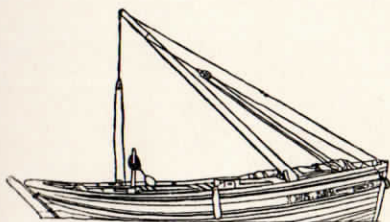


FISHING BOATS AND FISHER FOLK

ON THE EAST COAST
OF SCOTLAND



WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED
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mica slates, and surmounted by a lighthouse, formerly part of the old castle, we enter the Moray Firth. It consists of a triangular-shaped piece of water extending from Duncansby Head in the north to Kinnaird's Head in the south.

Broadsea. About a quarter of a mile to the west of the lighthouse is a small rocky bay known as Broadsea, the old "seatoun" of Fraserburgh. The coast continues low and treeless with ledges of rock stretching out a quarter of a mile in some places.

Sandhaven and Pitulie. Ahead of us lie the adjacent villages of Sandhaven and Pitulie.¹ Both of them are now very much decayed. The harbour of fourteen acres, built in 1830 by Sir John Forbes of Pitsligo at a cost of £4205, lies neglected. The old curing stations are abandoned. Once there were prosperous ship-building yards here. To-day the industry is dead.² No boys are going to sea and of the thirty-three fishermen who are left, and who still try to earn a living in their twenty small sailing boats, few of them are under fifty years of age.

Two miles west of Pitulie, whose general appearance and situation is not unlike that of Inverallochy or Cairnbulg, as will be noticed in the sketch of its fisher homes and shore, we come to Rosehearty.³

Rosehearty. It is difficult to realise that seventy or eighty years ago this now somewhat derelict fishing village, was a serious rival to Fraserburgh. But such is the case. It is one of the oldest seaports on the coast of Scotland, its history going back to the fourteenth or fifteenth century, when a colony of Danes settled on this low promontory jutting into the Moray Firth. In 1681 it was created a burgh.

In the *New Statistical Account* (vol. xii, p. 396) we are told that in 1839 there were seventy-three fisher families here, and that during the herring season the little harbour was crowded with drifters.

White fishing was also carried on; cod, skate, ling, saith, and

¹ Pratt's *Buchan*, p. 286.

² Forty years ago there were forty-six boats belonging to Pitulie and ninety-one fishermen. In 1855 the number of men and boys fishing from the two villages was as many as 170.

³ Cf. Pratt's *Buchan*, p. 286.

"poodlies" being caught. Most of it was sold in the neighbourhood, the surplus sent to Edinburgh and Glasgow. In the month of March a number of Rosehearty boats always sailed to the west coast and fished off Coll and Tyree for cod and ling, which they carried to Glasgow, returning home with coal in time for the summer herring fisheries. The bait used for the line fishing here

had to be brought all the way from Tain or Dundee. At that time the Rosehearty fishermen paid "teinds" of £1 to the proprietor.

There are two harbours here. The old harbour, formed of two stone piers, is two acres in extent. It is shown in the illustration, which was made from the end of the south pier, looking west. Port Rae Harbour lies to the east and has an area of ten acres, and during the herring season forty years ago was scarcely large enough for all the drifters which landed their fish here for



ROSEHEARTY

the twelve curers of Rosehearty.¹ The old fishermen of Rosehearty,² like most of their brothers along this coast, attribute the decline of the white fishing to the coming of the steam trawler. They will shake their heads and tell you there are no shoals of haddock off the coast like there used to be when they were young.

From Rosehearty we sail across Aberdour Bay. For the first three miles the coastline is low, but soon after Clenterty Point begin

¹ In 1855 there were as many as 232 fishermen belonging to the port, and a fleet of sixty-five boats. In 1880 the number of fishermen was 186; the boats eighty-eight. Before the war Rosehearty owned thirty-three drifters; in 1929 there were eight steam drifters here, nine motor boats, and twenty-two sailing craft, making a total of forty-four fishing craft. The number of fishermen stood at 176.

² Among the most common names are Ritchie and Duthie.