

**LIVELIHOODS, CRAFT AND  
HERITAGE:**

**Transmissions of Knowledge in  
Cornish Fishing Villages**

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## Abstract

In response to a sense of ‘crisis’ in global fisheries, contemporary policies and social science accounts have tended to approach fishery ‘problems’ in terms of models derived from biology and resource-economics. Through a study of the fishing industry in Cornwall, UK, this thesis contributes an alternative perspective – examining how knowledges and meanings attached to the work of fishing are reproduced in the context of wider social relations and economies. Processes of European rural re-structuring, increasing costs and restricted access, have recently exacerbated more long-term trends of decline in Cornish fisheries. However social change and new media for knowledge transmission also contribute to the remaking and reinvention of fishing livelihoods and ideologies. The study is based on a historical ethnographic methodology which included archival research, participant observation, unstructured interviews and life-histories.

From the late nineteenth century the marginalisation of Cornwall’s fishing and maritime economy accompanied the ‘discovery’ and idealisation of Cornish fishing villages through art and tourism. Social distance and inequality in fishing villages grew but so also did new forms of co-dependency. More recently conflict has emerged around the politics of the environment, and fishers’ knowledges point to the unpredictability of fishing ecologies and economies, suggesting the potential for alternative management models. Narratives about skill, craft and expertise play a role in how some producers in Cornwall reproduce themselves as independent fishermen and reflect a concern that such skills and dispositions are passed on to future generations. Others have diversified into forms of art and craft production – activities which shape memory and sense of place whilst replicating notions of self-sufficiency. I argue for the potential *constructiveness* of forms of heritage practice which can be both a source of critical nostalgia and an imaginative approach to the past as a resource for the regeneration of regional maritime economies. Whilst meanings and ideologies attached to the work of fishing in Cornwall may serve as markers of loss or of conflicts around knowledge production, or may mask systemic inequalities, they can also be a source of innovation, reward and creativity.

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## List of abbreviations

<b>CAP</b>	Common Agricultural Policy
<b>Cefas</b>	Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science
<b>CFP</b>	Common Fisheries Policy
<b>CIFCA</b>	Cornwall Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
<b>Defra</b>	Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs
<b>EBFM</b>	Ecosystem-based fisheries management
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
<b>GWR</b>	Great Western Railway
<b>ICES</b>	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea
<b>ITQ</b>	International Transferable Quota
<b>MAFF</b>	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (now Defra)
<b>MSY</b>	Maximum Sustainable Yield
<b>NFIF</b>	Newlyn Fish Industry Forum
<b>RNLI</b>	Royal National Lifeboat Institution
<b>TAC</b>	Total Allowable Catch

## Foreword

Every rock and cove in the parish has a name. Porth & Gear, The Nancy, Rubble Cove, Buttercove, Porthmear, Tottycove, Trescore, The Turtle – These names show how much this coast was once used but they are nearly forgotten. If that happens their history will be gone forever, and if a community loses its past it's in danger of losing its way.

Nick Darke, *The Wrecking Season* (Darke 2005)

*Nick Darke, who died in 2005, was a Cornish playwright, lobster-fisherman and wrecker. His mother was an actress and his father was a farmer and an ornithologist descended from a line of seafarers. He grew up on the beach, owned his own small boat by the age of 10 and learnt to fish with his father. When Nick returned to live near the beach in later life, after establishing a career first as an actor, then playwright, he would go on to the beach every day collecting pieces of flotsam and jetsam, such as driftwood and anything else, useful or strange, that had washed up on the strand. He would often find bits of fishing gear carrying tags that identified the owners and through these he was able to make contact with fishermen in Newfoundland. He and his wife, the artist Jane Darke, made a film, 'The Wrecking Season', all about the experience of discovering the connections between these Atlantic communities through beachcombing. Nick referred to himself as a 'wrecker', identifying the practice with a long tradition of Cornish coastal communities salvaging useful materials and other items from wrecked ships and the bounty of the sea. In the film Nick says, 'These days coastal dwellers are not on the whole farmers or fishermen. Their connection with nature is tenuous to say the least. The few wreckers who are left carry the tradition on their shoulders'.*

*The coastal settlements of the Atlantic emerge in this film as communities not only by virtue of their internal associations as singular clusters but also as communities in the plural – interconnected in diverse ways, including through natural processes such as the ocean currents. A concern evident in Nick's work is that people living in coastal places can become alienated and disconnected from nature by losing the ways of life that have traditionally sustained them. They still might be said to constitute communities of a kind but their interdependence is no longer produced through common interest, purpose and local knowledge. They are thus alienated not*

*only from 'nature' but also from the past. However part of the 'traditions' of a place and its associated livelihoods are stories and forms of expression in language and art. The life and works of Nick Darke are a testament to this. His works and the skills and experience of the playwright, fisherman and 'wrecker' gathered within them, derive not only from local history and place but also travel and experience beyond. The words and images of the plays in their turn also travel in a multitude of directions and forms. Just as seeds drift from the Amazon rainforest to wash up on Cornwall's shores so have Cornish people drifted across oceans and between coast and city. Thus we must return to the image of clusters of life, human and non-human, on the edge of the great ocean – a force which generates dispersal and return.*

# 1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis is concerned with activities, meanings and ideologies of fishing *work*, in Cornwall, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. During the research I have encountered various characters with divergent views, some idiosyncratic, some widely shared, on what constitutes fishing work and why it's important. For Nick Darke, whom I regret I did not have the opportunity to meet personally, work was not only writing, but also fishing and combing the beach for salvage. He caught on average about a hundred lobsters a year, far from enough to constitute any significant part of his living, but fishing and salvaging enabled him to more deeply engage with the natural environment around him and to be part of a working maritime community that included friends who depended on fishing for a living; and it also gave him a sense of connection to a familial and communal ancestry. These activities took on additional meaning after he suffered a stroke that affected his speech and writing. Before he died of cancer in 2005 he in was in the process of writing a play that would provide his son with a kind of manual for lobster fishing, and thereby be a vehicle for transmission of knowledge from father to son, an enduring record that would complement his attempts to show his son in practice how to fish.

For another fisherman I interviewed, the work of fishing included making traditional willow lobster pots to sell to tourists and other buyers and demonstrating his skills at fish-festivals – these activities complemented part-time fishing and providing tree and timber cutting services as a 'chainsaw-man'. He saw himself as an authentic descendent of pluralistic *covers* who for many centuries lived and worked in Cornish coves and combined fishing with crofting and other activities. However to some full-time fishermen working from the port of Newlyn, he was regarded as a marginal eccentric and not a 'proper' fisherman because he did not solely depend on fishing for a living. These fishermen would also have distinguished Nick Darke as a 'hobby' fisherman. Yet other fishermen I interviewed had diversified into making art as part of their subsistence and for them this was also 'work', if of a different kind to going fishing. One actor prominent in my research was a former merchant navy captain, who every day for at least five years of his 'retirement', was to be found

rebuilding a former sail fishing vessel – work which, literally, nearly killed him, when he had to be carted off the boat and into an ambulance after a fall.

These are just some of the cases I encountered, examples of a much wider range, including forms of fishing labour in which the household, and not the sea or a harbour, is the primary setting, and various kinds of women's labour (paid and unpaid, within and outside the home) that also enable fishing families and households to survive. However, fishing in Cornwall today is primarily a man's occupation (and perhaps more so than in the past). It is extremely rare to find women working on fishing boats, and in the port of Newlyn, on which my research has focussed, only primary processing of fish occurs, and women employed in the fishing industry tend to be employed in secondary processing, or in the business and management side of the industry. Women have always been strong figures in the management of fishing households and therefore there is some continuity with the past in respect of these roles. However even the manager and public representative of the largest fishing firm in Newlyn acknowledged that she was working very much within a 'man's world'.

Within this wide range of forms of fishing labour, my thesis deals mainly with men's work and in particular the meanings and ideologies of work surrounding the notion of the 'free', 'self-sufficient' and *Cornish* fisherman. Whilst the various activities Cornish fishermen have combined in different historic periods certainly point to their adaptability, they also have something to say about the precariousness of fishing and its relationship to other precarious, new forms of economy, such as tourism. In his introduction to *On Work* (1988), Ray Pahl cautions against a romantic view of artisans and other labourers in the pre-industrial past. In the same volume, Ronco and Peattie suggest that 'the demand that work should be satisfying seems to be a modern one' (1988: 710). Both essays imply that contemporary attitudes to work are commonly informed by interpretations of the past in the context of current conditions. Cornish fishers and miners in the 'pre-industrial' age would not have *chosen* those dangerous occupations but did them because that was what they and their ancestors had 'always' done, and given the choice, might well have taken easier paths. Yet in the modern era, the situation is somewhat different, although not entirely. In Cornish fishing ports, after the First and Second World Wars, and especially at Newlyn where offshore, 'deep-sea' fishing dominated in the twentieth

century, many parents have encouraged their children to pursue other less demanding, less dangerous forms of work, which promised steadier incomes. Nevertheless, many times during my research I met fishermen who *had* chosen their occupation – who described for example, leaving school as soon as they could, to go to sea, because fishing was all they had ever wanted to do; others had started out as clerks in insurance offices, or as motor mechanics, sometimes as far away from Cornwall as London, but felt stifled working indoors and in the city, and longed for the sea and its different rhythms, routines and unpredictability.

Despite globally declining fish stocks, increasing regulation of fishers' activities and in the last few decades especially, rising costs, restricted access and declining incomes (Symes and Phillipson 2009; Urquhart, Acott, and Zhao In press.) fishers in Cornwall, as elsewhere in Europe, remain remarkably persistent and committed – even, like many small and medium-scale farmers, attempting to maintain their occupation in the face of negligible or deficit profit. There is a particularly strong, romantic identification between fishing and Cornwall. This ideology is something continuously remade and re-invented – drawing on senses of the past as well as anticipations of the future - and it is made in the context of mutual regard and social encounter, between diverse groups such as fishers, local historians, heritage-makers, artists and tourists. Therefore this thesis asks not only, *what kinds of meanings and ideologies surround Cornish fishing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, but also, *what kinds of knowledge and skill are embedded and privileged and what are the different forms and contexts for knowledge transmission within which such ideologies are reproduced?* I enquire into this on various levels, temporal (pasts, presents and futures) but also spatial, as fishing economies and techniques are increasingly embedded within international and global markets, scientific knowledge-systems and regulatory technologies. The politics of fishing work and knowledge is not only constructed in terms of the mutual regard between fishers and visitors to the seaside but also between fishers, scientists and government and in terms of the politics of the environment.

I embarked on this research with a view of the fishing industry informed by dominant narratives within scientific and social studies literature on fisheries, as well as in policy and media representations. The sense of 'crisis' these emphasise (for an overview see McGoodwin 1995) seemed to be confirmed by my early fieldwork

forays and conversations. There were several recent events and long-term conditions that converged around the time I first visited Newlyn to do research in 2008 including: the financial ‘crash’ and economic recession; a sharp rise in fuel prices which impacted negatively on fisher incomes; a court-case involving the prosecution of Newlyn’s largest employer, boat owners and merchants; and within the last decade or so there have been several large schemes of fishing vessel decommissioning and ongoing conflict and contestation around the impact of regulatory policies. These events heightened local anxieties and pessimisms and reinforced my early impressions.

In the early stages of ‘writing-up’, I continued to work within a framework informed by dominant narratives of crisis, decline and rupture. However as I worked through my data, conducted further research and developed the thesis, another view emerged. This thesis shows that there are other stories to tell about the fishing industry in the UK in the early twenty-first century. This is not to brush aside valid concerns about the long-term decline of the industry<sup>1</sup>, the state of fish stocks and marine ecosystems or the viability of local livelihoods. Indeed the latter concern frames this whole thesis. Rather it is to recognise that there is another ‘side to the coin’ so to speak – that amidst crisis and decline, there can be creativity, renewal and innovation. Where there are breaks or ‘ruptures’ in knowledge transmission, people are capable of drawing on diverse kinds of knowledge (including those associated with decline, loss or crisis in earlier eras) in order to bridge those gaps; often adapting or salvaging old methods, artefacts, and representations, for new purposes and to shape new opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup> The number of fishermen in England and Wales peaked around 1881 with 58,000 recorded in the census of that year (Rule 2006), although there would have been many more for whom fishing was not a part-time or occasional activity, as well as many women and children employed on shore. By 1938 the number of fishermen in the UK had fallen to 38,000 (regular) and 8,444 (part-time) and in 2008 there were 10,242 (regular) and 2,519 (part-time), a decrease of nearly 1/3<sup>rd</sup> on the figures for 1998 (Marine and Fisheries Agency, *UK Sea Fisheries Statistics 2008*). Landings of fish in Great Britain/UK peaked around 1913 (1,199,000 tonnes) and since then have steadily declined (with dramatic downward spikes during the First and Second World Wars followed by periods of brief partial recovery). In 2008, landings of 400,000 tonnes were lower than the 553,000 tonnes landed in 1887 (Cracknell 2009).

This perspective encapsulates the anthropological contribution of this thesis. My aim is to produce an innovative and original approach to the subjects of fisheries, knowledge, human-environment relationships, memory, heritage, place and livelihood, because all these themes are brought together, when too often they are treated as separate specialist fields. I do so by looking at the meaning of fishing work in different contexts (the spaces of a village and a harbour; conflicts between fishers and the state; narratives and life-histories; art, craft and heritage). This is not done arbitrarily. Rather it has been compelled by my research site, where all these things were found together and interacting, and this is what makes Cornwall, and more specifically Newlyn, a fascinating subject for anthropological enquiry.

A number of theoretical approaches are combined in this study. I draw in particular on Weberian based work, but also on Marxism, as reflected in for example the approach of *Living the Fishing* by Thompson, Wailey and Lummis (1983). The authors note that 'Fishing communities are particularly valuable in presenting sharply different social systems operating within a common technological world and an international market' (p.368). Like other parts of the economy, the fishing industry as a whole has been transformed by changes like mechanisation, the spread of the capitalist wage system and increasing state regulation and professionalization. However fishing continues to carry a strong sense of alterity and difference, with distinct regional traditions as well as more broader cultural differences. In Cornwall, income continues to be distributed within fishing crews through a share system but even in fisheries where wage-relations prevail the ship-board working life of fishers, differs vastly from that of working in a factory or office. Senses of independence and freedom continue to be strong values and motivations in, pursuing fishing livelihoods (van Ginkle 2001), and family continues to be important as in the particular division of labour between spouses and partners, and in father to son transmission.

*Living the Fishing* represents a rare and important social history of fishing communities in Britain, that crosses the boundaries of history, anthropology and sociology. The study focused on fishing ports of Scotland and the Northwest and East coasts of England, teasing out through archival and oral history sources unique regional histories and cultures of fishing. Its political economy approach bridges materialist and ideological perspectives, bringing religion, government and the role

of women and children to the fore. A limitation is that the book almost completely fails to acknowledge the extensive history of fishing in the Westcountry and in particular Cornwall. A strength, on the other hand, is that it went some way towards debunking the myth that today's small, independent fishing communities are survivals of traditional, natural ways of life with distant origins. In fact as the Scottish Western Isles context demonstrates very well, fishing has often been a strategy taken up in the face of marginalisation and dispossession such as the Highland Clearances. However this view can also be overemphasized as I show of the Westcountry context in Chapter Three.

During my research I did not find that class was a particularly salient aspect in the consciousness of my research subjects. Whilst this does not preclude a more rigorously Marxist approach, my preference towards not totally underpinning the study with an extensive class framework has been guided by my concern to understand and present the experiences of my research subjects in terms of how they themselves see and interpret the issues they struggle with. I discuss this issue further in Chapter Two. Early anthropological studies in Europe (from around the 1960s, for example Frankenberg 1966) focused on how patterns of deindustrialisation and urbanisation had consequences in terms of eroding 'traditional' patterns of work, family life and community. My study builds on some later accounts (for example Ennew 1980; Nadel-Klein 2003) that do not presume the prior existence of static, essential, parochial and bounded rural cultures. In the manner of E.P. Thompson (1963), I am also concerned to show how the subjects of my research are involved in actively *making* their experience, in *place-making*, (including aspects of marginality) and in *making work* and the 'social construction of work' (Ronco and Peattie 1988: 721). In Cornwall these experiences are shaped by a long relationship with the sea, and between the country and the city (Williams 1975). These relationships, past and present, are continuously invested with new meaning and adapted to new ends, in light of broader changes in economy and attitudes to work.

More recently, Mollona's ethnographic study of Sheffield steel workers (2009) has shown how different forms of capitalist organisation can co-exist, suggesting that economic history does not unfold in discrete stages. Whilst he found that the existence of small and medium-scale firms reflect resourceful and flexible economic strategies on the part of their workers and owners, they are also underpinned by

relations of exploitation that impact on family and community lives. Mollona also highlights the ongoing interplay of artisanship and more proletarian work relationships and practices. My study also points to the non-uniform and non-linear character of socio-economic change, and this is reflected in how knowledge-transmission occurs in unpredictable and diverse ways. This helps to maintain ideologies around fishing in Cornwall, particularly notions of resourcefulness, independence and expertise. These ideas are configured at least in part by processes of representation through which fishing communities and the nation-state have defined one another, interacting with complex, longstanding and shifting meanings of the sea and territorial margins. Whilst acknowledging that this ideology can serve to mask relations of exploitation and dependence my research suggests that it can also be a source of resistance, innovation and progressive change.

For the remainder of this chapter I shall introduce the research site and give an account of some of the challenges and methodological issues encountered in the research, before proceeding in Chapter Two to further consider key concepts within the context of existing literatures.

## **Research site**

Newlyn fishing port is located in West Penwith, a region in the far west of Cornwall, southwest England (see Figs.1 and 2 for maps). The harbour and village encapsulate the broader history and political economy of Cornwall – a place often described as ‘rich in resources and poor in wealth’. Cornish landscapes and culture have been shaped by a history of extraction – through agriculture, fishing, mining, and quarrying. As these traditional industries have undergone decline tourism has grown in their wake, which feeds on another form of extraction – the extraction of meaning<sup>2</sup> through representations of labour and place (such as art, literature, and museum heritage). However traditional livelihoods and literary or artistic romanticism are both so embedded in Cornwall’s history and representation that it is difficult to claim one as more ‘indigenous’ than the other. Whilst tourism in Newlyn itself is not well developed, its historical development and contemporary dilemmas

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<sup>2</sup> My thanks to the ‘Penzance convention 2012’ for highlighting this dual nature of extraction in Cornish history.

have been shaped by the interaction of these two different modes of extraction. Newlyn not only has a long history of fishing but was also the site for an important artist colony in the late nineteenth century (the Newlyn School).

West Penwith, or the Land's End Peninsular as it is also known, is England's most south-western extremity, jutting out to meet the Atlantic Ocean. *Pennwydh* is a Cornish name deriving from *penn* meaning 'headland' and *wydh* meaning 'at the end'. It is an outcrop of mostly granite, but also greenstone and Mylor slate. Inland it rises to a moorland plateau, as high as 252 meters, scattered with structures dating back to the Neolithic (4000-2500 BC) – tor enclosures such as Carn Galva and Trencrom, and megalithic chambered tombs such as the *quoits* at Zennor, Chûn and Lanyon (Tilley and Bennett 2001). From here water spills in streams down its flanks of gorse and cascades into hidden valleys. Stacks of dark angular granite stand like sentinels on the sloping cliffs. The sea in winter heaves heavy with the Atlantic swell but on calm summer days takes on a shiny translucence in hues of green and turquoise blue. The water is clean and clear and refracts the lustre of pale yellow sands. Amongst the granite and heather, hardy lichens and wild flowers and grasses grow, sea pinks in early spring and summer, whilst in the skies, kestrels and hawks sweep low over the precipices.

The peninsular extends east about as far as the town of St Ives on the north coast and Penzance on the south coast (see Fig.2). Between them the land is just a few miles in breadth and marked by the Hayle River estuary and the St Michael's Way – a walking path between the coasts and once part of a pilgrimage route from Ireland to Santiago de Compostela. Between the moorland interior and the sea's edge is a thin band of farmland divided by the old field system – small square parcels of pasture mostly used for hardy breeds of dairy but also beef cattle, sheep and arable such as potatoes, cauliflower and broccoli. The field boundaries are marked with granite dry stonewalls, the foundations of many dating back to the Bronze Age (2400 – 800 BC). In fact the local granite is used so profusely in the region that, 'the stony nature of the landscape is reflected in everything from cottages and farmhouses to walls, stiles and bridges, a natural harmony of man with the landscape' (Lawman 2002). This granite architecture is most striking in the small fishing coves that are dotted along the southern coast of Penwith, where the houses and harbours are of the

same stout quartz-grey quality – Priest’s Cove, Porthgwarra, Sennen Cove, Penberth, Lamorna Cove, and Mousehole.

The most important industries in Penwith have historically been extractive – mining, quarrying, agriculture and fishing. There are no longer any working mines in this part of Cornwall and fishing and agriculture now employ a minority of the population, although greater than the averages for the Southwest and for England and Wales. The five largest sectors of employment in 2001 (in ascending order) were: wholesale and retail (18.42%), health and social work (12.26%), hotels and catering (11.35%), real estate renting and business activities (10.09%), and manufacturing (8.35%). The region is therefore very dependent on tourism as well as public sector work; much of the employment is seasonal and/or low paid and there is high unemployment (4.21% compared to 2.57% average for the southwest and 3.35% average for England)<sup>3</sup>.

