transported salmon. In 1799 the three shipping companies between them laid in 7,600 cart loads of ice and the 32 salmon coopers in Berwick employed 300 fishermen. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Old Shipping Company consisted of 34 shareholders and owned 11 vessels of 300-500 tons 'Kings Measurement'.

In 1820 the Old Shipping Company and Commercial Shipping Company came to an end and their members formed a new company, the Berwick Shipping Company, on 28 August of that year, constituted on a broader basis than the two old companies. From 1820-1832 the new Company consistently made a loss on its fisheries which were always offset by profits on shipping. A profit was made in 1833 on the fisheries but this was not to happen again until 1848. A new competitor had emerged in 1825 with the formation of the General Shipping Company which had many partners in common with the Berwick Shipping Company and plied the coastal trade between Leith, Hull and Newcastle. In 1837 a merger was suggested between the two companies but this came to nothing. Steam vessels were introduced in that year on the Hull, Leith and Newcastle runs.

A new proposal for amalgamation between the Berwick Shipping Company and the General Shipping Company was put forward and agreed in 1850. In 1855 large losses on the fisheries barely offset by shipping profits led the partners of the Berwick Shipping Company to realise that increased capital was required, which led directly to the creation of a limited liability company on 1 November 1856. The main objects of the new company were:-

'The conveyance of Goods and Passengers in Ships and Vessels between the ports of Berwick and London...

The purchasing and Taking on lease of Salmon Fisheries and the Disposing of the Produce there from.'

The Company owned 3 clippers from the old partnership but gradually the shipping profits began to diminish, mainly due to the advent of the railway but also because more attention was being paid to the fisheries. In 1865 the shipping side of the business made a loss for the first time and in 1869 the vessels were sold. New Fisheries Acts were introduced in the late 1850s for the better protection of fish and new Tweed Commissioners were appointed to oversee the Acts. The Company has provided one representative on the Tweed Commission since 1857.

After the cessation of shipping the title of the Company was felt to be out of date and it was changed to the Berwick Salmon Fisheries Company Ltd in 1872. The method of fishing for

salmon, grilse and trout has changed little during the Company's history, although more fisheries have been acquired and improved. In 1966 it employed 90 fishermen which was approximately half the total number engaged in commercial netting on the River Tweed. The Company's old offices in Berwick were built in 1835 and in the 1850s a new landing place for boats and nets was built on part of Meadow Haven Fishery close behind the pier. In 1901 the old lifeboat station at Quayside, Berwick, was purchased to act as the Company's new premises and continued to act as the Company's registered offices until 1978/9. New premises were erected on the south bank of the river at Spittal in 1964, which housed a new boatbuilding shop, a boat store, a flake ice making plant, a blast freezing chamber and a low temperature cold store. The last two items meant that the fish could be frozen during the fishing months when the price was low and sold at a higher price later in the year. The rest of the building was occupied by Border Fare Ltd, a subsidiary company which was primarily engaged in producing quick frozen scampi.

Border Fare Ltd was incorporated in 1962 as a private company in which Berwick Salmon Fisheries Co Ltd has a financial interest and representation on its Board. The latter acquired all the share capital in the former in 1965. Border Fare (Stornaway) Ltd was subsequently formed as a subsidiary. Both companies deal in frozen foods.

On 22nd November 1980 the Company was the first company to be issued with a certificate of re-registration, as Berwick Salmon Fisheries Public Limited Company, and was the 16th oldest company remaining on the Register of Companies.

Contents:

BRO 10/1 Berwick Salmon Fisheries Company

BRO 10/2 Old Shipping Company

BRO 10/3 General Shipping Company of Berwick

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