Newlyn is the principle fishing port in Cornwall and until recently was the premier fishing port in England (in terms of value of landings); it is now second behind Brixham in Devon. Situated in the western corner of Mount’s Bay, on the lee side of the Land’s End Peninsular, it is sheltered from the prevailing south-west winds that blow in from the Atlantic. Its harbour supports a large and diverse fishing fleet including beam trawlers, stern trawlers, gill-netters, long-liners, crabbers and hand-line fishing boats. From this position on the most westerly tip of England, these vessels exploit fisheries primarily in the Celtic Sea, but also the English Channel, the Bristol Channel and the Irish Sea. The waters of the Celtic Sea are particularly rich and fertile as this is where warm and cold waters mix with the meeting of several currents including the North Atlantic Drift (the northern extension of the Gulf Stream). The diversity and productivity of the region is also due to the fact this region lies on the edge of the continental shelf from which nutrient-rich upwelling occurs (the rising of deep cold water to shallower depths).

Historically, sea fisheries can be classified into three main gear types – traps (including pots), nets, and lines. The prey also falls into three classifications; shellfish, *pelagics* and *demersals*. Pelagics are fish that swim mid-water and migrate to spawn such as herring, mackerel and sardines. Demersals are fish that live on or

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<sup>3</sup> Census, 2001: Office for National Statistics

near the sea bottom such as cod, hake, flounder, plaice, sole and whiting. In Cornwall the most important fish for the export industry up until around the turn of the twentieth century was the pilchard (*sardine pilchardus*). Two different methods for catching pilchards evolved and entailed different labour relations: *seine nets*, worked from beaches and using small boats, and *drift nets*, also cast inshore but from larger boats working under sail. These larger boats were operated from ports where there was some protection provided by a harbour. Mackerel were also caught in drift nets, whilst cod, hake and ling were caught using *longlines* of baited hooks and also trawl nets. The small Cornish fishing coves clustered around a beach were (and still are) limited to open boats under five meters working hand-lines, pots and nets. ‘Covers’ would often work as agricultural labourers or on their own crofts, whilst the larger harbours were home to many full-time fishers. Between the early and mid twentieth century, motorization of fishing boats replaced sail and oar and combined with the mechanization of fishing gear and later developments in navigational and fish-finding technologies increased range and intensity across these different methods.

**Table 1: The Newlyn fleet – number of vessels by gear type and number of fishermen employed in 2009. Data courtesy of CIFCA<sup>4</sup>, formerly the Cornwall Sea Fisheries Committee.**

<b>FISHING METHOD</b>	<b>NO. OF VESSELS</b>	<b>NO. OF FISHERMEN EMPLOYED</b>
BEAM TRAWL	23 (7 LAID UP)	64
TRAWL	9 (2 INACTIVE)	14
RING NET	4	12
STATIC	59 (7 INACTIVE)	104
HANDLINE	61	61
	<b>TOTAL 156</b>	<b>TOTAL 255</b>

A survey conducted in 2009 by the Cornwall Sea Fisheries Committee (now the Cornwall Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority, or CIFCA) found that there

<sup>4</sup> Cornwall Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (CIFCA).

were 610 registered and licensed vessels operating out of 41 ports in Cornwall, employing 1037 fishermen. Newlyn was the base port for 156 of these vessels whilst a number of visiting boats also use the port to land to the daily market. Most of Cornwall's offshore fleet is based at Newlyn, including the substantial *beam trawl* fleet, which 'operates exclusively offshore for monkfish, megrim, lemon sole and sole' (Pawson, Pickett, and Walker 2002: 58) as well as a smaller number of *stern* or *otter trawlers* which operate both inshore and offshore depending on size. Of the 59 vessels using *static gear* this includes larger boats fishing offshore using hake nets and *tangle nets* for monkfish, turbot and rays<sup>5</sup>, while the inshore fleet set *gill nets* for demersal fish, sometimes around wrecks, and for pelagic fish, such as herring, bass and grey mullet. Some of the netters also set longlines and the static gear boats also include a number of boats using pots to target crab. These may be inshore or offshore and the larger boats may work more than a thousand pots a day. The remainder of the boats is primarily *handline* boats, worked single-handedly and targeting mackerel and bass.

Demographic indicators for Newlyn are provided for by figures for Penzance South, a local authority ward that includes the neighbouring villages of Mousehole and Paul and roughly corresponds with the older boundaries of Paul Parish. Census figures show that altogether 4,919 people lived in Penzance South in 2001. Of this number only 98 people, 5% of the employed population were working in the fishing industry, while 394 (20.5%) were working in the hotel, catering, real estate and renting sectors<sup>6</sup>. There is therefore a need for local employment far beyond what the fishing industry can provide. However, a quarter of all fishermen and fishing vessels in Cornwall operate out of Newlyn. When compared with historical figures, these statistics represent two trends: 1) the shift in the beginning of the last century from fishing to tourism as a major source of employment for coastal communities, and 2) the increasing concentration of fishing within a few key ports, especially Newlyn. This partly explains why the fishing industry in Newlyn apparently looms so large in local identities, in a way that is disproportionate to the number of people it employs in the immediate locality. It is also a matter of topography.

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<sup>5</sup> 'Boats of between 8-12 m are capable of setting up to 15,000 m of net each' (Pawson, Pickett and Walker 2002: 58)

<sup>6</sup> Figures sourced from Office for National Statistics, Census 2001: Penzance South ward.

Newlyn has been described as a ‘dark, brick, tumble-down-to-the-docks Cornish fishing port, a few miles from Lands End on the most seaward tip of England’ (Kurlansky 1999: 208); an apt and precise description, except I would say there is a constant play of light and dark, with the dark exterior of the Victorian terraces prominent one moment, and the many half-hidden and verdant gardens vivid the next. The scene shifts constantly with the changeable weather and with the mirror of the sea. Besides the main through roads there are many smaller lanes and all lead down and to the sea.

Newlyn evolved from three settlements and some historians have argued these were regarded as distinct by their residents (Mattingly 2009). These were Tolcarne, Street-an-Nowan and Newlyn Town, and these names are sometimes still used (see map, Fig.3). There are several roads into Newlyn: New Road – running along the seafront from Penzance; The Coombe – coming in from behind the village and connecting with the B3315 Penzance to Lands End road; Fore Street – the sea-road approach from Mousehole, and Chywoone Hill (formerly Paul Hill) – leading from the parish village of Paul. The Coombe takes its name from the bubbling brook that runs alongside it, down past the row of the tall granite buildings of the fish merchants with their wooden shutters fronting the loading bays and large family firm names printed against dour colours of green, blue and brown. On the adjacent side is the Anglican church of St. Peters, and that side of the brook is the area known as Tolcarne. Along with housing, it includes the Tolcarne Inn, a funeral firm, a Modern Art Gallery, and a striking monument to fishermen in the form of a trawlerman throwing a rope.

A small bridge connects Tolcarne and Street-an-Nowan. Street-an-Nowan adjacent to the harbour is where the main roads in and out of Newlyn meet – a cluster of shops and services including bakers, the Co-operative food store, the Royal Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen, a post-office, the Cornish Fish Producers Organization, Barclays Bank and several pubs. During my fieldwork there was always a busy atmosphere in this area as people stopped off to and from work and school or came off the harbour quays for supplies or refreshment at one of the dockside pubs – The Swordfish, The Star or The Dolphin. Standing imposingly at the head of the harbour are the offices of the harbour commissioners and W.S. Stevenson and Sons, the largest of the company boat-owners, vessel agents and fish

merchants. Extending outwards from them are the outer harbour piers, the North and South Piers, and enclosed inside, the Mary Williams Pier and the old medieval quay. Small mechanical workshops and storehouses servicing the fisheries run along the North Pier on the western side of the harbour. Leading to the eastern side is the fish market, a simple large square building of concrete block-work. Many visitors and tourists may be surprised that from the centre of the village this building obstructs the view to the sea. Along with many villagers I sheltered in this building during the ‘turning on of the lights’ Christmas ceremony on a very wet night, and sang carols. The annual congregation in the market, the address by the local mayor, the lighting up of the boats – all seemed to be a willing performance on the part of the village to emphasize their common bonds identified with the fishing industry.

Far away from the harbour, high up on Paul Hill, is the Gwavas housing estate, where construction began in the 1930s when many of the older houses of the working poor in Newlyn were designated as ‘slums’, condemned and demolished. Lower on Paul Hill are the substantial Victorian terraces that escaped the clearances. The more wealthy residents of Newlyn historically occupied these. Viewing one of these properties when looking to rent a room, I was told how friendly and gossipy the rows continued to be, and how the maze of paths connecting them allowed residents to pass easily along and between the rows without having to step foot on the road. Throughout the village there are various discreet way-markers relating to the heritage walk *The Newlyn Trail*. Way-markers for the trail are cast in bronze, the material of choice for the craftsman of the ‘Newlyn Industrial Class’ set up to give fishermen work during spells of unemployment. An extension of the trail incorporates *Wells, Shoots and Pumps* (Lomax 2007) – the communal water facilities that had an important household function before water was piped directly to households as well as having a social function in being a meeting point for the women of the village.

The topography of Newlyn therefore connects everyday experience to both the past and present day fishing industry. Central to this experience is the physical presence of the harbour. However during my research, the harbour has emerged less as a symbol of unity and more as a symbol of social difference, conflict and boundaries.

# **Methodologies**

## **Beginnings**

This research originated from a proposal for a quite different PhD project on sheep farming and ecological conservation in upland Wales. The project was sound enough in conception but for one reason or another I found it difficult to get it off the ground, intellectually and personally. I began to think about Cornwall as an alternative site for research. It is a broadly similar region to Wales, with a history, culture and geography to some extent experienced as separate and distinctive from Anglo-Saxon 'England'; a region dependent on the extraction of natural resources and tourism and a region of marked poverty recognized by Objective One status granted by the EU in 2001. My motivations for doing the research were initially that I was curious about how the energies of sea and land in Cornwall mould each other; the ways in which rural production shapes experiences and perceptions of land/sea-scapes; and the ties between a particular rural industry and a particular place (how each shapes the character of the other and the forms of knowledge that underpin their reproduction). I wanted to know better the region I came from and to experience and learn the craft and way of life of being a fisherman – which I had imagined somewhat romantically. However in practice these aims presented many difficult challenges – personal and methodological. It was not as easy to 'step into' life as a fisherman, or life in a fishing village, as I had first imagined. It took me a long time to develop a rudimentary knowledge of the different components of the fishing industry – local, national and international; to develop my confidence as a researcher; and to refine my research questions and methodologies.

## **Summary of research methods**

The core of my research data derives from an extensive period of fieldwork between autumn 2008 and autumn 2009. This was supplemented with short visits over the following three years. However my personal ties to Cornwall and its relative proximity to my academic base in London meant that my research has really been more of a continuous and ongoing process, shaped only by degrees of nearness and distance as I moved back and forth between city and coast. In addition, researching Cornwall and its fishing communities also involved absorbing the rich social history

documented in memoirs and history books available in London based institutions such as the British Library and also navigating the constantly shifting and expanding range of web-based resources which the fishing industry and fishing communities are increasingly engaging with. Neither of these methods was merely ‘background’ research; both were central to the ethnography of a place and an industry. Learning about the social history of Newlyn, fishing and Cornwall was part of doing a historical ethnography and history was all the time being brought up by my research subjects, who cited history books and memoirs and who (in some cases) had written, or were writing their own books. Following the ever changing web resources on fishing meanwhile was helpful for following discussions of local developments in places like Newlyn, but it was also essential to learning about the common occupational, technological and regulatory world of the fisherman. Some web resources are useful for fishermen’s everyday work – whether checking the weather or recent allocations of quota and fishermen are increasingly using the web to market their own fish, for example running blogs of their time at sea.

These two components of understanding a place and an industry – historical ethnography and learning about an occupational community – were pursued through a number of other methods in the field:

- Formal and informal unstructured interviews including life histories
- Attending exhibitions in art galleries and museums involving visual research of images and artefacts relating to the sea, fishing heritage and local history
- Visiting archives and examining documents, images and newspapers
- Completing basic training to obtain Sea Survival and Health and Safety Certificates – now compulsory requirements for fishermen
- Gaining experience onboard fishing vessels
- Learning to sail a restored heritage fishing boat

During the research I have frequently come across (and perhaps been particularly drawn to) images of different kinds, especially artworks, photographs, and postcards. These reference various eras and were found in different contexts (for example books, archives, the web, museums, pubs, the Fishermen’s Mission). I have been intrigued by their ambiguity – evoking something both of the past, and the past in the present. I use many images within the thesis and find them particularly effective (as I hope readers will too) not only as illustrators of social change, but also in conveying

my experience of fieldwork in which past and present seemed to be always jostling up against one another, sometimes meeting seamlessly, at other times pulling apart. For this reason and so as not to disturb the flow of the text, I present images grouped in sections following relevant chapters, so that readers may find their own rhythm in viewing the images and finding connections and contrasts between them.

### **The experience of fieldwork**

Despite having been intrigued to study Newlyn because of its industrial as well as communal tensions, I was unprepared for how the level of industrialization would influence my experience of fieldwork in ways that might have been quite different had I selected a smaller, inshore fishing port. The growth of a substantial offshore fleet at Newlyn, especially the beam trawlers from the 1980s onwards, meant that Newlyn became a capitalist deep-sea<sup>7</sup> fishing port within a small village. Only recently were pontoons built with EU funds making the port more accessible and user-friendly for smaller boats (previously they had to vie for space along the piers with the larger boats). There have always been many independent and inshore boats, but in the last few decades Newlyn particularly developed the feel of a company town. The offices of the harbour commissioners and W.S. Stevenson and Sons stand imposingly at the head of the harbour granting management the ability to monitor everything that goes on in the harbour. The firm is not only the largest employer in the area but also owns many properties. Commercial buildings (and in the past, vehicles too) were painted in the company's distinctive colours. Their presence is not as imposing now as it was at the firm's height, but it remains very influential. The Fisherman's Mission and the cluster of dockside pubs administer to the different needs of fishing crews who might be at sea for up to ten days at a time. As many people told me, some with pride, and some with caution: Newlyn is a 'rough and ready', 'real, working seaport'. It was a culture however that was difficult to access as a fieldworker and one through which ran an undercurrent of pessimism and conflict.

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<sup>7</sup> 'Deep-sea fishing' fishing is a colloquial term for offshore and distant-water fishing. Newlyn offshore vessels routinely venture up to a hundred miles or more from the Cornish coast but are not engaged in fishing the 'deep sea' which in a scientific sense refers to the lowest level of the oceans.

When I told a fisheries training coordinator that I was doing research on ‘intergenerational relationships in Cornish fishing’ she asked why I had chosen Newlyn and not one of the smaller ports where inter-generational relationships are still strong. ‘Newlyn’s a transit port’ she said, adding that in Newlyn everyone was ‘doom and gloom about the fishing industry, but it’s the parents that are putting the young people off’. It was difficult at the time to appreciate what she meant, but eventually I did understand how Newlyn was very particular and not only in being a port that pulled in workers and boats from other areas. Declining incomes and profit resulting from the pressure of quotas and high fuel prices and the fact the deep-sea fishing boats can be at sea for ten days or more at a time meant that these boats were struggling to make money and recruit young fishermen. A threat of redundancies and the visible presence of beam-trawlers tied up in the harbour unable to go to sea created an atmosphere of stagnation and malaise and the firm that owned the large company fleet were often referred to in ways that cast them as a mysterious, coercive and malevolent force hanging over all. Also there seemed to be two different sides to social life in Newlyn that converged around the harbour but nonetheless at times felt distant from one another, in antagonism even. There were no clear boundaries between one and the other, but a sense of difference and divide was felt in certain contexts.

Newlyn is a diverse place and the presence of the fishing industry has attracted a range of migrants, from itinerant deck-hands to designers and artists. As a friend of my landlady said to me, this made it a place ‘rich for anthropological study’. At the same time he warned me away from the harbour-side pubs which have a reputation as the drinking dens of deckhands who he said come of long trips on the deep-sea vessels with a wad of cash to spend on booze and drugs. Social problems relating to drug-use at Newlyn were not only hearsay, as testified by the Superintendent of the Fisherman’s Mission. They have been fostered by the demands of deep-sea fishing, and by a situation in which periodic fishing booms and cash surpluses have been interspersed with periods of unemployment and low income. Similar issues have affected other ports in Britain which depend, or formerly depended, on fishing. When I visited some of the harbour-side pubs at Newlyn I did experience an edgy and high-octane atmosphere at times, but their ‘rough’ reputation is also something deliberately stoked by patrons and other locals.

Initially it was a real struggle to find anywhere to live in Newlyn (and at first I had to take a room in Penzance) but by November 2008, I had found a room to rent in a former artist's house near the top of Chywoone Hill (known to locals as 'Old Paul Hill'). The house was on the market and empty. I had a sweeping panorama of Mount's Bay from my bedroom window – the big blue sea fringed by St Michael's Mount to the far east of the bay, then Penzance with its prominent church and 'Jubilee Pool' (a Victorian lido on the seafront), and along the promenade to Newlyn on the western side. In Newlyn itself I could see the harbour and fishing fleet whose number would increase when the weather was rough. I'd often wake up to rain and tree branches lashing my windows in the November gales and jackdaws fighting and squabbling in the Montgomery pines. The owner of the house was an eccentric but very friendly antiques dealer living with two young sons. She showed me a side of Newlyn I otherwise might have missed. I went along to some karate classes with her sons at The Centre, a Methodist hall, and one night before Christmas we walked a spiral of green foliage at The Centre and each laid a candle – a reinvention of a pagan rite.

Most days I'd go out and walk or cycle around Newlyn, Penzance and Mousehole. Initially I attempted doing surveys in the harbour but it was very difficult to catch fishermen when they were a) in port and b) not very busy either readying to go to sea or just returning from a long trip. In addition there is a problem with 'survey fatigue' amongst fishermen as they are constantly required to participate in government and scientific research, as well as all the other paperwork and bureaucracy that fishing now entails. I was keen to feel useful and more integrated within the community so I attempted to find a job. I tried boat-owners, merchants, bakers, grocery shops, and local agencies administering the fishing industry – all with no luck. Employers either took on short-term staff during the summer season, or were actually laying-off workers at that time. The recession was just beginning to bite and there was a lot of fear and anxiety about what the future held in store, although this was combined with a hard-edged fatalism and the view that whatever was in store could be weathered since the fishing community was used to surviving ups and downs. I became a regular at one of the fishmongers and he would always ask how my job hunt was going. 'No luck', I'd reply and he'd shake his head and say 'ah it's terrible at the moment', throwing in some extra fish.

I spent some time sitting chatting in the Fishermen's Mission and pubs, and went out on a small punt with a fisherman handlining for bass and mackerel. Although this latter experience was wonderful and one from which I learnt a lot (even though we didn't catch any fish), in all these contexts I felt awkward merely being an observer. It was important for me to feel involved and useful. The bigger boats such as the beam trawlers seemed very inaccessible as they went to sea for long periods and I had at this point no sea-going experience, it was the worst time of year weather-wise and I had been warned about the safety records of the company-owned trawlers. It was a strange for me to feel an outsider in the place where I was from and created some internal conflicts that a researcher in a totally unfamiliar environment may have been less prone to. I was in need of a catalyst to open up new research avenues and shift my research into another gear.

Two events that occurred during the period of fieldwork, and which I simultaneously followed, proved to be catalysts for driving the research in new directions. One was the judicial sentencing in January 2009 of the owners and skippers of six fishing vessels belonging to the port of Newlyn in Cornwall. The charges related to the landing of non-quota fish species and the falsification of logbooks. One local newspaper emphasized that these were family enterprises and that several of the defendants were pensioners. These defendants seemed genuinely surprised and angry to find themselves prosecuted by the state for what they believed, rightly or wrongly, to be the pursuit of an honest livelihood. Six months later, the trial which had begun in 2002 was concluded with the sentencing of the firm W.S. Stevenson and Sons for the sale of the illegal fish with falsified sales records. As the firm is the major fish merchant in the port of Newlyn and owns a large fleet of boats, various media voiced concern about the future of the fishing industry in Newlyn, whilst others praised justice for acts they identified with piracy and greed.

I have been interested in the images of family, community and culture evoked during this event, in the different interpretations given in the media (Fig.6) and by the participants themselves and other local commentators. One elderly defendant struggled to understand the changes in the relationship between fishers and the state since he had begun his career soon after the Second World War. His wife, a co-owner of the boat which their son skippered, could not understand why they were

being punished for providing their crewmen and their families with a living by landing fish that under EU quota rules would otherwise have to have been dumped at sea. For others, the trial was one more demonstration of corruption, stagnation and backwardness amongst sections of the fishing industry in Newlyn which undermined and corroded local economic prosperity and community. In levying sentencing, the judge himself seemed caught between these interpretations. An idea of community was reflected in concern about the potential knock-on effects of financial sanctions for 'Cornwall's last great fishing town', but there was less explicit acknowledgement that the group of 'conspirators' as the judge described them, might also be regarded as a 'community' of sorts.

Newspaper headlines relating to the trial included:

**'Skippers in the dock as Cornwall's last great fishing town awaits fate. Fishing Trawler industry in Newlyn under threat after quota breach puts war veteran, ex-policeman and 15 others on trial' (*The Guardian*, 28 August 2007).**

**'Fishing pirates of Newlyn caught in law's net. Newlyn fishermen fooled themselves that quota rules were unworkable and so it was morally acceptable to break them, says Charles Clover' (*The Telegraph*, 9 January 2009).**

The other event concerned the restoration of a Cornish sail fishing vessel, of the type known as a *lugger*, salvaged from its muddy grave on the shores of the Penryn River, near Falmouth. Originally built in 1884, one hundred and twenty-three years later it was re-launched in Newlyn harbour with the original name *Ripple* and fishing registration number SS.19 (Fig.8). In 2007 the vessel was hauled to the sea by a local rugby team watched by a crowd of several hundred, and blessed by the local parish minister. *Ripple's* rescuer and restorer is a retired sea captain, John Lambourn, who saw the vessel as a vehicle for community and economic regeneration, a 'tangible example of getting the past to work for the future'. For John, the boat represented something of a challenge to what he identified as the failings of the 'status-quo' in present-day Newlyn, through inspiring new ideas for the future through recovering knowledge, skills and ways of life associated with the past. Most of the work entailed in reconstructing *Ripple* had already been completed before I arrived in the field. However I became actively involved with *Ripple* as a crewmember. Alongside museum and art exhibitions and heritage festivals *Ripple* has helped bring into view

images of community in nineteenth and early twentieth century Cornwall, when distinct fishing communities developed and expanded with the aid of these kinds of boats. However John Lambourn had vocal and controversial visions for the harbour, beyond *Ripple*. Contestation came to head in a dispute between the Harbour Commissioners over the future of the Newlyn fish market. A twist to the tale is that the main antagonists, the Stevenson and Lambourn families, are linked by marriage<sup>8</sup>. The juxtaposition of these events and actors provided a series of metonyms through which to examine the micro-politics and the broader forces at play in the struggle for livelihoods. These events and the actors at the heart of them are particular to Newlyn but the issues are relevant to many other coastal and rural situations.

Recently John and the *Ripple* have become quite well known both locally and further abroad and have even been featured on a BBC programme about heritage initiatives in Britain. However at the time I met him the *Ripple* had not even made a maiden return voyage to sea. The character of the boat and even John himself seemed in such stark contrast to their surroundings that it sparked my curiosity. I helped John form a crew and learn the skills required to get *Ripple* sailing again. Anthropologists have commented on the parallels between anthropological field work and apprenticeship and some have adopted processes of apprenticeship into methodologies as ways of studying apprenticeship-style learning (Coy 1989; Marchand 2008; Simpson 2006). As I was interested in knowledge transmission, I was also seeking an apprenticeship of a kind. In the case of *Ripple*, it was particularly significant that I was a novice learning amongst other novices which created a distinctive apprenticeship experience. It enabled me to step out of my exceptional role as ethnographer, to feel a sense of comradeship and shared endeavour with my fellow learners and to be more involved than perhaps I would have been able to be on a commercial fishing vessel. The learning experience also opened up my eyes to the history of the Cornish fishing industry in a very physical, tangible way and inspired me to expand my research methodologies. This included exploratory visits to the archives where I was able to examine documents to build a picture of the social history of the fishing industry in the lugger era. My experiences also led to a new perspective on local museum displays and art exhibitions depicting

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<sup>8</sup> John's brother, a fisherman, is married to Elizabeth Stevenson.

fishing heritage. Later, as John became more and more embroiled in the micro-politics of harbour management, regeneration and investment, the deceptively simple and benign seeming *Ripple* proved to be a metonym for a much wider set of issues embracing the relationship between coastal industry, tourism and heritage.

In early 2009 I returned to live in my hometown of Falmouth. Having some distance on my field-site (which was about a 50 minute drive west from Falmouth) gave me more confidence and certainty in my position as a researcher. My experience as a participant observer became focused on *Ripple* but during that year and in subsequent shorter field trips I continued to follow-up research with members of the fishing industry, principally through the method of unstructured interviewing and, in a few cases, life histories. My method for finding contacts for research was mainly using the ‘snowball technique’. This was particularly useful for exploring the fishing industry as a broad occupational community that is not bound by a particular port such as Newlyn.

Although Newlyn remained the geographic and historical focus throughout the research, reflecting its position, especially from the twentieth century onwards, as the centre for the fishing industry in West Cornwall (a study located further east would be more naturally drawn to Mevagissey or Looe), it became apparent right from the early stages of fieldwork that it would not be the sole locality for research. This is because although some of the folklore around fishing is very place-specific, fishing also has tended to stimulate and be driven by movement – that is movement of people, boats and of course fish in the everyday pursuit of livelihood, but also historic movements of fishermen between ports and in some contexts ‘fisher lassies’ (such as the female migrant workers who followed the herring on the east coast). A second reason related to this geographical fluidity is that of occupational fluidity – that is although fishers have their distinct attachments, working groups and community affiliations, they also strongly identify themselves (and are identified by others) as belonging to a large and distinct occupational group with a degree of common experience that transcends notions of belonging to very specific places. Thus throughout fieldwork, when attempting to find prospective informants within the industry, I would be referred to a fisherman, or an industry official, not because they lived or worked in a certain place but because they had respect and reputation for success or were articulate and forthcoming with outsiders wishing to understand

the industry, or a combination of both. Interestingly most of these contacts who were fishermen were boat-owners rather than deckhands<sup>9</sup>. It is also notable that most of my research subjects were male and that posing questions about ‘social change’ led me to an older range of informants whom in their individual ways were experts on this theme. These methodological choices were representative of the situation in which status and expertise in terms of fishing knowledge, both practical and historical, was ascribed to boat-owning fishermen and older males in general.

Fieldwork was therefore focused around Newlyn but also inevitably reached out to other harbours – St. Ives, Hayle, Porthleven, Cadgwith, Penberth, Falmouth, Mevagissey and Looe – connected historically and today as networked sites for fisher association, expertise and services such as boatbuilding and repair, or for the growing popularity of fishing and maritime related heritage festivals. I found that fishermen and other actors in the fishing industry on the whole responded extremely well to semi-formal interviewing. Fishers and maritime people in general tend to be natural storytellers, experts in the ‘craft of place’ as Nadel-Klein puts it (2003) borrowing a phrase from Clifford Geertz. These interviews were mainly conducted on shore and gave my informants a chance to open up about their life experiences and views. Nonetheless the accounts they gave were in all cases bound up with their experience of work, and for fishermen – working at sea – with the practice of skills and with their knowledge of marine environments. In total I completed around thirty formal and informal interviews (including two in-depth life and family histories) in addition to numerous casual conversations with a wider range of people living and working in Cornwall (see Appendix 1 for list of interviewees). Whilst the study is primarily a shore-side study of fishing communities (with the exception of my time aboard *Ripple*), I also gained insights from several short fishing trips on working fishing boats.

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<sup>9</sup> Although I was able to meet with a few deckhands onboard fishing boats, casually in the pub and once when a deckhand hitched a lift with me, their lack of capital (i.e. boat-ownership) means they are a sector of the fishing industry that is much less accessible from the point of view of sociological research. They remain an under-researched group in the social science of fisheries although their labour position has been documented by some historians and sociologists (Robinson 1996; Thompson, Wailey, and Lummis 1983) and more recently by an anthropologist (Howard 2012a).

I consider one of the strengths of this research to be my use of different genres, and forms of data, including art, literature, artefacts, photography, historical texts, archives and policy documents. This has enabled a historical and ethnographic methodology, as I have physically and analytically moved between different contexts and scales. At specific junctures of the research some research avenues seemed inaccessible, such as life at sea on an off shore trawler. However I have tried to reflect on these moments of resistance and regard reflection on paths not taken as being as informative as paths taken. For example, the difficulty of accessing offshore fishing (which reflected both personal and practical challenges) was informative for me in terms of the specialised skills, work-culture and dispositions that off-shore fishing involves, but also leading me to reflect on why it may not often appeal to young people today. Not following some paths has also allowed me to pursue other, less conventional ones such as learning to sail a reconstructed fishing boat and therefore encountering a whole new set of experiences and questions which have not been widely explored in the social science literature on fisheries – in particular the links between fishing heritage and the reproduction of fishing knowledge, places and economies.

## **Structure of the thesis**

Chapter Two reviews some of the trends in the social study of fisheries and links these to wider themes and debates particularly relevant to the thesis – rural social change, concepts of community, the relationship between industry and heritage and finally issues around place, knowledge and practice. This chapter is not intended as an exhaustive ‘literature review’, rather it is intended to set-up and frame the core chapters where relevant literature is treated more substantively.

Chapter Three explains the historic relationship of fishing in Cornwall to other aspects of maritime life and economy. It looks at the historic relationship between markets, the state, and changing technological and socio-economic organisation in fisheries, placing particular emphasis on the transitions between broad political economies, especially from an Atlantic colonial merchant economy to a state-led, national and international market economy. It also traces the emergence of Cornish

fishing villages as material and ideological entities – a process which accompanied their growing marginalisation.

Chapter Four looks at the cross-cutting of class and occupational interests, patterns of work, ownership and residence in Newlyn, focusing on the harbour as a space where terrestrial and maritime life intersects. It explains why Newlyn might be viewed as a ‘fragmented community’ and looks at its social history and transformations from the nineteenth century to today, from a historical and present-day perspective of local actors. How have patterns of social life and economy shifted in this time, and what are the continuities? To what extent has there been the growth of a distinct ‘occupational community’ and how are communities in Newlyn fragmented (at sea and on shore)?

Chapters Five and Six show how the politics of industry and heritage in fisheries cannot be understood without consideration of the current politics of the environment through which labour, class and community interests intersect and are experienced and communicated. The existence of an occupational community of fishermen becomes pronounced in the perceived division between scientists/policy makers and fishers and the kinds of knowledge and outlooks linked to different kinds of work at sea. However I also find that there is a considerable flow of ideas, knowledge and experiences across occupational, epistemic and class divisions between fishers and scientists.

Chapter Seven examines the relationship between fishing skills, family and place. In particular it looks at the interaction of family and communal contexts for the transmission of skills with migration and movement as underlying learning and innovation. It considers to what extent fishers make links, through practice and memory, to places and forms of community associated with knowledge and skills. I reflect on the ‘craft’ or ‘art’ of being a fisherman – not only as manual technique, but in a broader sense incorporating personhood, attitudes, and historicities.

Chapter Eight explores the connections between fishing, art and craft-making. I examine the artistic and craft engagements of fisherman-artists past and present, showing that making art or craft as a fisherman is both a pragmatic and an expressive activity, reflecting and shaping memory and sense of place, and playing a role in enabling fishers to diversify whilst remaining committed to independent forms of production and a broader fishing ethos.

Finally, Chapter Nine considers the present, and anticipates the future, of fishing heritage – situating *Ripple* within the context of the macro and micro politics of local regeneration. The knowledge, memories, skills and ideas of community linked to the production and consumption of heritage do not always sit harmoniously with commercial fishing interests and livelihoods. This relationship varies from port to port, but is most at odds in the port of Newlyn. The potential for industry and heritage to positively contribute to one another can be developed by recognizing their interdependency, as well as their differences, and fostering and innovating cross-connections with implications for new and alternative forms of heritage, tourism and fishing. An example of where heritage and new forms of fishing have co-evolved – the revival of the Cornish pilchard fishery – is also considered.

**Figure 1: Maps showing location of Newlyn in Penwith, West Cornwall and of Cornwall in the UK.**



**Figure 2: Map of Cornwall**



Figure 3: Map of Newlyn harbour. Golowan Community Arts (G.C.A. 2004).



**Figure 4: Mount's Bay with view from Perranuthnoe towards St Michael's Mount and across to Penzance.<sup>10</sup>**



**Figure 5: Newlyn harbour; with the medieval pier to the left, the North Pier on the far right and the Mary Williams Pier and new small-boat pontoons at centre, 2012.**



<sup>10</sup> (<http://aroundperranuthnoe.blogspot.co.uk/2011/04/maybe-last-day-of-this-wonderful.html>. Accessed 19/10/12.)

Figure 6: Newspaper article regarding the Newlyn court case. *Western Morning News*, 7 January 2009.

WESTERN MORNING NEWS WEDNESDAY JANUARY 7 2009 www.thisiswesternmorningnews.co.uk WESTC

## Fishing families attack sentences as 'final nail in coffin' for the industry

# 'I cannot believe I ended up in court as criminal'

MN060109\_MT02\_03/MIKE THOMAS



■ Continued from Page 1  
The owners and skippers had been convicted after two earlier court hearings in 2006 and 2007 of a total of 114 specimen charges of failing to submit landing declarations that accurately indicated the quantities of each species landed.

All of the charges related to fish sold through W Stevenson and Sons auctioneers in Newlyn.

W Stevenson and Sons was also convicted of failing to supply accurate sales notes of the fish and is subject to confiscation proceedings which are ongoing.

After the hearing, Mrs Turtle said she and her husband Donald were registered owners of the Ben Loyal as they had agreed to put their house up as security against the boat skippered by their son John.

The boat has since been sold.

Mrs Turtle handed a letter to the WMN which said: "I cannot believe I have ended up in court as a criminal when all I have done all my life is try to support my husband and family.

"Can you imagine throwing one-third of your wages in the dustbin. It was need, not greed.

"The gut feeling of having to throw dead, healthy fish over the side when you could not avoid catching it - I can't imagine how it was."

The letter added: "This case has ruined my health and ensured a very unhappy retirement so far.

"It's certainly an unfair world and does not encourage ordinary hardworking families."

John Turtle, who will now have to pay up more than £15,000, said: "This will cause devastation for Newlyn - I can't see there will be a future for fishing in the town. The quota system will never be able to control the fishing in a mixed fishery."

Drew Davies, 40, owner and skipper of the GKS, faces fines and costs of more than £13,000 and said he would have to fish harder to earn the cash.

"Newlyn is on its knees. This is the final nail in the coffin. I've been going to sea since I was 15 - the only thing I wanted to do was own my own boat but now I have no interest in going to sea.

**'This has ruined my health... it's an unfair world'**

"If I had thrown those fish back, they would have gone to the seagulls. The quota system in general is a joke.

"The Government just takes and takes and gives nothing back."

A senior Marine and Fisheries Agency spokesman said: "This was an environmental and financial crime. Quota was available for these species of fish throughout the investigation period.

"This deception was done for financial gain - not to avoid discarding fish. And these activities both endangered fish stocks and penalised legal fishermen by depressing prices.

"The investigation by fishery officers was detailed and painstaking due to the well-organised nature of this deception.

"The defendants denied their offending to the last moment which led to protracted legal proceedings."

MN060109\_MT02\_01/MIKE THOMAS

Above: Joan, John and Donald Turtle



MN060109\_MT02\_02/MIKE THOMAS

Left: Doreen, James and Jonathan Hicks



MN060109\_MT02\_04/MIKE THOMAS



Leonard and Arthur Williams

Drew Davies

**Figure 7: Beam trawlers berthed on the North Pier, Newlyn, 2009.**



**Figure 8: *Ripple* during a race at the Looe Lugger Festival, 2009.**



## 2 ANTHROPOLOGIES OF FISHING AND RURAL SOCIAL CHANGE

As I adapted to, and tried to make sense of, the challenges encountered in doing fieldwork (both unanticipated resistances and opportunities) I had to leave behind, or at least radically revise, some of my initial assumptions and concepts. In particular I had to reconsider critically notions of what kinds of work, and meanings around work, fishing in Cornwall entails. This also involved reflecting on concepts of class, industry and heritage, the notion of what constitutes a fishing community, and on varieties of knowledge about fishing and the various vehicles and contexts for its transmission.

### Concepts of ‘fishing community’

Anthropology has had a long and productive engagement with cultures that have a social and economic base in maritime subsistence and trade, including many studies of fishing culture. Some significant monographs have included studies located in Southeast Asia (Busby 2000; Carsten 1997; Firth 1946), East Africa/Indian Ocean (Astuti 1995) and Portugal (Cole 1991) and these have particularly engaged with kinship and gender themes. A systematic review of the anthropology of fishing was produced by Acheson (1981) and since that publication many more studies have emerged particularly from Canadian and continental universities and research centres such as MARE (Maritime Centre for Research in Amsterdam). However there have been relatively few extensive studies of British or European fishing *communities* in the broad sense – the various ways fishing cultures are embedded in place and political economies, as well as distinct from other ways of life – whilst important work has emerged from Canada (Nadel-Klein and Davis 1988; Newell and Ommer 1998; Sider 2003), Iceland (Pálsson 1991) and Holland (van Ginkel 2007, 2009). In Britain there have been only a handful of anthropological studies of maritime or fishing contexts such as (Ennew 1980; Fox 1963; Nadel-Klein 2003; Ota and Just 2008) and only a few of any aspect of life in Cornwall (Ireland 2004; Laviolette 2006) and these have not been extensive. Rather the social study of fishing and

coastal communities in Britain has been mainly confined to the fields of sociology and history e.g. (Starkey, Reid, and Ashcroft 2000; Friend 2010).

Contemporary fisheries social science tends to be interdisciplinary and policy-focused as fisheries are increasingly regulated. These are positive developments but sometimes the social dynamics of fisheries are obscured by a too narrow focus on resource-use and this can lead to an ahistorical perspective. As Pálsson has argued (1991), anthropological discussions of fishing have tended towards a 'natural' model 'which depicts the individual producer as autonomous isolate, engaged in the technical art of catching fish' (p.23). Meanwhile 'community' in fisheries, as in other areas of environmental conflict, has become a byword for local knowledge, rights and resource-management rather than a properly theorized and contextualized analytical concept (Agrawal and Gibson 1999; Angerbrandt, Lindstrom, and de la Torre-Castro 2011; Olson 2005). Recent accounts of community in fisheries have perhaps been guided by the need to articulate a measure that is translatable into policy discourse. Therefore we have had terms come to the fore such as 'fisheries dependency', which is treated by Brookfield, Gray and Hatchard (2005) mainly in economic terms (e.g. employment and GDP). However as Urquhart et al point out (2011) these conceptions fail to capture the ways fisheries are embedded in local social-cultural systems and the other kinds of 'value' it generates. They highlight the literature that suggests fishing is a 'way of life', of common bonds, knowledge, language and tradition. Such commonalities may be maintained by kinship networks, may spill out into other domains such as tourism via material heritage, or may stem from an occupational identity that is formed not only in terms of how fishers see themselves in relation to society, but also how fishers see themselves in relation to how society sees them, such as heroic food providers or villainous exploiters of the environment and other social stigma (van Ginkel 2001). Finally, there have been attempts to look at the relationship between fisheries and ideas of community in contexts where fisheries have declined to such an extent that they have all but disappeared but where the memory and symbols of fishing history has been re-appropriated to forge new sense of place, belonging and identity e.g. (Nadel-Klein 2003). Brookfield, Gray and Hatchard (ibid) make a distinction between 'real' and 'virtual' fishing dependency but as Urquhart et al object (ibid) this distinction is overly simplistic and suggests the danger of positing a separation of materiality from

ideas and representation, authentic practice from inauthentic practice, and economy from culture and community.

As John Walton (historian of the British seaside) has discussed, ‘the notion of a “fishing community” is problematic’:

both in terms of the rivalries and jealousies which divide such places (and can co-exist with overarching shared ethics of mutuality and co-operation), and of where to draw the line between those whose world is fishing, those whose core economic activity involves harvesting the sea but who have other sources of income and sociability, and those who fish part-time and occasionally as part of a more complex family economy and social network (Walton 2000b: 127).

Walton makes clear that the issue is not only the question of these internal politics and occupational sub-divisions, but also that fisheries are part of social and economic systems that vary widely within and across regions. Neither are they amenable to any neat and linear historical narrative: Walton, and in more depth, Thompson, Wailey and Lummis (1983) argue that fisheries defy the simplistic assumptions of modernization theory. Rather than exhibiting a transition from isolated village economies producing for local markets, to the rise of the specialized distant-water trawling ports, these different forms of economy have in some contexts co-existed. Furthermore whilst the latter fisheries based on capitalistic forms of organization such as waged-labour, experienced decline and collapse from the 1930s onwards, more flexible enterprises rooted in pluralistic, informal and co-operative systems of labour (such as the purse-seiners of Shetlander fisher-crofters) have been able to survive.

Fishing communities also vary widely in the work and residential patterns of the port villages, towns and cities where they are located. Walton’s distinction between ‘traditional’ and ‘occupational’ community is helpful (ibid): ‘traditional’ denotes a context of ‘shared values and a wide diffusion of capital among the members’, whilst an ‘occupational’ or ‘working class’ community ‘pulls together a wage-earning workforce through a combination of pride in work, from which status derives, and shared experience of dealing with employers and their underlings, sometimes through conflict and collective action’ (p.128). The former model is more commonly associated with the small, rural fishing village context and the latter with that of the urban enclaves of fishers that very quickly sprung up in the industrial port cities such as Hull and Grimsby. However I argue that both models are necessary to understand Cornish fishing communities, both in terms of how they have changed over time and

of what the ideological dimensions of community and class are, as employed in various present-day contexts.

Despite these complexities, as Walton argues, the core concept of fishing communities ‘...is helpful and none the worse for having a firm foothold in everyday language. If we use it, it offers a basis from which to try to explain change and difference’ (p.128). The key issue is that it needs to be carefully extricated from romantic assumptions of continuity and unity. Cornish fishing villages and also places like Whitby in Yorkshire have particularly accrued their stock of romantic images since they became the focus for photographers, artists and tourism from the late nineteenth century onwards. Their relative geographic remoteness and seeming isolation was one of the factors that drew the fascination of artists and early tourists, along with the tightly clustered fishing quarters and modes of fishing that corresponded to emergent ideas of picturesque and idyllic rural scenes. However as I elaborate in Chapter Three, much of what these early visitors witnessed was the result of recent economic change and this change was ongoing, partly in response to the new opportunities and constraints these visitors and newcomers brought. Furthermore despite the impression of isolation, these communities were part of broader maritime communities of which migration and cosmopolitanism had long featured, linked to cross-channel, trans-Atlantic and Mediterranean circuits of exchange, navy recruitment and later on, as mining industries shifted elsewhere, the Cornish diaspora.

However with the coming of the railway in the latter half of the nineteenth century members of Cornish fishing communities increasingly were defined, and defined themselves, in relation to ‘newcomers’ and ‘outsiders’ just as broader notions of Cornish and English identity, ethnicity and nationalism were shaped by the material and imaginative cross-border encounters that followed (Vernon 1998). Conflicts that arose between fishing and holidaymaking highlighted local class antagonisms as when local planners favoured the clearance of so-called ‘slums’ in Newlyn and St Ives. However reflections on class difference were not only prompted by local development conflicts but also by broader class interaction. Walton (op.cit.) discusses these themes through the life and work of Stefan Reynolds, an author and fisheries inspector who lived and worked amongst the fishing community of Edwardian Sidmouth for a time. He felt that the fishermen he came to know were

able to identify more with working class visitors who were increasingly arriving on the railway, then with ‘people of other classes who had lived in the neighbourhood all their lives’. Reynolds articulated a sense of the distinctive *craft* of the inshore fisherman: ‘local knowledge, coupled with ‘pluck’ and the practical skills of the seaman’ (ibid: 134) but he also expressed some of the anxieties (although filtered through his own romantic and sensitive pre-occupations) regarding the potential loss of manliness, dignity and ‘degradation of craft’ (ibid) posed by the opportunity for fishermen to work as pleasure boat-men for the visitors.

In a collected volume entitled *Seafarer and Community* Fricke (1973) observed that in a number of traditional seaport communities, seafarers (including fishers) were declining in proportion to other kinds of residents and were becoming occupational sub-groups within a much larger community. One has to be wary of an unwarranted assumption that ‘traditional’ communities have ‘always’ existed, unchanging, in the past, or that they were homogenous. Nevertheless, in places where industry has declined relative to other occupations one can still recognize like Fricke (ibid: 2) that ‘the ambience of a community, the reality of its existence, may still be seen by its inhabitants as due to a particular occupational activity’. Fricke highlights changing patterns of recruitment in post-war Britain and the changing skills required for seafarers, putting forth a perspective of conceiving ‘of a community as changing over time, of becoming differentiated with the advent of new skills, but also integrating itself through a common tradition and social life’ (ibid: 3). Adopting longer time-scales in our analyses helps to reveal the evolving dynamics of distinct social groups and the relationship between partly imagined symbols of past tradition and community identified with the material traces of industry and rural life (such as buildings) and contemporary social groups with overlapping residence and/or work patterns. Smith (1999) demonstrates how understanding long time scales reveals the nature of the British maritime tradition as,

...A combination of the very old (medieval) and the successive contributions of the modern era which has resulted in the building up and subsequent decline of specific maritime communities, especially in the context of commercial shipping and ports, the Royal Navy, fisheries, and marine science. Contemporary maritime communities involving these and other uses of the sea are arguably much more communities of experience and ideas, and much less those of physical entities represented by the sailortowns, naval bases, fishing villages, and marine laboratories of past times (ibid: 284).

Fishermen have always depended on a network of auxiliary services and institutions (as well as being integrated with wider society and life on shore and at home, through family dependence on institutions like schools and hospitals and through the work of spouses). In Cornish fishing villages in the past, especially prior to the advent of motor engine boats and steel hulls, there was a particular kind of division of labour involving high interdependency within overlapping work and residential groups – coopers, boat-builders, fishers, mariners, blacksmiths, sail-makers etc, constituted a nucleus (with a degree of horizontal relations) within a wider stratified class society. This was linked to particular kinds of economic institutions – co-operative shares, credit systems (informal loans from merchants as well as between trades-people, kith and kin), mutual aid and particular attitudes towards money, debt, work and saving influenced by religion. With the transition to motor powered vessels, fishers became less dependent on these local systems of petty commodity craft production. With the advent of sonar and GPS (fish finding, navigation and ground discriminating technologies) they also became less dependent on a body of oral knowledge to find fish. Like-wise the development of plastic monofilament nets led to fishermen being less dependent on the labour of wives in making and maintaining the nets. Fishermen became much more of a singular occupational group, and as some catching methods became more active and less passive the individual skill and status of fishers, became more important and a boat's reputation came to be associated with the skill and acumen of the skippers – not only in catching fish but also in efficiently marketing it and re-investing (money and business management). They also became less dependent on local, informal systems of credit and more on banks.

### **Occupational community**

The concept of occupational community and its application to a rural fisheries context has been considered by Davis (1986). Davis explains that the concept was first introduced in sociology by Lipset in his study of the printer's union in the United States (Lipset, Trow, and Coleman 1956) and was expanded by Blauner (1960) and (Lockwood 1975). Fishermen and miners according to Blauner are classic examples of occupational communities. The key characteristics he identified, as summarized by Davis, are: 1) isolation from the wider society by time of work,

physical location or place of employment; 2) a high degree of job satisfaction; 3) leisure time and socialization is restricted to work-mates; 3) a tendency to talk shop on the job; and 5) possessing a distinct world view where occupational reference groups guide conduct and set the standards of behaviour and systems of status and rank. As Davis points out, accounts of occupational community have tended to be andocentric – that is confined to the working world of males. However her exploration of the various social and economic roles of ‘fisherman’s wives’ in a Newfoundland fishing village, led her to argue that these do not make the concept defunct but we do need to recognize the role of women in creating occupational community (both in terms of the material reproduction and the ideology). She also found that unlike Lipset’s printers who by their patterns of association were encouraged to actively participate in the trade union, in Newfoundland the solidarity of the occupational community led to conservatism rather than radical social action.

A similar conclusion was drawn by Lummis (1977) in the context of East Anglia. Quoting Blauner he says,

...His observation that “in such worlds one’s skill and expertise in doing the actual work becomes an important basis of individual status and prestige”, seems to isolate one of the major factors in the lack of conflict imagery in the social perceptions of the East Anglian fishermen (p.57).

Lummis gathered oral histories between 1974 and 1976 from fishermen who were in particular asked to recall the period between around 1900 and the outbreak of the First World War. They were by and large herring fishermen working steam drifters on a share system.

For up to five months at a time they were away from their homeport, working from Newlyn in Cornwall to Stornaway in the Hebrides as well as from Irish ports. During these spells, the boat was their only home and the crew their basic social unit, their lives were job-orientated and male-dominated to an exceptional degree (p.58).

These working conditions consolidated the experience of a distinct occupational community but the sharing of the profits of the catch through a share system was key. As argued in the classic *Living the Fishing* (Thompson, Wailey, and Lummis 1983):

There was no wage bargaining to draw out the class-consciousness of the Lowestoft and Yarmouth drifters. When the owners put in more capital, the men also earned more. Since boat-owners were usually former skippers, there was little sense of class difference between them and the fishermen. The owners, as one Kessingland fishermen put it, ‘weren’t uppish or ought like, they were just – they were just people... They would pick you up and give you a lift home... They mixed with you.’

Skippers and men all started as boy cooks on the boats, continued to work side by side, and even the most successful kept to a simple working-class style of life (p.197).

For Lummis, the East Anglian fishermen constituted an occupational community because whilst they were conscious of hierarchy in society at large, class was not a salient dimension of their group-consciousness. This contrasts with the labour conflicts that Thompson, Wailey and Lummis (op.cit) documented for the capitalist trawling ports of the Humber estuary during the same period, where a wage system prevailed and conflict and social distance was marked between crews, skippers and owners. Lummis' account accords with some of the data I present here on Cornwall where, in terms of relations within the fishing industry, status according to personality and skill was a prevalent concern (although in the context of the port of Newlyn class issues within the fishing community were also prominent because of a peculiar situation in which one merchant firm are owners of a large section of the over 10 meter fleet). Nonetheless the concept of occupational community needs to be used in a way that is informed by history and social change and awareness of its limitations and implications. It partly depends on what is meant by 'community' (i.e. whether this is assumed to imply unity). In Cornwall fishermen are part of wider social groups and society and also fragmented amongst themselves, individualistic as well as factional; whilst on the other hand there is a level of familiarity between fishers in the region i.e. many fishermen will be known to many other fishermen across a widely dispersed area personally and by reputation. In recent times fishermen's perceptions of broad class difference in society have shifted from the politics of labour that marked the early twentieth century capitalist ports (Thompson, Wailey, and Lummis loc. cite) to become more focused on the politics of the environment.

In sum, community form shifts over time as markets, labour relations, technologies and systems of knowledge change. Just like the concept of class, the concept of community in relation to fisheries is a thorny one, yet both are indispensable and it is the relationship between them that is important. In sociological terms we can distinguish between at least four different kinds of community: a geographic community; a community of interest; a community of practice (Wenger 1998) and an occupational community. In this thesis I broadly refer to *coastal communities* and *fishing communities* as the central subjects. By this I

mean a geographic community (associated with a particular place) that embraces also an *occupational community* (focused around fishing) and multiple communities of practice and interest (e.g. of fishermen or artists) all of which in the case of coastal communities (in the broad sense) tend to coalesce around the foreshore (the harbour or beach). I envisage coastal communities and the harbour or beach at their centre as nodes in networks rather than discrete, bounded places. However the existence of a harbour or a beach as a common focal point does not necessarily lead to unity. It suggests a common interest although this might be the focus of conflict and competing claims. In policy planning and local debates over patterns of investment and harbour activity, the term 'stakeholder' is frequently used, however this implies only a narrow economic relationship to the harbour and as such frequently gets opposed to 'the community', which perversely comes to stand for all those who have an interest in the harbour that is not directly related to work or commerce.

In a similar vein is Walton's argument about fishing communities (2000b): whether 'traditional' or 'occupational' they, are in the final analysis, mixed economies, the particular form of which is always changing. Walton quotes a Lowestoft man born in 1902 speaking of what made community in his local fishing context (p.128), and concludes that the basis of community in this view was 'commitment to an industry, not necessarily entailing actually going to sea, but being part of a network of shared interests and concerns that surrounded the fishing'. This economic view of community is similar to some recent anthropological models, especially for example as conceptualized by Gudeman (2001). Part of my enquiry concerns the extent to which evolving mixed economies of fishing can also include heritage production encompassed within shared commitment and interests.

Over the course to my research I was forced to revise my original understanding of fishing *community* because Newlyn proved to be a fragmented place – a node in a network of multiple and shifting forms of community, association and interest-groups. Over the course of the twentieth century the fishing industry became more divided and stratified and in Chapter Four I highlight issues such as economic monopolisation, economic insecurity and even safety risks for crew, and lack of price-setting power and poor returns for fishermen. Meanwhile some fishers working and/or residing at Newlyn felt socially estranged, ambivalent or even hostile to processes of gentrification and of the harbour becoming dominated by non-fishing

concerns and interests. Yet my research also highlights interdependency between these different sides of Newlyn's economy and population. This is explored in Chapter Four through the examples of the lifeboat and the fisherman's mission – funded by charitable contributions mainly coming from outside the fishing industry, and yet protecting the welfare of fishermen. A concept of community remains indispensable to understanding lived ideals and practices.

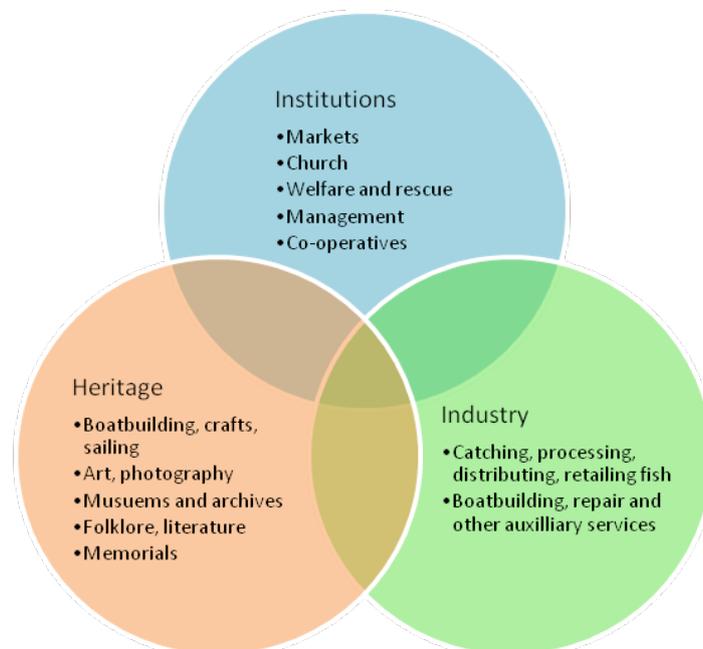
To return to the two metonymic events introduced previously – the court-case and the reconstruction of *Ripple* – each suggested a double-sided image of community. In the first 'community' was the 'last great fishing town' and fishing families threatened by a punitive regulatory regime; but it was also the 'community' of 'conspirators'. In the second, 'community' was the celebration and sharing of knowledge, skills and memory that a boat reconstruction facilitated as well as the images of past community that it brought into view; and it was the notion of a community perceived as undermined by lack of transparency and equity in harbour management and ownership. These examples not only highlight that 'community' is an ideological, relative notion but also that in practice it can act against positive change and be a conservatory force. In Chapter Four I suggest that one of the factors perpetuating economic concentration and inequality at Newlyn was not so much the complete loss of the share system in distribution of profits but its continuation within a company fishing context – which served to mask relations of exploitation under an egalitarian ethos (cf. Howard 2012b who treats this issue more extensively). In such contexts change stimulated by diversity can be a good thing (Back 2009). Similarly Sen's writings on development (e.g. 1999) and debates around 'resilience' and 'well-being' (cf. Coulthard 2012) also emphasize that some forms of collectivity can serve to maintain situations of exploitation, stagnation and/or poverty (see also Angerbrandt, Lindstrom, and de la Torre-Castro 2011; Davis 1986).

I now move on to outline some issues around notions of class, industry and heritage which bring up some broader issues relating to the study of social change and rural lives.

## Class, industry and heritage

Heritage studies that take a critical approach to the subject often highlight a theme of conflict which reflects the social anxieties and inequalities that underlie and surround the production of heritage in the contemporary era. These often imply an opposition between production and consumption, work and leisure, real (and living) authentic practice and simulated (and dead) inauthentic history (see Table 1). Tensions between heritage and industry do not only represent a conflict between producers and consumers (such as tourists) however. This is because heritage can incorporate forms of production as well as consumption and because heritage is produced for a variety of audiences and purposes other than tourism. In Cornwall I found the production of fishing heritage to be a diverse activity incorporating a wide diversity of activities, individuals and associations: including boat-builders, artists, fishermen, fishermen-artists, historians of various creeds, archivists and other museum staff and people researching their own family history (see Diagram 1).

**Diagram 1: Fishing heritage practice and fishing industry as interconnected spheres of activity, linked also with institutions.**



**Table 2: Common associations of industry and heritage seen as a dichotomy**

<u>INDUSTRY</u>	<u>HERITAGE</u>
Production, distribution, consumption	Consumption
Extraction and manufacture	Representation
Tangible commodities	History as commodity
Real jobs, real life	Museums
Living, authentic traditions/practice	Dead history, simulacrum, in-authenticity, decline
Vital, masculine	Nostalgia, romance
Pragmatism	Aestheticism
Risk, danger	Safety
Working class	Middleclass/elite
Progressive	Conservative
Occupational community	(Images of ) traditional community
Interaction with / transformation of nature	Detachment/alienation from nature

The other often neglected aspect of heritage studies is the relationship between notions of ‘cultural’ and ‘natural’ heritage. The discourse of sustainability involves the notion of environmental conservation for future generations and there is frequently an implicit overlap, in consumer and environmental politics, between the conservation of the environment and the maintenance of ‘traditional’/ ‘indigenous’/‘local’ livelihood practices. Furthermore in marine science there is a growing effort to build data about past environments to use as baselines for the *recovery* of marine ecosystems. This brings into view a third dimension to the relationship between heritage and industry: environmental policy, scientific knowledge and practice and ecological ideas. It also raises the point that heritage is

not *only* about romance and/or nostalgia but also involves attempts to reconstruct pasts for pragmatic present or future-orientated purposes.

My use of the term 'industry' is best explained by a definition given by Mauss as '...an ensemble of techniques that combine towards the satisfaction of a need... or more precisely towards the satisfaction of consumption' (Mauss and Schlinger 2006) More specifically, Starkey, Reid, and Ashcroft (2000) provide a useful summary of what industry constitutes in terms of fisheries:

...Fisheries generally comprise three elements, production, distribution and consumption. Fish production entails the preparation and assembly of equipment, vessels, labour, bait and preservatives, transport to and from the fishing grounds, and the catching operation itself. This 'fishing effort' is essentially a facet of the maritime economy. While it draws upon the services of shipbuilders, port operators, victuallers, insurers, brokers and other maritime suppliers, it also involves the acquisition of seafaring skills. Once the catch is secured and landed it is transformed into a marketable commodity by the various components of the fish trade. This is a relatively swift operation if the fish is to be sold fresh. If curing is required, the catch might be subject to pickling, salting, drying, smoking, freezing or other preserving processes, before being packed and dispatched by road, rail, or sea carriers to inland or overseas markets. Then, from the warehouses of wholesalers, the baskets of hawkers, the stalls of fish markets, or the deep fryers of the fish and chip shop, the fish becomes an item of consumption. A protein-rich source of nourishment, it has long since adorned the tables of the wealthy filled the bellies of the poor, added variety to the dietary regimes of the health conscious, and fed the animals and soil of the improving farmer (2000: 7).

Fisheries heritage as a *practice* is fundamentally related to fisheries industry (in this broad sense) but is also distinct. In most definitions of heritage the term is confusingly conflated with 'culture', especially since in recent times notions of 'intangible' or 'non-material' heritage have become more common-place in official and policy-led definitions, alongside the previous emphasis on the historic (built) environment (Jokilehto 2005). I think it is important to retain a distinction between the terms 'heritage' and 'culture' for two reasons. Firstly, heritage is not simply cultural artefacts, ideas, languages, or practices, but rather implies a selective and explicit attention to particular manifestations of culture that are deemed worthy, or in need, of preservation and maintenance. Heritage is associated with tradition because it is conventionally concerned with what is transmitted (or inherited) from one generation to another. This leads me to the second reason I argue for keeping the terms distinct: the notion of culture as limited to that which is passed down or transmitted from one generation to another as an inherited cultural substance or essence has been subjected to critical scrutiny by contemporary anthropologists.

Ingold for example (2000) has elaborated a view of culture that is not distinct from nature, nor the biological organism, where learning occurs through a process of active engagement within environments that may include inter-generational contexts.

However although heritage is concerned with articulating a view of what is traditional, this does not mean it is necessarily conservative (either in the sense that it need be against innovation or change, or in the sense that it need be elitist), as heritage critics such as Hewison (1987) have argued. Heritage derives from processes of social change, especially declining and/or shifting patterns of labour and livelihood and the accompanying movements of people and social encounters through which different places and classes interact. An integral argument of this thesis is that heritage is not only a preoccupation of middle and upper classes, but derives also from the experience of working classes in interaction with other classes within ongoing processes of social transformation. Rather than seeing heritage as merely a thing, entity or essence then, I follow (Harvey 2001) in taking a relational view on heritage as ‘a process, or a verb, related to human action and agency, and an instrument of cultural power... a contemporary product shaped from history’ (2001: 327).

The field of maritime heritage studies is a growing one. Day and Lunn (2003) review of some of the issues it presents such as the role of maritime heritage as a vehicle for nationalistic and nostalgic narratives about British maritime power. However they also highlight that the concept of maritime heritage is shifting and diversifying as the range of local and informal heritage initiatives are growing, from small industrial museums involving the participation of former workers to the reconstruction and sailing of traditional boats. It is a focus on local and non-institutional forms and meanings of heritage that I develop in this thesis. Nadel-Klein (2003) produced an extensive study of fisheries heritage in Britain and I build on her insights that heritage is part of how regional identities are constructed in a way that is shaped by, but also adopted as a response to, a capitalist political economy that produces the marginalization of rural economies and places. Laviolette makes a similar argument for the significance of practices of Cornish maritime art (2006). Like Laviolette my attention is also directed towards the significance of craft, making, learning and participating in producing and engaging with maritime material culture, rather than only treating heritage as forms of representation or folk narrative

as it emerges in Nadel-Klein's account. However in Lavolette and Nadel-Klein's accounts heritage comes across as something divorced from contemporary industry and economies – an afterlife or 'second life' as Lavolette puts it, and this sense of separation is an issue this thesis particularly examines and ultimately challenges.

Thus another important line of argument involves unpacking and contesting conventional ideas of industry and heritage as being radically separate, with the first associated with pure or mindless labour and utilitarian economic relationships and the latter with material or symbolic representations of (past) tradition, divorced from (present-day) work or labour. Of course the idea that production is both a material and ideological or symbolic process is a fundamental tenet of Marxist approaches to the study of labour. I see industry and heritage as two poles of experience. All production and work is inherently social and symbolic, but it is particularly at the points where the representation of industry and livelihoods is generated by encounters between different kinds of social groups, especially at, or following, moments of acute social transformation that this experience tends to be articulated as 'tradition' and more specifically 'heritage'.

As Ennew points out in her monograph on the fishing, crofting and textile economies of *The Western Isles* (Ennew 1980), a tradition/modernity dichotomy is the classic theme in the genre of European ethnographic monographs. The anthropology and sociology of rural Britain has predominantly been preoccupied with the study of community (although more recently this has shifted to a focus on the politics of place). This partly reflects a previous concern in anthropology to extend its focus on what it conceived of as 'exotic' small-scale societies and cultures to what it assumed were comparable units of study closer to 'home' (Nadel-Klein 2003). The problem however had earlier roots than this. Wolf critiqued the foundational premises which guided the social sciences (heavily influenced by Durkheim) towards the study of social relations seen as separate and autonomous from political economy. Social scientists, he believed, have been preoccupied with the dissolution of social order: 'Sociology stemmed from an attempt to counteract social disorder by creating a theory of social order, by locating order and disorder in the quality and quantity of social relations' (1982: 11). He recognized an important implication of this being:

...It issues a polarity between two types of society, one in which social order is maximized because social relations are densely knit and suffused with value consensus and another in which social disorder predominates because social relations are atomized and deranged by dissensus over values (ibid).

‘Social process’ therefore becomes the change from one society to another. Nineteenth century social scientists such as Tonnies, Maine and Durkheim, influenced by forms of social change they witnessed around them as a consequence of industrialization and capitalism, elaborated social theory that was largely concerned with the loss of community. The sociology of Max Weber consolidated the developing view in the twentieth century that utilitarian and technical relations were replacing sacred and moral ties.

In European rural studies of the 1950s, 60s and 70s, change often was accounted for as deriving from the imposition of exterior forces (industrial/urban wage-labour, markets and capital) on a family peasant structure assumed to be static and constituted by homogenous pre-industrial face-to-face relations (as encapsulated by Redfield’s influential folk-urban continuum). However since, and even during this same period, social historians, anthropologists and sociologists have also questioned the utility of an uncritical concept of community. E.P. Thompson (1963) and his former student John Rule (2006) explored how social conflict e.g. between craftsmen, miners, peasants and merchants, landowners and factory owners shaped ideas about class consciousness and ideas of tradition and moral economy. Raymond Williams (1975) examined recurring notions of the rural idyll, and argued that in rural Britain community institutions in many cases arose as a consequence of the adversity and conflict arising from industrialization:

In many villages, community only became a reality when economic and political rights were fought for and partially gained, in the recognition of unions, in the extension of the franchise, and in the possibility of entry into new representative and democratic institutions. In many thousands of cases, there is more community in the modern village, as a result of the process of new legal and democratic rights, than at any point in the recorded or imagined past (p.104).

Howard Newby (1977, 1978, 1987) considered how changes in agriculture and the countryside in the twentieth century derived not from the apparent external imposition of impersonal forces, but from changes in social relationships within the countryside itself. Fredrick Barth and Antony Cohen developed the view that social organization is shaped by boundaries and relations across boundaries, and that

culture and communities exist less as concrete entities and more as relative ideas and processes (cf. Cohen 1990).

Many anthropological and sociological studies have subsequently emerged that locate rural actors and communities as active and heterogeneous agents in their adaptations to integrated European and global political economies – in the context of post-socialist Eastern Europe as well as the capitalist West (Pine 1996). The task is not to dispense with concepts of tradition/modernity but to recognize that there is a dynamic interplay between these notions that is likely to be a characteristic of most periods and places in particular ways. Pine suggests that ‘in certain contexts, people accept and adopt modern technologies, and interact with and participate in the worlds that produce them, while in other contexts, what may be seen as the encroaching and anti-social claims of modernity are consistently resisted by these same people’ (2007: 187); and as Ennew puts it in relation to her study of the Western Isles, a ‘myth of past coherence is an important backdrop to the way in which many Hebrideans conceptualise what they see as discontinuous present change’ (1980: 4). This perspective enables the application of political economy approaches such as ‘world-systems theory’ (Wallerstein 1974) to the study of rural locales whilst at the same time recognizing that the experiences and representations of centre-periphery relations, class difference, geographic/social distance and marginality, are in part actively constructed and/or performed by rural subjects themselves as a powerful source of meaning, resistance, identity and economic adaptation (Darling n.d.).

Another reason why anthropologists and sociologists have stressed relations of community in the study of rural Europe is that in rural locales a significant degree of autonomy is frequently found amongst producers. As Howard points out (2012a) quoting Sider (2003):

Most anthropological research has taken place not in classic factory waged labour situations, but in what Sider has described as “merchant capital” systems (such as fisheries) that are characterized by the “purchase of commodities from communities that generate these products through forms of work organization that they themselves control and supervise”. The tension between the autonomy of production and the constraints of producing for a market in such circumstances can produce a uniquely varied and dynamic set of class relations (Howard 2012a: 59).

Perhaps for this reason, I also found class distinctions and boundaries difficult to objectively differentiate in the context of fishing villages in Cornwall. When my

research subjects seemed to draw class distinctions, either implicitly or explicitly, these were variable and fluid depending on context. At times, stratification within the fishing industry was highlighted, including sometimes the relationships between owners of capital and workers. More often, conflict or inequality was cast primarily in terms of perceived differences between insiders and outsiders, for example, between those who *knew* about fishing and depended on fishing in some way, for part or all of their income, and those who did not, which may include non-fishing locals as well seaside visitors or much maligned ‘second-home owners’. In some contexts differences in perceived levels of affluence or consumption patterns were the issue, in others, differences were drawn in terms of work-culture and occupational background, or in terms of epistemic differences, as with conflicts identified around conservation and regulation issues. Invariably, when class experience was salient, a double-image was involved, one of relations close to home, and one of relations between home and more distant contexts, as between the coast and the city for example. Emphasis would shift between these two poles, calling attention not only to class, but also to memory, kinship, place and landscape. Therefore my approach is to consider class in different contexts as one way of conceiving of relations and experiences amongst others and to examine how they interact. This sometimes calls for other kinds of language, methodologies and theoretical frameworks.

An especially insightful and cogent approach to class in the context of fisheries and other maritime settings has been elaborated by Howard (2012a). More generally, Howard argues that class remains an essential analytical concept for anthropology, not as a static category defining distinct socio-economic groups but as a way of understanding relationships and social change, defining class relations as ‘...social relations as they relate to the experience of producing a livelihood’ (p.59). This is the definition I adopt in this thesis. By focusing on work and different forms of knowledge (as underpinning and/or fragmenting the experience of place and community) social analyses are less likely to fall into essentialised constructions of ‘identity’.

A political economic framework that considers regionally variable experiences of centres and peripheries is also relevant because of the capacity of capitalism to ‘create and then dismiss a way of life’ (Nadel-Klein 2003: 1) and to concentrate the

profits of extraction. However rather than seeing this process as a unidirectional and linear sequence of stages, social and economic change occurs through the multiple articulation of modes of production and the particular interactions of tribute, kinship and capitalist forms of economy in different times and places (Wolf 1982). These articulations are essential to understanding both the regional specificities of fishing communities, *and* the commonalities between them, that make fishing distinct from but interconnected with other ways of life.

## **Place, knowledge and practice**

Writing about the study of community history Deacon and Donald (2004) argue that the methodology for approaching community may be more important than formulating any rigidly defined concept. Like Angerbrandt, Lindstrom, and de la Torre-Castro (2011), Olson (2005) and Urquhart (2011) he also draws attention to looking at situated practice and communities as process. Similarly, seeing *place* as a site of situated practice rather than mere context or locality is also essential, recognizing in the phenomenological tradition of Heidegger (Gray 1999; Ingold 2000; Gray 2000) that environments are not empty containers for human activity, but like human subjects themselves, are constituted by those activities. However it is important to also acknowledge how these activities may include the application of knowledge and technologies that are linked to abstract technical/scientific representations of space (such as cartography and quota regimes).

Instead then of thinking of places as areas with boundaries around, they can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understanding. And this in turn allows a sense of place which is extra-verted, which includes consciousness of its links with the wider world (Massey, cited by Olson 2005).

In the case of the fishing industry, practices do often challenge any straightforward interpretation of the topography of fishing: with fishers sometimes residing, docking their boat and landing their fish in different locations; with state surveillance and regulation shaping everyday practices at sea and perceptions of the environment; and competition and co-operation between fishers creating distinct communities at sea, such as through the sharing or withholding of knowledge about fishing grounds and catches, produced via communications, navigation and fish-finding technologies. Even across historical periods, 'common fishing practices like seasonal and gender-specific mobility, or the radical disjuncture between the spaces

of fishing and places of dwelling, reiterate the inherently corrosive potentials of everyday socio-cultural processes and the production of community' (Olson 2005: 260). Finally it is important to also seek to understand how the practical activities that create our environments, sense of place and human subjectivities (and the socialization and learning processes involved) reflect socio-economic conditions including class differences and intergenerational politics (Howard 2012a).

My research has led me to adopt a much broader and multi-layered notion of what constitutes *local knowledge* of fishing. It is much more dynamic and diverse than a more narrow conception of local knowledge as specialised or occupationally-bounded practical, technical and/or ecological 'know-how'. For example, the knowledge that fishers may take for granted as constituting and maintaining their everyday lived worlds is fluid, in that over time it evolves to incorporate new forms of knowledge that allow people to adapt and innovate in the face of change (as in the example of the father and son trawlermen whose notions of natural instinct, craft and family-transmitted skills now include diverse skills such as being politically engaged, business-minded and scientifically informed). Often the context for this knowledge is as significant as the content. Fishermen's everyday working knowledge and skills may be embedded with particular *historicities*, thus also reproducing, and making meaningful, knowledge about the past; but historical knowledge about fishing also exists in contexts which are outside or peripheral to the everyday occupational concerns of fishermen. Knowledge about the fishing past is conveyed via a diverse range of material culture – built environments and artefacts (including visual mediums such as art and photography), archives, stories, and also skills and techniques (such as sailing, fishing, boat-building, basketry and painting). It entails practices of historical enquiry, of memory and narration and in some contexts reconstruction. The past is not only an object of intellectual curiosity but may also be seen as a resource for the present and the future. Practices of art, craft-making and heritage (in which sites or artefacts are might be created, salvaged, and used outside of everyday commodity circuits) are ambivalently placed as reflections of loss and social change, but also vehicles of recovery, political critique and new opportunity. DeSilvey (2012) constructs an unconventional geo-historical account of harbour protection at Mullion, Cornwall. The harbour owners and heritage managers have found the harbour to be increasingly uneconomic to maintain in the face of

environmental and social coastal change and have devised a long-term plan involving ‘managed decline’. She makes the case that the narratives we weave around such sites might be better told in ways that reflect entropy as being part of a long-term process of dynamic flux and creative change.

### **Summary**

This thesis critically examines the interaction of three perspectives on the rural coast – the labour view of the coast as a working environment, a scientific/ecological view, and a romantic/nostalgic/salvaging view. I explore tensions and conflicts between the fishing industry, science, regulation, and heritage practices, but also the continuities, interdependencies and bricolage that bind them. All of these domains incorporate forms of labour as well as representations of labour, practical and informal knowledge as well as formal and epistemic knowledge. Following Cruikshank’s example (2005), all can be viewed as various forms of *local knowledge*, when we recognize that ‘local knowledge is not located in closed traditions but exists in encounters, it is dynamic, complex and often links biophysical and social processes’.

The thesis builds on the fields of literature I have outlined above in several important ways: it provides a contemporary account of fishing communities in a region where little anthropological work has been done to date; it attempts to combine an approach informed by political economy with a perspective on human-environment relations, place and community informed by the anthropological literatures on knowledge/skill, narrative and practice; and it examines heritage-making processes alongside industrial processes and includes a study of forms of heritage that are informal/ non-institutional and experiential.

### 3 FISHING AND CORNWALL'S MARITIME ECONOMY IN 'LA LONG DURÉE'

The smuggling days of Cornwall are over and past, and the wrecker of history and romance has become the mere gatherer of driftwood upon her beaches, but still the fisherman plies his ancient trade, the first of all the long-shore types to take to the sea for a livelihood, the last to leave it (Jenkin 1932).

In *Cornish Seafarers*, the historian A.K. Hamilton Jenkin captures some of the romantic appeal of the Cornish fishing trade, which is at once an ancient livelihood and an encounter between hunter and prey that is unique each time it is enacted; an industry where 'despite changes in a mechanical world' fishermen are still dependent on 'the unforeseen dances of nature' and the 'verdict of others for the ultimate reward of his toil'. Contemporary historians have also emphasised the 'primitive conflict' at the core of the fishing business (Starkey, Reid, and Ashcroft 2000): 'for fishing is essentially a form of hunting, a life and death struggle in which one form of life captures and consumes another' (p.7). Whilst fishing as an opportunistic predator-prey pursuit has ancient origins, its social organisation is highly variable and context dependent. An ensemble of techniques, fishing defies easy characterization. In industrial economies it involves aspects of factory production, and the capture of fish has been described (by scientists and policy makers and sometimes fishermen) through farming terms such as 'harvesting', rather than 'hunting'. In Cornwall, the historical development of fishing doubly defies assumptions because its early modern history was more characterised by typical capitalist relations of production (such as wage-labour) than its late modern history. It was only later that fishing became predominately a full-time occupation of share-earning fishermen and that ownership of the means of production came predominately into the hands of a new class of fish producers.

Thompson, Wailey, and Lummis (1983: 13) state that, of 'today's major fishing ports, only Lowestoft could claim that it has a longstanding fishing community of any significance'. Even in more sparsely populated regions, they add,

...before the eighteenth century it was rare for fishing to provide the mainstay of a coastal village, because it was not easy to find – or supply – a regular fish market, and there were more direct ways for the community to meet its needs, through farming and artisan craftsmanship (ibid.).

Whilst I agree with these general arguments, Cornwall provides an interesting and important contrast, where fishing was a significant part of the economy and for some fishers a full-time occupation, since at least the early medieval period. The industry developed particularly from the sixteenth century when markets for fish were consolidated in the Mediterranean. Markets and capital investment in fishing derived from Cornwall's unique geographic and political economic position, able to exploit trans-Atlantic and southern trade routes, and to some extent independent from the state. Given the longstanding place of fishing in Cornwall's history, it is necessary to take a long view if we are to fully understand aspects of continuity and change in the region's fishing communities. Furthermore given the deep influence exerted by the sea, it is also justifiable to consider such a view as a 'long durée' in Braudel's sense of the deep structural constraints and opportunities afforded by environment.

The purpose of this chapter is therefore to explore the regional character and development of Cornish fisheries, with particular attention to west Cornwall, during the medieval and industrial eras. Drawing on authorities on Cornish history such as John Rowe (2006), John Rule (2006), Bernard Deacon (2007) and Tony Pawlyn (2000), it aims to show how distinctive fishing cultures, technologies and craft were developed in Cornwall, but also that these are not static or isolated traditions, and they evolved in relation to broader political economies. It is admittedly a potted history that takes the story of the Cornish fisheries up until the First World War, by which time the industry had entered a long era of relative decline and a shift towards a more nationalized and professionalised industry. This theme is developed in Chapter Four, which also explores in more detail the changing economic arrangements organising fishing. The two chapters form a pair that 1) examines the notion of Cornwall and fishing as peripheral; 2) considers fishing harbours and boats as places where land and sea meet, configured by changing institutional arrangements and technologies; 3) looks at the way topography and different uses of space reflect overlapping economic forms and historicities. My enquiry into history does not merely provide 'context' for material that could be otherwise be understood separately. Rather it proceeds from the inescapable presence of the past in Cornwall and of physical and symbolic markers of continuity and loss.

## History and anthropology

Over the course of the twentieth century there have been several points of convergence between history and anthropology. From the historiographical view of Burrow (2009) movements within history reflecting the influence of anthropology (and arguably in turn influencing anthropology) have included the Annales School; Marxist influenced social history, and micro-histories. All of these have in some way involved innovative methodologies including new approaches to archives and oral history; and have also expanded the scale and boundaries of historical study to a range that encompasses the small-scale (households, parishes, workshops, factories) to the broad scope of world-systems. A particularly fertile area of overlap between history and anthropology has been the study of the family. Through studies of mobility, demographics and property transmission anthropologists and historians have been able to challenge and debate previously taken for granted assumptions such as the thesis that industrialization overstretched or dissolved kinship relations (Segalen 1986), whilst Macfarlane (1978) and Laslett (1965) on the contrary argue *against* an emphasis on the centrality of extended kinship relations, even prior to the Industrial Revolution.

In terms of maritime history there is a strong correspondence between world history, social history and historical geography in offering a counter-trend to the prevailing narrative of the nation-state as the central protagonist of history (Lambert, Martins, and Ogborn 2006). Seas emerge not only as empty spaces for the projection of sovereign power (Steinberg 1999) but also as communal and cosmopolitan spaces. However the maritime worlds of frequently non-literate mariners and coastal dwellers remains elusive, except for what we can discern from archives and also pictorial representations and literary accounts from people from 'non-traditional' backgrounds (e.g. Melville's *Moby Dick* [1851] and Richard Henry Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast* [1840], cited by Mack 2011). We cannot really know about their experiences, outlooks, and perspectives – their 'mentalities' (a concern which pre-occupied the original Annales historians Febvre and Bloch). For one reason, as Mack argues (2011:10), we are 'hampered by assumptions derived from the experience of steam ships and modern developments in cartography and marine survey', (as well as the legacy of earlier dominant colonial constructions of the sea).

In adopting this perspective I echo the arguments put forth by Lowenthal (1996). In an Association of Social Anthropologists debate on the motion ‘The past is a foreign country’<sup>11</sup>, Lowenthal and the other participants were forced into adopting an opposition between *historical* and *memorial* approaches to the past. My approach is not to attempt the reconstruction of past lives but to explore the origins, context, significances, of *forms of the past in the present* or ‘historicities’<sup>12</sup> (Hirsch and Stewart 2005) and the various ways different kinds of historical knowledge are transmitted. This approach entails adopting a ‘historical’ *and* a ‘memorial’ approach. I see both as being important to the anthropological project and not opposed.

Both Braudel in *Memory and the Mediterranean* (2002) and Cunliffe in *Facing the Ocean* (2001) acknowledge that even the visual-physical contemplation of the sea resonates with an experience of history. Braudel says,

The best witness to the Mediterranean’s age old past is the sea itself. This has to be said and said again; and the sea has to be seen and seen again. Simply looking at the sea cannot of course explain everything about a complicated past created by human agents, with varying doses of calculation, caprice and misadventure. But this is a sea that patiently recreates scenes from the past, breathing new life into them, locating them under a sky and in a landscape that we can see with our own eyes, a landscape and sky like those of long ago. A moment’s concentration or daydreaming, and that past comes back to life (2002).

In Cornwall there is an immediacy of historical presence, which may be shaped by the presence of an absence – the sea as ‘revelatory’ and ‘concealing’ of history (Mack 2011), and there is considerable, and very knowledgeable local dialogue and activity involving the researching, writing and narrating of history. It therefore would not make sense to engage only with ‘memory’ and not with ‘history’ in the more conventional sense of the term.

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<sup>11</sup> A quotation from LP. Hartley’s 1953 novel *The Go-Between* (Hartley 2011).

<sup>12</sup> Hirsch and Stewart (2005) consider that “‘historicity’ describes a human situation in flow, where versions of the past and future (of persons, collectives, or things assume present form in relation to events, political needs, available cultural forms and emotional dispositions... Historicity in this sense is the manner in which persons operating under the constraints of social ideologies make sense of the past, while anticipating the future’ (p.262).

## The presence of the past

The distinctiveness of present-day Newlyn lies in the juxtaposition of a partly industrialised and capitalised fleet harbouring within a small fishing village of medieval origins. The experience of walking around the village as a visitor is therefore not an impression of seamless continuity, but rather a disruption of the senses as one attempts to register material forms associated with different time-periods and ways of life jostling up against one another. My encounters with the past were not only via inert material traces but through the combination of local architecture and topography and the evocations of folk stories, local historians, archives, museum and gallery exhibitions, and the presence of *Ripple* and narratives of her owner/restorer John Lambourn.

Over the course of my research, I visited five excellent exhibitions<sup>13</sup> at Penlee House and Gallery that featured the history of fishing and art at Newlyn and the neighbouring village of Mousehole and drew heavily on the paintings of the Newlyn School (c.1880 - c.1940). The central theme of the most recent exhibition, *Another Cornwall / Gens de Cornouaille(s): Art and Life in Finistère and Cornwall 1880-1930* was the strong links between West Cornwall and Cornouaille in the Finistère district of Brittany. Penlee describes this relationship as one that ‘dates back to the prehistoric past and really came to the fore when art colonies developed in each area. The influx of some of the greatest painters of their age into Brittany and West Cornwall meant that the lives of the indigenous communities in both places were captured for posterity’<sup>14</sup>. The exhibition therefore highlights the long history of interaction and exchange along the seaboard of Western Europe (Bowen 1972). It also highlights the fact that pictorial representations inform our knowledge and perceptions of these regions shared histories. However, similarly to the artworks that feature depictions of local dress, fishing technology, and gender and family relations

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<sup>13</sup> *A Village in Focus: Mousehole*, 29 November 2008-14 March 2009; *A Village in Focus: Newlyn*, 17 January – 14 March 2009; *The Brotherhood of the Palette: Newlyn School Paintings 1880-1900*, 20 June-12 September 2009; *Walter Langley and the Birmingham Boys*, 11 June-10 September 2011; *Another Cornwall / Gens de Cornouaille(s): Art and Life in Finistère and Cornwall 1880-1930*, 24 March-9 June 2012

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.penleehouse.org.uk/whats-on.html> (accessed 29 July 2012).

modelled through the lens of late Victorian values, the exhibition is reproducing a narrative of indigeneity and tradition. In fact, as Segalen (1991) explains, some regions in Brittany had almost entirely turned their backs on the sea for two centuries when the maritime economy declined in contrast to agriculture. With the arrival of the railway at Quimper in Finistère in the late nineteenth century, rural workers flocked from the land to the coast to work in the fishing industry and its new canning factories. At the same time the railway facilitated the arrival of artists who would ‘capture’ this moment of transition recast as primitive tradition. As we shall see later in this chapter, this is the real parallel with West Cornwall.

The invention of camera photography in the nineteenth century facilitated the work of the so-called *en plein air* Victorian artists who worked in Brittany and then in Cornwall. Whilst some paintings were produced outdoors, photography was often employed to capture a scene which would then be painted in the studios converted from fisher cottages and sail-lofts (Cross 2008). Photographic depiction of fishing villages and coastal scenes was also produced by the early tourist industry, again stimulated by the railway. Less embellished and dramatised than the genre paintings, photographs remain a powerful evocation of this era. My guide through the extensive photo archive at Morab Library in Penzance was retired fisheries patrol officer Glyn Richards (Fig.9). In addition to volunteering as an archivist at Morab, he was also writing a book on local fishing history and his grandfather who was the last sail-maker in Newlyn. A fountain of knowledge about local history as well as the technicalities of the modern fishing industry, he explained the social history behind the early photographs of Newlyn. In particular he drew my attention to the significance of the medieval pier (Figs. 10-12), suggesting I should go down and soak up its atmosphere. When the artists began arriving to Newlyn from 1880, this was the only harbour protection for a substantial fleet that had undergone considerable recent growth<sup>15</sup>. It is to the origins of this pier and the historic development of the settlements it supported that I now turn.

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<sup>15</sup> Newlyn had 130 ‘drift’ boats in 1870 (Rowe 2006). This is the number of vessels permanently based at Newlyn but a much greater number would have been using the port to land fish and take shelter etc.

# **Fishing and Cornwall's medieval maritime economy**

## **Origins and early development of Newlyn and Mousehole**

Newlyn and Mousehole are typical of the fishing villages of Devon and Cornwall; mazes of cobbled streets and small cottages tightly packed and climbing the hillsides of steep coastal valleys. Fox (2001) endeavoured to show that the appearance of chaotic arrangement in the geography of fishing villages on the south coast of Devon could be explained in terms of their origins,

...First, collections of cellars on the shore, growing slowly, the buildings being added one by one: then evolution, also usually slow and unplanned in most cases, into inhabited places. High density of buildings has been explained by the cramped sites on which these settlements stood and by the fact that cellars, later to be replaced by cottages, had no gardens, almost by definition, and were placed close together – although later in the evolution of these places, small plots might be enclosed, if there were some space, to grow hemp for making nets and for vegetables. The winding, narrow streets today are simply the interstices between these structures and enclosures (186).

Seasonal coastal settlements colonised from inland by peasant farmers were initially cellars and stores for the preservation and storage of fish and fishing gear, sited on the marginal edge of manorial land. Eventually some of these sites evolved into fishing villages. Their inhabitants tended to be landless as a condition of their relative autonomy from the manor and situation at the edge of cultivatable land. Similar origins apply to the settlements that developed into Newlyn and Mousehole. As described by Mattingly (2009), these sites were used as temporary fishing camps from at least the Mesolithic era. The raised coastal beaches were colonised from the high plateau inland for permanent settlements from about the twelfth or thirteenth century by which time the area of Paul Parish incorporated a number of manors all part of the Earldom of Cornwall. Mousehole was the earlier and more important settlement, although in that period it consisted of two linked settlements – in Cornish known as Porthenys ('island harbour') and Porthengrouse ('the cross harbour'). Its English name Mousehole was probably given later by sailors. The importance of the settlement derived not only from access to the sea, but also the steep valley sides and streams which fed manorial mills. Residents in 1327 included a clerk, merchant, miller, shoemaker, tailor, weaver, baker, blacksmith, carpenter and mercer. It was the first port in Mount's Bay to have a protective quay, which was built between 1387 and 1393.

Newlyn was not as important during the middle ages as Mousehole but its origins were nonetheless also medieval. (Its name was usually spelt *Lulyn* meaning ‘fleet pool’ from the Cornish *lu* ‘army, fleet’ and *lyn* ‘pool’). It began like Mousehole as two distinct settlements, Newlyn Town and a smaller twin settlement of Tolcarne and Jackford. Newlyn Town was probably originally a collection of fish cellars and net lofts, at the edge of a basin known as Gwavas Lake (the Cornish word *gwaf-vos* ‘winter dwelling’ originally referring to the practice of transhumance but in this context referring to winter shelter for fishing boats). From the shore, track-ways ran up the steep valley sides to the church and farmland on the plateau. Half a mile across cornfields to the north, in the tree-lined Newlyn Coombe (*coombe* meaning ‘valley’) lay Jackford and Tolcarne either side of the Newlyn River. Here animals were driven down from farmland on the plateau and across a ford and later a bridge. This practice is marked by nearby place-names ‘Street an Nowan’ (street of the ox) and ‘Fradgen’ (ox road). The parish church at Paul was the most dominant local institution in the medieval period; not only did it lease the fish-tithes but also commissioned the repair of Newlyn’s quay. In 1435 Bishop Lacy appealed to the faithful to contribute to the cost of rebuilding the pier in return for 40 days of indulgence (remission of sins). The medieval communities of Newlyn were very small, still less than a dozen families in Newlyn Town by the sixteenth century, but it had already acquired some distinction as a place associated with fishing, described in 1530 as a ‘hamlet to Mousehole’ and a ‘poor fisher town’ (Mattingly 2009: 22).

### **The Cornish and Mount’s Bay medieval maritime economies**

The maritime trade of Mount’s Bay was extremely important to the development of the Cornish economy as a whole. As early as the third century BC, tin and copper were being exported from Cornwall to the Mediterranean (Doe 2006). It is even thought that the Phoenicians traded for tin as far north as Cornwall and that St Michael’s Mount and Hayle estuary may have been trading posts for these seafaring merchants from the eastern Mediterranean. In the Middle Ages, the chief exports from Cornwall were tin, fish and hides, as well as cheese, cloth and horses.<sup>16</sup> The

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<sup>16</sup> Wine and above all salt were Cornwall’s major imports in the Middle Ages. Grain, iron, figs, raisins, garlic and onions were more occasionally recorded. As well as wine, pilgrims were also an

‘English’ economy by contrast was dominated by the export of wool and cloth, illustrating the distinctive character of Cornish resources, trade and political economy. England, with its agrarian base, looked south and east for its trade, towards the Baltic and North Sea continental ports. Cornwall and the Westcountry, with its relatively rugged coastal landscapes and proximity to the Atlantic looked to the far Atlantic North, southern Europe and the New World<sup>17</sup>.

After Cornwall’s status as the Norman Earldom of Cornwall was superseded by the status of ‘Duchy’, Cornwall was more deeply tied to the English Crown, but in many ways it remained stubbornly independent and unruly in land-use, religious politics and maritime affairs. The Killigrew family for example was reluctantly charged by the early Tudor crown with the responsibility of protecting England’s most important south-westerly harbour (Falmouth as it later became known), but was notoriously caught up in piracy, proving a menace at times to English shipping and interests. Meanwhile Cornish privateers were willing to work as mercenaries for the Bretons, for as Doe points out ‘the type of national loyalty we might consider today was irrelevant in the medieval world of shifting boundaries and constant conflict’

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important part of the medieval Mounts’ bay economy as it lay on the pilgrimage route between Spain, France and Ireland.

<sup>17</sup> Pryor (2011: 11) describes these two historic/geographic regions as: a North Sea Province ‘which consisted of the Scottish and English East coast, extended across to the Pennines, through the Midlands, to the South coast around Dorset. The contacts here were with Scandinavia, the Low Countries, France and Germany. This contrasted with an Atlantic province to the west, which included Ireland, the Western Isles, the Isles of Man, Devon and Cornwall’, with ...‘close ties between those regions and neighbouring parts of Europe, especially Brittany, Spain and Portugal’. Following the example of Cunliffe, we might conceive of this North West European Atlantic region as having a ‘unity’ (in Braudel’s sense of the term) as a region with shared cultures and histories linked by the ocean. For Braudel, the diversity of the Mediterranean underlay a unity, which extended far beyond its waters and shores to its cities and hinterlands of mountain and desert, linked by sea-trade. Limitations and variations in geography drove exchange. Whilst harbours supported a ‘...floating population of sailors... mixed and polyglot; It is an unforgiving world that Braudel depicts ...toil, epidemics, the chances of trade, pirate raids and kidnappings for enslavement, near-starvation at times on the subsistence afforded by poor, stony soil’ (Burrow 2009: 484). The parallels with Cornwall are striking. For example ‘on 16 June 1640 in one of the worst pirate raids, 60 people were taken from five fishing boats and four other vessels near Mousehole’ (Mattingly 2009: 47-48). Hunger also was a feature of life especially during years when the pilchard fishery failed and coastal dwellers were forced to rely on limpets and mussels for protein (Rowe 2006).

(2006: 8). It was not only Cornwall's proximity to the sea and distance from the English seat of power that gave it its independence. Its most precious resource – tin, also meant that it was governed by distinct legislation, for example with power being invested in the local Stannaries that organised the tin trade.

By quantity, fish was by far the main trade of Cornwall in the Middle Ages. From the late twelfth century onwards, fish were already being exported to Spain, France and Gascony. St Ives and Mousehole were the most important ports in the west of the county, followed by the other Mount's Bay ports of Marazion, Newlyn, Penzance, Porthplement (which no longer exists) and Lamorna (Mattingly 2009). The main fishing ground for Mousehole and Newlyn was the bay itself, although from the fifteenth century the Irish fisheries were also important. Plentiful supplies of fish of many different types were available providing year round employment in the fisheries. This was in contrast to the more seasonal fisheries of the East English Coast. Although the East coast ports were more significant in the early medieval period, they gradually declined relative to those in the West, partly because of this seasonal factor but also because of war and shifting Baltic herring stocks. Fisheries in Westcountry ports also benefitted from weaker seigniorial control<sup>18</sup> and access to new fishing grounds in Ireland, Iceland, Greenland, Newfoundland and new markets in the New World. The Newfoundland trade in particular was favoured by the Elizabethan government and deemed worthy of protection from the marauding fleets of the Spanish. Boats built by Westcountry shipyards and manned by Westcountry seafarers commonly sailed to Spain (with fish and other commodities) to collect large amounts of salt for curing, then sailed to Newfoundland where they took on board dried cod, taking this cargo back to the Mediterranean and then returning to Britain with wine, fruit, olive oil and other items.

There were principally three different markets for fish caught off Cornwall – a local market (for fresh fish), middle-distance markets (for which fish were lightly cured by quick salting or wind-drying) and long distance markets (for fully salt-cured fish). France and Spain were the principle markets for the latter who relied on fish during Lent and on fasting days. The Elizabethan government also attempted to increase domestic fish consumption by maintaining Catholic restrictions on meat

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<sup>18</sup> According to Kowaleski (2000) seigniorial rights and profits from fishing were relatively small but seigniorial investment was strong.

(one of many acts of the Privy Council regarding fisheries). In fact the Cornish had a popular toast to the Pope:

Long life to the Pope! May he live to repent  
And add just 6 months to the term of his Lent,  
And tell all his vassals from Rome to the Poles  
There's nothing like pilchards for saving their souls!

Long life to the Pope!  
And may our streets run with blood!

St Ives and Mount's Bay developed substantial fish curing centres especially for pilchards – pilchards and hake being the most commonly exported fish from Cornwall. The pilchards mostly arrived in late summer to the coast of Cornwall, their most northerly limit. Hake followed in their wake, feeding on the shoals. The principle catching methods for hake (and other fish like cod and ling) was hook and line, whilst nets were used to catch pilchards with two rival catching techniques, drifting and seining.

## **Cornish fishing and early industrialisation**

### **Drifting and seining**

*Seine fishing* originally developed as an industry sometime around the fourteenth century. A shoal of pilchards was encircled by men using nets from small boats close to shore. The operation was directed by a *huer* positioned on a cliff-top who would announce the arrival of the shoals with the cry '*Hevva, hevva!*' (Cornish meaning 'a shoaling place'). The huer would then co-ordinate the movement of boats around the shoal with the aid of a trumpet and a bushel. A 'seine', was composed of two to three boats, a net or nets, and a cellar for processing and storing the fish. This seine capital was supplied and owned by a capitalist merchant. As Rowe points out (2006), the need to organise a distant foreign market, maintain three boats and cellars for a short period of use, and the increasingly large size of nets, all called for a capitalistic scale of organisation. The hired labour was provided by local farmer-workers, smallholders, miners, shopkeepers and grocers. A season ran for anything up to 10 weeks during late summer and autumn, but the shoals only came in for a small number of

days during this period, and that is all the workers were hired and paid for<sup>19</sup>. They received their earnings either by wage or some system of wage and share. Such systems varied from place to place and over time. Landowners and mine-owners, such as the Bolithos in Mount's Bay, held large controlling stakes in such ventures.

The drift-fishery was also longstanding, particularly in Paul parish, where there were few beaches for seining and a long history of independent fishers and mariners. However it particularly developed as an industry in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. *Drift fishing* was done using nets typically cast from *luggers* (sailing boats used for fishing with two perpendicular sails positioned *fore* and *aft*<sup>20</sup>, Fig.17) and set further out to sea than those of the seiners. Amongst other species they fished for pilchards, and there were bitter feuds between the seiners and the drifters, the former claiming that the drifters took all the fish before they came inshore.

Seining interests, being those of the merchant and gentry class, were strongly represented in parliament, and for a long time had the advantage because they were excluded from, or received certain compensation for, the salt duties (Rowe 2006). As in those days all fish not destined for immediate local consumption had to be preserved and salting was the main method by the eighteenth century, salt duties were a highly contentious issue in Cornwall<sup>21</sup>. Pilchards were 'balked' in layers of salt, either in cellars that a group of fishermen could lease or in large capitalist operations utilising an outdoor court. A large work-gang of women and children provided the labour required to salt, press and pack the pilchards. After salting the fish were packed into casks and the oil was pressed out of them (a by-product that was used to fuel lamps). Rowe provides figures for total exported between 1820 and 1877: 960, 051 ½ barrels or *hogsheads*, and an average of 16, 553 hogsheads per annum (ibid: 334). After one of the best seasons ever known in 1790, 52,000

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<sup>19</sup> It is thought that in the St Ives area, the autumn flooding of the mines may have coincided with the pilchard season, giving miners the chance to make up their earnings through fishing (Rowe 2006); whilst the inter-seasonality of agriculture and fishing is expressed in the Cornish rhyme, 'when the corn is in the shock, the fish are on the rock'.

<sup>20</sup> *Fore* and *aft*: forward (towards the bow of the vessel) and backward (towards the stern).

<sup>21</sup> Salt was not only widely used to preserve fish for export but also to preserve fish and pork for home consumption, vital to avoid starvation in the lean months at the end of winter.

hogsheads were exported and each hogshead contained up to 3000 fishes! (ibid: 280).

Since Charles II's Long Parliament of the Restoration, government had favoured the seining interests, instituting in 1662 the 'Act for the Regulation of the Pilchard Fishery'. This legislated against the 'growing evils of the Driving nets' (cited by Rowe, 267) and prohibited the use of drift, trammel and steam nets within one and a half leagues of the Devon and Cornwall coasts from 1<sup>st</sup> June to 30<sup>th</sup> November every year. The drifters were accused of breaking up the shoals before they got close enough to the shore for seining. As Rowe explains,

the Act then went on to make provisions against persons loitering near boats, nets and cellars, to provide penalties against the purloining of fish, and to ban the "making" of pilchards and Fumenthoes<sup>22</sup>, except by owners, partners and adventurers in "the Craft of Fishery" or by the persons to whom they had openly sold their fish (ibid: 267).

Rowe finds it likely that the Act followed a succession of poor fishing seasons which had created hunger and poverty amongst the poor, driving them to steal fish from the merchants. The seiner's monopoly continued up until about the mid-eighteenth century after which parliament began to be petitioned by a lobby on behalf of the drifters, merchants from the towns of Looe, Bodmin, Liskeard and Plymouth, calling themselves the 'society of the free British fishery' (ibid: 270). Prominent amongst the seining interest was Rev. Walter Borlase, Vicar of Madron and Kenwyn, adventurer and bound proprietor of several tin mines in West Penwith<sup>23</sup>, Vice Warden of the Stannaries and share-holder in a seining outfit. He argued that the seine fishery was more gainful for the employment of men and for the revenues of the realm (ibid).

The ordinary Cornish fishers held little if any allegiance to the established order of church and state. The imposition of salt duties, the regulations against drifting, the exactions of the church tithes and the activities of the press gang<sup>24</sup> all exacerbated

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<sup>22</sup> *Fumenthoes*: (Spanish) referring to pilchards that have been smoked.

<sup>23</sup> By this period, the focus of tin mining had shifted to the west of Cornwall as had the bulk of the pilchard shoals. Penzance had its own coinage charter and the combination of increased capital from mining, port trade and increased catches made fishing in the west of the county an increasing resource for investment and profit.

<sup>24</sup> At times of war, the conscription of males into navy service was a constant threat. However some special dispensations were allowed for those engaged in seining and not more than one son was to be taken from each fishing family.

anti-establishment sentiments. Smuggling (which had for some time been the only way for the poor to obtain cheap salt) became, according to Rowe, an economic necessity during the long years of the American and Napoleonic wars, when continental blockades were in-place. It was not only salt that was smuggled but also brandy and wine. Many of the smugglers were fishers by trade or were connected in some way to the fishing communities of Mount's Bay and the south coast of Cornwall. This illicit cross-channel trade even influenced the design of Cornish luggers, as innovations and boat building styles that the Bretons employed were adopted by the Cornish, making the luggers more refined and faster, both for outrunning the revenue cutters and for the all important race home to market from the fishing grounds (Fig.18).

Despite the antagonism between the state and the Cornish fishers, gradually political forces shifted in favour of the drifters over the 'rich man's fishery'. In the war years the government favoured the year-round drifting which was seen as a nursery for seamen, providing a vital source of skilled man-power for the nation's navy. In the various government inquiries into the state of the fishing industry it must also have been evident that the foreign market for pilchards was unreliable (given the constant threat of war and the variability of the pilchard catches). The drift fishery was also increasingly sought out as a livelihood by the Cornish themselves<sup>25</sup>. It gave those interested in making a living from fishing the means to almost year-round employment. It may have been to some a preferable alternative to working in the mines. In fact as the mining went into decline (and with it mining merchant capital) it might have been a very necessary alternative.

Owning or crewing on a lugger gave fishermen a chance to participate in the Irish and North Sea herring fisheries. Many drift fishermen eventually came to own their own boats, the capital outlay for a new build being about £250 pounds rather than £1000 for a seine. In addition, leading up to the late nineteenth century boom in the local drift fishery, seine fishing was going into decline. It is difficult to interpret cause and effect from these twin developments. However, in addition to the possible appeal of the drift fishery and its stimulus (for a time) by the coming of the railway,

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<sup>25</sup> Rowe found that between 1827 and 1870 'the relative importance of the seining and drift fisheries had been reversed; in 1827 the seines had employed 2,672 at sea and drifters 1,599, in 1870 the seiners only employed 1,510 men and the drifters 2,462' (2006: 300).

the pilchards were ceasing to come in such regularity and mass. The loss of the Mediterranean markets to other competitors in the early twentieth century was the final blow to the seining interests. Meanwhile in the nineteenth century drift fishery, there was a gradual internal accumulation of capital within the emergent 'fishing communities', perhaps, as Deacon has speculated (2009), stimulated early on by the Napoleonic wars, with higher domestic demand for fish and opportunities for smuggling.

### **Comparisons and connections between mining and fishing communities**

In mining regions, according to Deacon (2007), 'early industrialisation reproduced a small-scale landscape, with the cottages of the miners distributed away from the small fields, lanes and settlements' and this 'domestic scale was reinforced by a continuing role for the family' (p.124), including father to son inherited skills for example. Deacon argues that mining in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was a product of merchant capitalism but retained some older social forms associated with domestic economy, and was therefore a stage before full industrialization: 'Merchant capitalism provided a space in which "independent" community life flourished, in the process creating new "traditions"' (pp.124-125). Cornish labouring communities at the end of eighteenth century, Deacon observes, were acting like English agricultural communities in the sixteenth. That is, they depended significantly on collateral aids. Three-quarters of all miners still lived outside the towns as late as 1851. Collateral aids such as small-holdings, or at least a potato allotment, protected families from sudden price changes. Deacon suggests there is some evidence to show that these aids may even have been provided links between occupational communities, finding that in St Just 'potato allotments were supplemented by joint ownership of dairy cows and shares in fishing boats, all of which diversified sources of income for a labouring family' (p.126) – part of a wider 'economy of makeshifts' (ibid). There were also distinct gender relations, with women working both allotments and mines and therefore also having relative independence especially between childhood and marriage.

Deacon notes that independence and customary rights were not confined to mining and were fiercely defended. In 1768 in Mousehole, one merchant tried to abolish the custom whereby cellar women curing pilchards were allowed to keep the

dregs of the catch. The women were still refusing to work for him five months later. So whilst these societies were still marked by ‘paternalism and dependence’, there was nevertheless a constant struggle for autonomy. The fish tithe in Paul parish for example had always been problematic, but the final dispute came in 1828 when the new lease owner of the tithe tried to double the one guinea rate that fishermen had agreed to instead of paying a tithe in fish. The women of Mousehole and Newlyn pelted the bailiff with fish offal and he escaped with barely his clothes on his back. Placards were raised reading: ‘It is better to die than to starve – No tithe – One and All’ (Mattingly 2009). They finally won a battle that had been waged since the thirteenth century. It is one example of what Thompson would call ‘moral economy’ (1971) and the actions workers take when owners fail to meet their obligations.

In a number of ways there were some real connections and some observable similarities between mining and fishing work practices and social organisation in Cornwall, such as: a spirit of independence rooted in a economic share systems, a growing culture of Methodism, strong family involvement, distinct gender relations, a provisioning of collateral and mutual aids in times of crisis, as well as exchange between occupational communities, such as the salted fish that prevented mining communities from experiencing the full impact of potato blight that had so adversely affected the Irish<sup>26</sup>. The various labouring communities also had in common a dependence on the merchant-gentry class. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw increasing division between labour and capital across industries in Cornwall (Whetter 1974). The new industrial society had produced a new social class, the merchant bourgeoisie, with three families emerging in particular – the Williamses, the Bolithos and the Foxes, with interests spanning shipping, iron mongery, mining, fishing and timber. They led a handful of other merchant families, all linked by kinship, trade and marriage. In the process, gentry-led institutions were also on the rise, such as the Royal Institution of Cornwall, with which a number of antiquarians and scientists were associated.

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<sup>26</sup> However such resources were not enough to curb hunger during the hard decades in the nineteenth century in which poor prices and falling agricultural production following the Napoleonic wars compounded slumps in the mining industry. Emigration amongst the miners occurred on a mass scale but was less significant in the fishing communities

Deacon describes how by the 1820s a view of Cornwall had emerged which emphasised the glory of Cornwall as an industrial region (ibid). This had grown partly out of the character of rural industrialism in Cornwall and partly out of nineteenth century notions of progress. This image rested according to Deacon on three related concepts: 'independence' – cast as individualism and later a 'scape-goat for the failure to surmount deindustrialization' (132); 'combination' – the famous Cornish motto of 'one and all'; and 'enterprise' – used to explain emigration (133). In the process a local religious-mythical teleology was wedded with a scientific discourse of technical progress and a 'romantic-antiquarian impulse to recover the fragments that were being irretrievably lost' (135). I highlight these points of Deacon's because they show how marginality and difference (rooted in a peculiar mixing of ideas about the old and the new, tradition and modernity), were at this time emerging as Cornish self-representations, which no doubt influenced also the self-consciousness of the labouring communities. This is important because it takes us beyond elite language and discourse to material process, a peculiar combination of which I will identify as at work in the west Cornwall fishing communities of the late nineteenth century. The latter should be understood within this wider culture and in terms of its contemporary legacy under different circumstances today.

## **The emergence of a Cornish fishing village**

One of the vehicles of emerging ideas of 'Cornishness' and of 'authentic' rural labour and culture in the Victorian era was the establishment of several art colonies – most significantly at Newlyn and St Ives from around 1880. Artworks from this era explore idyllic notions of 'primitive' communities working together in their struggle to make a living amidst the dangers presented by the forces of nature. As portrayed in Percy Craft's *Tucking a School of Pilchards, 1897* (Fig.16) seine fishing in particular appeared to the artists and their audiences as highly communalistic. It was also much more visible, drift fishing being carried out at night and out of range of visibility. However, seine fishing – which as an organised industry had been going on much longer than drift fishing – was actually the more capitalistic of the two. The newly expanding drift fisheries – carried out by small independent crews of share fishermen – were of the more egalitarian structure as well more individualistic.

However even the drift lugger industry was not to survive much longer. My aim in this final section of the chapter is to outline the transformations that were happening during the period of the early artists' colonies in Newlyn and St Ives. The main point to be conveyed about Newlyn at this time is that on the one hand, like other Cornish ports it did lose its distinctive and longstanding traditions of building and fishing with sail boats. On the other hand, whilst this period marks the beginning of the substantial decline or disappearance of fishing from many Westcountry harbours, Newlyn was one of the few ports where the remainder of the Cornish fishing industry was concentrated.

The other significant point is that whilst Newlyn and the wider region went through substantial socio-economic changes (including new relations of production within fishing and elsewhere), the local and national consciousness of places like Newlyn and St Ives as natural, distinctive, and tightly bounded communities was just beginning to take root, partly because of the growth in the arts and coastal leisure, and partly because of industrial conflict and change. Therefore this period is as much about the growth of folk and romantic ideas of the Cornish fishing village and socio-economic/political ideas of fishing as an occupation, as it is about the fishing village or community as a material reality, which is a more complex concept.

### **Maritime economies in Britain and the South-West at the turn of the twentieth century**

To understand the transitions thus outlined, wider changes in the Cornish and British maritime economies must first be explained. This subject has been thoroughly treated in Starkey's (1998) study of changes in the South West maritime economy between 1870 and 1914. He identifies six industries which made up the core of Britain's maritime economy in this period, all sea-reliant, located on the coast and inter-related to one another: (1) maritime defence, (2) coastal leisure, (3) fishing, (4) port operations, (5) shipping, and (6) shipbuilding. All six industries expanded in absolute terms in Britain during this period. It was the moment in which a global economy arose, integrated through sea transport with Britain providing its central hub. By the end of this period:

Possessing over 41% of the world's steam shipping stock, launching over 60 percent of the world's tonnage, carrying 52 percent of the world's trade, catching more fish than any other nation, deploying the largest naval fleet on the oceans, and

relishing the delights of more seaside resorts than any other nation, Britons were preeminent in most matters maritime (Starkey, *ibid*: 10).

However this expansion of maritime activity and commerce, like all processes of industrialisation, was regionally variable and in Cornwall and Devon a 'pattern of limited growth and marked decline was clearly evident' (p.11). By 1870 maritime interests in the South West were 'broad and well-defined', with longstanding and dynamic economies in all the above sectors and with coastal leisure just beginning to take off. In fact maritime activity grew in prominence in the South West in this period, employment rising in this sector by 50% as the population engaged in mining and quarrying almost halved and agricultural employment also decreased significantly. However Starkey finds that this growth in maritime employment was skewed in two ways: firstly, growth was focused on navy-related and coastal leisure occupations, with the fishing and sea-transport sectors experiencing degrees of relative and absolute decline; secondly, there was a spatial concentration of maritime activities across the board which also entailed a degree of occupational and technical specialisation. Devonport for example became the focus for navy defence, Plymouth for shipping and Brixham, Newlyn and Plymouth for fishing. There was a widespread development of tourism and recreational sailing, in some instances replacing or co-existing with traditional maritime industries (as at Penzance, Falmouth and Dartford) attracted by the 'instant theatre of the fisherman, seafarer or stevedore at work' (p.22). There was also some concentration of tourism in the larger Victorian seaside resorts (Torquay, Paignton, and Exmouth).

Why was the Cornish maritime economy so marked by deindustrialisation in this period in comparison to the maritime economy in England and Wales as a whole? Simply put, Starkey's answer is that there were fundamental structural issues that gave the Southwest a predilection towards small sailing vessels and restricted the growth of competitive and modernised ports, trade and shipbuilding. The region's geography exerted strong but ambivalent influences. The most significant constraints<sup>27</sup> in the changing industrial context were: firstly, the lack of raw

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<sup>27</sup> In the early industrial period by contrast, Starkey observes that the coastal environment had a number of features in its favour such as the proximity of the Western Approaches, the number of sheltered deepwater harbours for ship building and port functions, and ongoing opportunities for

materials such as coal, or iron ore to, a) stimulate capital investment, b) supply a steamship industry, and c) export as major sea-borne commodities; and secondly, the configuration of the coastline which prevented large vessels navigating its river estuaries and many small harbours. Instead a cycle of 'Anglocentric development' led to significant concentrations of industry:

...sea-borne trade, increasingly focused on the major industrial ports of London, Liverpool, Glasgow, Hull and the coal ports of South Wales and north-east England. Likewise, shipping gravitated towards the major ports, while shipbuilding migrated to the Clyde, the North East and other northern districts from the 1860s (p.29).

Fishing also became more concentrated in the ports of Hull, Grimsby, Yarmouth and Aberdeen, which had better access to the distant Arctic fishing grounds, capital investment, and railway links to the growing proletarian urban markets<sup>28</sup>. Of course the same geographic features that constrained the South-West's development in some sectors were assets for the growing interest in and market for the coast as a site of leisure, and its developing peripheral condition gave it an ambience of the untouched and undeveloped rural idyll.

### **The arrival of the railway: West Cornwall fishing communities in the nineteenth century**

Let us now turn to the specific manifestations of these broad changes within the fisheries of west Cornwall and particularly the port of Newlyn, firstly returning to the developing pattern of fishing after the Napoleonic War.

At the end of the war in 1815, many seamen were discharged from the navy and were keen to enjoy the freedom and independence of share fishing. They joined those fishermen who had been given special dispensation from the predations of the pressgang (Pawlyn 2000). Drift-fishing and the lugger building industry had been steadily growing and were boosted further by these new recruits. Drifting was done at night, up to 10 miles out to sea, using nets a mile long. The most important fishery

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naval activities. Additionally the region's mineral resources and china clay had provided cargos that stimulated earlier sea-trade.

<sup>28</sup> These newly emerging capitalist fisheries were not short of capital or labour. Railway companies were large investors in the northern and east coast fisheries, and a pool of labour was easily found, in many cases involuntary, indentured labour, such as young boys from workhouses and orphanages (Robinson 1996).

for the Mount's Bay boats was no longer pilchards, but the Western spring mackerel fishery, particularly in the bay itself and also around the Isles of Scilly. Fishing ranges had been restricted during the Napoleonic wars, but by the 1820s, every June and July some Mount's Bay boats took part in the mackerel fishery in the Irish Sea and off the Isle of Man<sup>29</sup>. By the 1840s many boats were continuing to the North Sea herring fishery in late summer and early autumn, using the Forth and Clyde Canal to reach the East coast.

Luggers were generally built in one of two sizes (or 'classes'). Larger (1<sup>st</sup> class) boats of up to 55ft were used as mackerel drifters or 'drivers', 'so called as the boats were driven by the effect of the tides on their nets'<sup>30</sup>. Smaller (2<sup>nd</sup> class) boats were pilchard drivers. Originally open crafts, by the 1830s most had forward half decks (towards the bow) and by the 1840s, nearly all were fully decked. The transition to decked boats gave shelter and accommodation for the crews to fish throughout the year and in difficult conditions, important as the Cornish boats extended their range. On their annual circumnavigation, crews of up to seven could be at sea for months at a time, only coming in to land their catches to the nearest market. They returned to Cornwall around October in time for the home winter pilchard and mackerel fisheries. Mackerel drifters far outweighed pilchard drifters in Mount's Bay (the latter being more common at St Ives) but the ability to switch between the mackerel and pilchard fisheries was one of the of the great drivers of expansion in west Cornwall fisheries (Pawlyn 2000). The other broader and long-term dynamic underpinning the success of Westcountry fisheries between the 1500s and about 1880 was that between 'near' or 'home' voyages and 'long' or 'far' voyages to the distant fishing grounds (Gray 2000).

The extension of the railway system into Cornwall was a great catalyst for change in Cornwall, and had huge and ambiguous consequences for the region's fisheries. In 1859, Isambard Brunel's project to bridge the River Tamar was completed, breaching the great river that had for millennia provided a physical and symbolic boundary between Cornwall and England (Fig.19). In addition, with only limited

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<sup>29</sup> Pawlyn (2009) has documented evidence for the growing participation of Cornish boats in the Irish fisheries through customs records. Due to anti-smuggling law Masters and boat-owners had to obtain a license from the admiralty in order to extend their range.

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.cornishmaritimetrust.org/#/the-barnabas/4537219866> (accessed 29 July 2012)

road systems of poor quality and a danger from bandits, travel and transport between Cornwall and England had for a long time been largely sea-borne. The railway transformed the opportunities for Cornwall's farmers and many turned their skills and small field systems to market gardening. It likewise brought new opportunities for fishers. Being a fish quick to rot, mackerel was always consumed fresh and up until this time had therefore been limited to markets for local consumption. The railway enabled fishers and merchants to participate in growing markets up-country such as Billingsgate in London. This was a further boost to the expanding drift fishery and boat-building likewise boomed in the 1860s and 1870s, with about 400 mackerel drifters landing 50 tonnes of mackerel a day in Mount's Bay in 1875 (Halliday 2000). However, as is always the case with the great harbingers of modernity the Great Western Railway (GWR) brought mixed blessings.

Until the advent of the railway, Cornwall's fisheries and other industries more generally had to some degree been isolated from the rest of the country. As I showed in the first half of this chapter, the markets that drove expansion in fisheries were local and Continental/ Mediterranean. The infrastructure and technologies of Cornish shipbuilding and fishing were more than able to compete in the era of sail, and the fishing boats of Mount's bay were admired as the finest fleet in the world even as late as the International Fisheries Exhibition of 1881. With the railway the Cornish fisheries became for the first time integrated into a national market and the playing field shifted considerably. The western mackerel fishery began to suffer from outside competition.

Since the late eighteenth century, there had been well established trawl fisheries pursued by Devon sailing smacks, stationed at Brixham in particular. These had been gradually depleting local fishing grounds and moving further afield (Pawlyn 2000). Trawlers and trawl technical expertise migrated to the East Coast, driving the development of industrial trawl fleets at ports like Grimsby and Hull. The GWR also gave Devon trawlers growing mobility in the southwest, enabling them to land to Newlyn and Plymouth and thus take part in the western spring mackerel fishery (with benefits for merchants of those ports). Steam-trawlers and steam-drifters joined them, from the East Coast and the continent, Belgium and Holland, able to fish three miles of net to the luggers' one.

With an expanding presence of both local and migrant boats in Mount's Bay, demand grew for a new protective pier at Newlyn, especially after the loss of the fishing boat *Jane* with all hands in a storm, within sight of the harbour. In the 1880s and early 1890s the South and North Piers were finally built bringing much needed modernisation to a harbour where the large fleet had been so far inadequately provisioned for by the single medieval pier. Glyn Richards also emphasised the historic significance of the new harbour road that was completed in 1908 and known as the Strand. It connected the settlements of Newlyn Town and Street an Nowan where before there had been only a beach between the two on which the boats lay and which provided access across only at low tide. A Penlee exhibition poster (Fig.21) features Walter Langley's *Between the Tides* (1901). It was painted shortly before the start of the road construction, and when compared with a recent photograph of the same site (Fig.20), illustrates how the road contributed to a quite radical transformation of the place. The beach had been very much an informal working space, where nets were hung to dry and sails pitched with tar, and where fish was sold (Figs. 22-25).

In addition, 'Newlyn' as a distinct and integrated locality was fast beginning to take shape. The financial and philanthropic muscle behind these developments was provided for particularly by the Bolitho family. Newlyn's residents continued to identify with the particular sub-settlements even with some antipathy to the others (Lomax and Hogg 2009). Glyn Richards explained that Street an Nowan tended to be where the more 'affluent' residents lived – merchants, mariners, boat-owners, tradespeople, whilst the poorest residents – the unemployed and fishermen and their families who did not own boats, or perhaps just owned the one boat, tended to live in Street an Nowan. The distinction between the communities was also marked by religion; the 'Newlyn Towner's' attending the Primitive Methodist Church and Street an Nowan folk favouring St Peter's Anglican Church (Fig.26).

However from the 1880s onwards, with the presence of the artists now known as the Newlyn Art School, the encounter began to shape a collective self-regard – as did events like the riot of 1896. This was the year in which one May morning Newlyn fishermen threw 100,000 tonnes of mackerel into the sea from the Lowestoft and Yarmouth boats. Running battles erupted, with men from Newlyn, St Ives, and Porthleven fighting those of Yarmouth, Lowestoft and their neighbours from

Penzance. The Home Secretary sent 330 soldiers from the Royal Berkshire Regiment and three gunboats to restore order. The official cause given for the riots afterwards was the Cornish fishers' antipathy to the east coasters landing on a Sabbath. However it was this fact this led to a glutting of the Monday markets, as well as the general increase in competition for the stocks, that really provoked the Newlyn men's anger.

This is the volatile background then to the formative era of the Newlyn Art Colony, but evidence of such conflicts was not to be found in the works produced. Newlyn was sought out rather than any of the expanding ports up country because of the contrasts it posed with the much more capitalistic new trawler fleets. Although there are few thorough historical accounts of the relationship between fishing and artists communities in nineteenth century Cornwall, those accounts that do exist (Deacon 2001) agree that the artistic images produced tended towards representing the communities of fishers as timeless and naturalized (England's primitive, pre-industrial 'other'). In fact as Deacon points out (*ibid*), Cornish fishing in the nineteenth century went through significant changes in two main ways. Firstly there was the changing division of labour with the transition from seining to drifting as the predominant method. 'In an inversion of what might be expected, the more capitalistic variety of fishing was ceding to one characterised by small units and a more egalitarian ownership structure'. Intense highly seasonal communal involvement gave way to full-time employment (although this point of Deacon's should be qualified to note that drifting was always the more significant trade at Newlyn. Nevertheless numbers of drifters swelled at Newlyn and gendered patterns of labour became more marked, especially as local fishermen were sailing further more regularly in search of fish stocks (the second big change in the division of labour). Increasingly shore labours like net-making and mending, house-hold tasks and child-rearing came within the women's labour sphere (Fig.27), whilst men and boys were away from home for long periods of time. This gendered division of labour appeared to the artists and their audiences as consonant with their expectation of naturalistic family roles. Particularly in the work of Langley, there is pathos with women often depicted as waiting in anguish for the return of their husbands (Figs.28-31).

Could there have been other distinctive kinship patterns that attracted the artists and that contrasted with the ‘norms’ of Victorian Britain? Deacon (ibid) examined the family structures of Paul parish and St Ives in 1881. He found that the proportion of extended families in Newlyn’s fishing community was only slightly higher than the average for England and Wales. St Ives was actually characterised by much more ‘modern’<sup>31</sup> family structures. Nevertheless, Deacon concedes, ‘a family structure dominated by conjugal household units could still co-exist with a high degree of relatedness between households and a widespread and unusually keen awareness of kin relationships’. There is a strong case for this in fact, given the way the luggers were organised financially, with crews often recruited along kinship lines and fisherman’s widows and local craftspeople being amongst the investors and part-owners of fishing boats (a subject explored more fully in Chapter Four) as well as there being other forms of mutual aid. Deacon finds some evidence that the internal accumulation and distribution of capital and profit in this period contributed to the sense of distinctive and bounded fishing communities and family structures that the artists encountered, with Paul parish and the fishing district of St Ives characterised by atypically high levels of endogamy and persistence of residence. This suggests to Deacon that ‘fishing communities were considerably more “closed” than other types of community, and may have helped to produce a sense of homogeneity within fishing communities making them appear qualitatively different’.

On the face of it then the expanding fishing communities of Newlyn and St Ives (the latter concentrated in the fishing quarter of the town) were becoming more distinctive and closed, and the port of Newlyn was beginning to take on the appearance of a single and unified nucleated settlement. I asked Glyn Richards, whose grandfather had been the last sail-maker in Newlyn (sail-lofts and ‘ropewalks’, cooperages and boatyards having all been part of the lugger industry<sup>32</sup>), what kinds of social differences there might have been within the fishing community of nineteenth century Newlyn. ‘Well my grandfather used to say, ‘There were the poor, and the very poor’. The difference was often between owning a boat or having

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<sup>31</sup> Although the comparison here is between C.19<sup>th</sup> family structures in Cornwall and averages for England and Wales, the idea of large families and extended kin-groups being typical of ‘pre-modern’ households has been found to be a myth (Laslett 1965).

<sup>32</sup> There were about 16 boat-builders in Newlyn in 1879.

a trade, and having neither. In any case it was rare for a fisherman to own more than one or two boats. Living conditions were very basic, if a household was fortunate they had a Cornish range for cooking and heating the house, as is typically depicted in the artists' domestic scenes, if not so lucky, they cooked with a primus stove as Glyn's ancestors did. Housing was often cramped, with large families sharing small living spaces, sanitation was poor and disease epidemics like measles and cholera were not uncommon. One devastating outbreak of cholera carried off 100 people in the summer and autumn of 1832, one third of the 300 deaths in the whole of Cornwall (Mattingly 2009). Poverty and hardship were the basic features of life in this period, as they had always been, including the common distress of loss of life at sea. On the other hand, as Glyn put it, 'what more could they have wanted?' There was not any great expectancy of living better off, and with a way of life characterised by a significant degree of independence, it is arguable their lot was much better than that of the urban poor. However, there remains a paradox. Even as this culture was consolidating, internal differences were emerging which would become particularly pronounced over the course of the next century.

### **Cornish fishing and the nation**

Through the exhibitions at the Royal Academy and other galleries, the London art world had as Cross puts it (2008) 'formed an easy familiarity with the village of Newlyn. It was regularly pictured as a confusion of cob-walled cottages strongly lit against the horizon, the brown sailed luggers in the bay and the shining sands had been portrayed often and by many hands' (p.133). One commentator in the Magazine of Art 1903 said,

...no other place has received such complete and minute illustration at the hands of a group of artists... the most trivial aspects of its daily life have been the subjects of imposing canvasses. We know its weddings and funerals, its feasts and its festivals... and almost expect to share in the hazardous life of those Cornishmen who go down to the sea in ships and occupy their business in great waters (cited by Cross, *ibid*).

One of the reasons the group were so prolific and so compelling was that unlike many other groups of seaside artists they settled in the village for a long time, some for years, permanently even, and some married locally. Stanhope Forbes described his work in terms not unlike those of a cultural or social anthropologist, as noted by Payne (2007) 'here was a life in with which we were in thorough sympathy, and

which it was more or less our duty to transcribe and to leave the record of for posterity' (p.194). It is interesting to share with Payne the observation that many of the artists depicting fishers around Britain in this period held firm socialist beliefs, such as the Birmingham working-class born Walter Langley. Even if the artists and the Newlyn fishing community were massively divided by culture and class, the colony would not have been so successful without willing engagement from the local population, beyond the fees some of the regular models received. The setting up of an industrial class on Arts and Crafts for out-of-work fishermen by T.B Bolitho and artists like Thomas Gotch, Percy Craft, and Reginald Dick, was just one local development they inspired, and the later Newlyn Copper School and the textile printing factory known as Cryséde.

The artists' works appealed to many of its elite London audience because the sea had already, although only relatively recently, become an object of romantic interest and the coast was now increasingly sought out both artistically and through Victorian tourism as a site of moral and physical renewal. In addition the artists of the sea made connections between fishing communities, Britain's naval strength and the heroism of life-saving (with many fishers manning the lifeboats that were also popular art symbols). 'Fisherfolk' were seen to be exemplars of virtue, but in a way that was different from representations of the virtuous agricultural labourer, as Payne explains (ibid: 171),

The agricultural labourer was at the bottom of a hierarchical village structure, dispossessed of his land, and consequently demoralised, as a result of the enclosure of the open fields and commons. Fishermen, by contrast, lived in egalitarian, self-governing communities, owned their own boats, and were free to go where they liked. Their occupation involved not just skill, but heroism, adventure and danger.

Such images offered 'a reassuring contrast to the urban mobs roaming the cities in an age of revolutions' (ibid) and were thus a comfort to viewers of both socialist and conservative persuasion. Payne also inadvertently exposes the inherent contradictions of this view. The freedom of the open-sea was illusory. There were no more free fishermen, than there ever were free agriculturalists. In fact the fierce individualism and competitiveness (the rule was always 'first to the fishing grounds, first back to market'), the dangers of the sea, the lack of security and dependence on middlemen, drove technological intensification as well as commercial exploitation, especially once competing within an open market. Although fishers would

experience rising incomes and standards of living in the next century, financial indebtedness, labour and resource decline, stratification and capital concentration would also be predominant features.

British government played no small part in this and already in the nineteenth century had begun to take a much more pro-active interest in its fishing industries, albeit in ambiguous fashion. The International Fisheries Exhibition of 1883 spread across South Kensington and attracted some two million visitors. It promoted the value of fish for working-class diets, compared fishing methods (the seine was argued to be one of the oldest known fishing methods) and showed a model fisherman's cottage alongside Newlyn School paintings. The conflict between the traditional sail fleets and the new steam fleets was therefore not acknowledged.

The white fish industry would for some decades after be the target of significant government investment. 'Cornish fishers' meanwhile (now their own distinctive occupational group) were both more incorporated into the nation and more peripheral – more dependent in a way (as demonstrated in the campaign between 1911 and 1914<sup>33</sup> to obtain money in the form of 'cheap' loans from the government to help Cornish fishermen install engines on their boats). By the time the traditional fleet had been broken up or left to rot in the lugger graveyard that the beaches of Lelant became, it had become part of the national memory and mythology of the sea. However Newlyn itself never became a tourist site to the extent of St Ives, because the commercialism of its fisheries survived. In fact as I show in the next chapter, it went to the other extreme, and became a 'company town'.

## Conclusions

What does this history reveal about Cornwall as a periphery? There is of course more than one answer to this question and each will be a relative view. In terms of *la long durée* of the western seaboard, shared marginality drove a common seafaring

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<sup>33</sup> I found evidence for this in newspaper articles *The St. Ives Times* (Nov 4 1911, Nov 29, Dec 6, 20 1912, Feb 6 1914), also in the *Cornishman* (July 6 1912), and the *Western Daily Mercury* (Nov 28 1912). The money was to be made available from the 1909 Development Act Fund. The matter of how to organise the loans and if a co-operative system would work, was still being debated in 1914. I have not found any evidence to conclude if, when or how the money actually became available.

culture on the fringes of Europe. However such cultures were also part of a cosmopolitan oceanic world, which from prehistory to the middle and early modern ages was at the centre of trade, migration and innovation. Cornwall may have been territorially remote from the English state and society and limited by land unsuitable for agrarian improvement. However by sea, which was the predominant mode of transport, distances could be covered very quickly, and ports, ships and trade routes afforded mobility as well as cosmopolitanism. Some of the greatest seafaring explorers of all time came from the Westcountry and several merchant families were very influential at the highest levels of government. Cornwall and its fishing communities truly began to become peripheral when the combined processes of industrialisation, railway expansion, and integration and development of the nation-state, brought about a new kind of market economy. Part of this transition, which I will expand on in the next chapter, involved fishing communities shifting from ‘traditional’ organisation (in the economic sense of wide diffusion of capital) to ‘occupational’ and becoming in the process more unequal. At the same time forms of the past persist in the present and remain influential, including some economic institutions and forms of work consciousness as well as images, narratives and material culture deriving from this transformative era.

**Figure 9: Glyn Richards retired fisheries patrol officer, pictured at Morab Library , Penzance, where he is a volunteer archivist, 2012.**



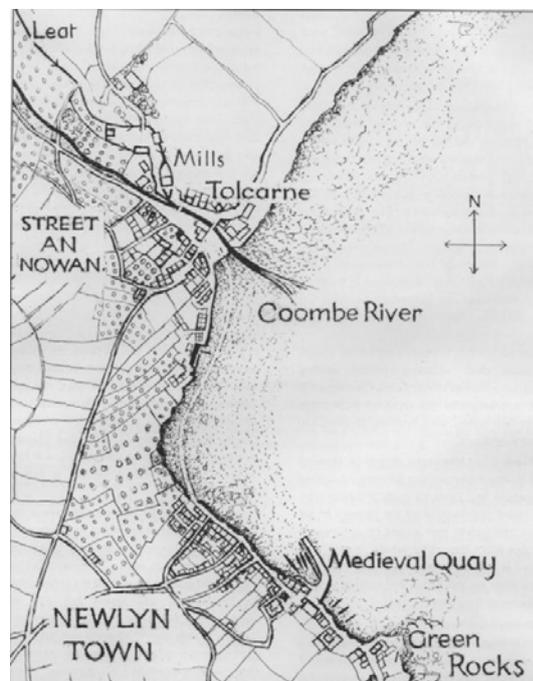
**Figure 10: The Old Quay, Newlyn c.1900. Collection of the Cornish Studies Library.**



**Figure 11: Newlyn's Old Quay, 2012.**



**Figure 12: Map of Newlyn c.1879. Drawn by Reg Simpson (Lomax and Hogg 2009).**



**Figure 13: The old bridge connecting Street an Nowan and Tolcarne and the Coombe running to the sea, c.1880. Collection of the Cornish Studies Library.**



**Figure 14: Former huer's hut, Cadgwith Cove, 2012.**



**Figure 15: Seine-netting for pilchards, late C.19<sup>th</sup> . Collection of Studio St Ives Limited.**



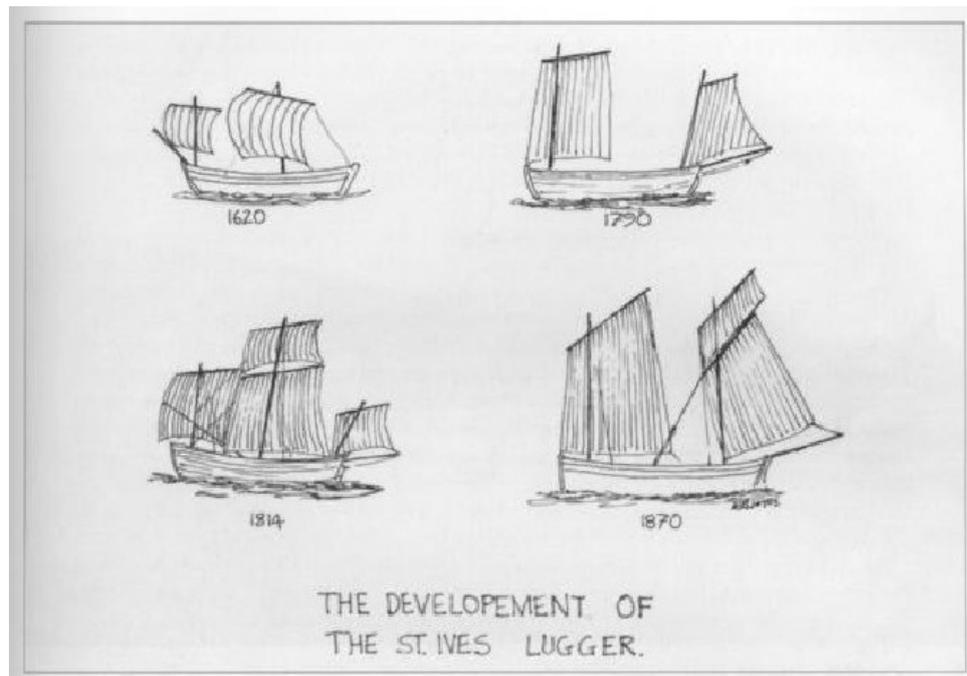
**Figure 16: *Tucking a School of Pilchards*, 1897, Percy Robert Craft 1856-1935. Oil on Canvas, 142 x 212 cm. Penlee House Gallery & Museum, Penzance.**



**Figure 17: Fishing luggers leaving Polperro harbour, late C.19<sup>th</sup>. Collection of Polperro Heritage Press.**



**Figure 18: The development of the St Ives Lugger (Smylie 2009).<sup>34</sup>**



<sup>34</sup> Note that in 1814 there are three-masts similar to the French 'Chasse-Marée' style but by 1870 the third mast had been dropped to clear the deck for fishing.

**Figure 19: The Royal Albert Bridge, 1936. Collection of the Cornish Studies Library.**



**Figure 20: Contemporary photograph illustrating railings which used to mark the harbour wall and beach front before the road was constructed.<sup>35</sup>**



<sup>35</sup> Compare with Langley's 'Between the Tides' (Fig.21) depicting the same location just before the road was built.

**Figure 21: Exhibition poster (Penlee House Gallery and Museum, Penzance) featuring Walter Langley's *Between the Tides*, 1901.**



DETAIL: *Between the Tides*, 1901, oil on canvas, by Walter Langley (1852–1922), Warrington Museum & Art Gallery (Warrington Borough Council), courtesy Bridgeman Art Library

# Walter Langley

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**Figure 22: Newlyn foreshore before the harbour road was built, late C.19<sup>th</sup>. Collection of the Cornish Studies Library.**



**Figure 23: Fishing boats beached at Newlyn, c.1900. Collection of the Cornish Studies Library.**



**Figure 24: Unloading catches from luggers to the beach at Newlyn, late C.19<sup>th</sup>.  
Collection of Royal Cornwall Museum.**



**Figure 25: *Fish Sale on a Cornish Beach*, 1885, Stanhope Forbes. Oil paint on canvas.  
Collection of Plymouth City Art Gallery.**



**Figure 26: Newlyn with St Peter's Anglican Church in the foreground, c.1880. Collection of the Cornish Studies Library.**



**Figure 27: *Mending Nets, Newlyn, circa 1890, John Branwell (1849 - 1929).* Photograph: Penlee House Gallery & Museum, Penzance / The Branwell Collection<sup>36</sup>.**



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<sup>36</sup> The photograph is clearly posed but documents an important aspect of women's labour in the fishing industry.

**Figure 28:** *Never Morning Wore to Evening that Some Heart Did Break*, 1894. Walter Langley. Oil paint on canvas. Collection of Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery.



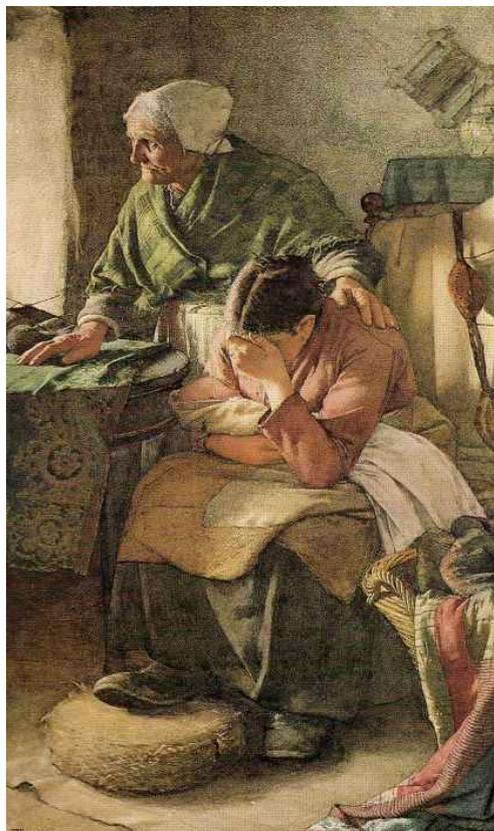
**Figure 29:** *A Hopeless Dawn*, 1888, Frank Bramley. Oil paint on Canvas. Collection of Tate.





**Figure 30: *Among the Missing – Scene in a Cornish Fishing Village, 1884*, Walter Langley 1852-1922. Watercolour, 103 x 70 cm. Penlee House Gallery & Museum, Penzance.**

**Figure 31: *But men must work and women must weep, 1883*, Walter Langley. Watercolour. Collection of Birmingham. City Art Gallery.**



**Figure 32: Burying victims of cholera in Paul Parish, C.19<sup>th</sup>. Collection of William Stevenson.**



**Figure 33: Changing times. Sail ships moored alongside a steam ship in Fowey harbour, 1890s. Collection of the Cornish Studies Library.**



**Figure 34: Two Newlyn artists posing on a small local fishing boat, c.1900. Collection of the Cornish Studies Library.**



**Figure 35: Stanhope Forbes posing with painting *Off to the Fishing Grounds*, late C.19<sup>th</sup>. Collection of the Cornish Studies Library.**



**Figure 36: Fishermen at leisure on deck, Newlyn, late C.19<sup>th</sup>. Collection of William Stevenson.**



**Figure 37: A fishing crew posing at Newlyn, early C. 20<sup>th</sup>. Collection of William Stevenson.**



## 4 THE ARCHITECTURE OF FISHING: HARBOURS, BOATS AND INSTITUTIONS

Because human beings are, to quote Nietzsche “unfinished animals”, they have to socially construct the “real world”. The limitations of human biology require social construction in which social institutions become crucial for providing a habitual background to deliberative social action (Turner 2000: 493).

Survival on the archipelago of Britain and Ireland has long depended on boats – for trade-routes, war, and fishing – from the coastal sea routes of the Mesolithic (Bowen 1972) to the Atlantic and Pacific networks of the colonial empire. Today most cargo imported and exported to and from the UK continues to be transported by ship. UK ports handled 562 million tonnes (Mt) of freight traffic in 2008 (almost half of the world tonnage of 1165 Mt) and the UK shipping turnover was nearly £14,000 million (DfT 2009a). A significant proportion of the population live near one of the many ports and major waterways in the UK. However maritime industries have become concentrated in a few large ports<sup>37</sup>, and with processes such as containerisation of cargo, the character of ports has changed, making, as Taussig has noted (2000), maritime activity more separate and less visible to the everyday lived experience of most people. This has led Taussig to analyse the beach, once an informal working environment<sup>38</sup>, as a modern ‘fantasy’ (ibid). As a consequence of these broad changes in maritime economy, smaller and more traditional ports struggle to negotiate between being consigned as relics of the past (with potential benefits from tourism) and as maintaining with thriving modern industries.

Changes in the relative economic importance and character of individual ports have been a long and ongoing process. For example between the medieval and early modern periods in Cornwall, there was a shift in the significance of harbours from those at the head of river estuaries such as Penryn and St Erth to those at the river

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<sup>37</sup> For example, ‘The Port of Felixstowe is Britain’s busiest port and one of the largest in Europe, handling over 3.4 million TEUs (Twenty-Foot Equivalent Units) a year. Over 40% of Britain’s containerised trade passes through the port’ (<http://www.portoffelixstowe.co.uk/>. Accessed 18/10/12).

<sup>38</sup> Whilst beaches now have a global image as places of leisure, they remain sites for often hidden forms of informal labour, for example migrant cockle-picking in Morecambe Bay, Lancashire, which received attention following the tragic drowning of twenty-three workers in February 2004.

mouth such as Falmouth and Hayle. In most cases this was a result of a combination of processes of environmental change (rivers silting up) and technological and political-economic change (the world-expansion of a merchant economy and the development of large ocean-going sailing vessels). Once a hub of industry and trade, Hayle harbour has since declined and become largely redundant, recently being brought by ING Bank for redevelopment. Similarly, in the twentieth century fishermen gravitated away from small tidal harbours towards the larger ports such as Newlyn, where bigger offshore boats could operate and catches be landed at any time. As one of my informants put it, 'There's more Porthleven and St Ives and Padstow men and Newquay men in Newlyn than there's Newlyn men!' Since the 1990s and the contraction of the UK fishing fleet, some of these fishermen have returned to their home ports to take up inshore fishing again.

This waxing and waning of ports is obviously connected to changes in other sectors of the economy. At the same time, harbours and the boats they support, carry deep symbolic associations of separateness from society and of self-sufficiency. Harbours appear as distinct entities with their own ways of life – their protective piers and lighthouses extending into the sea (Fig.38), encompassing the fleet sheltering within their embrace, and in fishing villages a central focus for a tight arrangement of houses clustered around them. This physical structure easily suggests a picture of solidarity and common purpose. Similarly as the technological means to survival at sea, boats are also deeply symbolic devices. The basic design of boats from prehistoric times – a skin or curved wooden planks upon a skeleton-like ribbed structure also evokes an association of protection that mirrors and extends the limits of the organic body. Just as whale-bones have been known to be used for dwellings<sup>39</sup>, so have up-turned boats and the design of ceilings in many simple, rural chapels and churches (especially in Cornwall) bear a strong resemblance to wooden boat hulls. More expansively, 'coasts are deeply ambivalent landscapes' as sites of invasion and defence. As Boissevain and Selwyn reflect (2004): 'those who protect them, coastguards (along with lifeboat crews), occupy symbolically highly charged spaces between danger seaward and safety landward' (p.31). Boissevain and Selwyn

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<sup>39</sup> Examples of whale-bone dwellings include those of the arctic Thule (Savelle and Habu 2004) and the house found on San Nicolas Island in California where Juana Maria an indigenous woman lived alone for sixteen years after the Mexican government removed the other inhabitants (Morgan 1979).

note that there is an etymological continuity between ‘coast’ and the Old French *coste* (meaning ‘rib’<sup>40</sup>) later *côte* (‘coast’, ‘shore’). It is significant that a rib ‘protects the internal organs’, and the coast (especially in Britain) has become symbolic as ‘a shield for the heart and soul of a nation itself’ (ibid). At the same time the ambivalence derives from the fact that coasts are also sites of informal economic and social activity that may subvert the state (such as smuggling) and the fact that port lives are often distinctive, cosmopolitan and have their own rules and codes, also leads to associations with lawlessness, deviance, alterity, licentiousness and violence.

Unique patterns of boatbuilding developed around the coasts of Britain and Ireland, such as the several hundred variations of traditional working vessels catalogued by (Greenhill and Mannering 1997) along with a diverse range of skills in the different sectors of maritime industry. Marshall (1987: 8) documents examples of ‘lost skills’ in the ‘coastal tradition’ of fishing:- ‘the building of a *Stroma yole*, the pickling of a herring, the sailing of an English *coble*, the weaving of a *withy pot*, the making of a *coracle*’. These distinctive technological traditions responding to particular local environmental conditions as well as industrial opportunities feed into the symbolic association of harbours and fishing with ‘self-sufficiency’. Conventionally, fishing is seen as a radically different kind of production from forms of production revolving around land, such as farming – where territory and rights can be more easily distributed (and an environment which can be controlled). The former, revolving around the sea which is seen as a ‘common-property resource’, cannot be easily subdivided and enclosed and neither is it an environment in which the factors of production (such as inputs and outputs) can easily be measured and predicted. However, fishing is about much more than the isolated man pitting himself against the sea; there are all sorts of structures – physical structures and ownership structures – that mediate the relationship of fisher and the marine environment.

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<sup>40</sup> The Online Etymological Dictionary explains thus: coast (n.) “margin of the land,” early 14c.; earlier “rib as a part of the body” (early 12c.), from O.Fr. *coste* “rib, side, flank; slope, incline;” later “coast, shore” (12c., Mod.Fr. *côte*), from L. *costa* “a rib,” perhaps related to a root word for “bone” (<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=coast>. Accessed 02/08/12).

The fact that ports are marginal to mainstream culture, concerns and experiences, might have obscured, as well as facilitated, the persistence of distinct forms of management and economic structure from port to port. Harbours embody particular historical and social formations such as capital structure, from the large shipping port to the smallest and remotest of fishing harbours. Arriving at St Keverne harbour on the Lizard Peninsular in Cornwall, the visitor is met with a sign saying that the harbour is entirely self-sufficient and is managed by its boat-owners. This projects an image of egalitarian, community rights but the reality underneath such a statement can be one of many forms of organisation which may or may not be equitable, despite the claim to self-sufficiency. Nigel Legge, a fisherman at Cadgwith Cove on the Lizard, pointed out an important contrast he felt distinguished coves from harbours. At Cadgwith, the boats are launched to sea directly from the beach – there is no man-made harbour as such. The fishermen depend on each other for help launching and beaching their boats. In Nigel's view this means that they have to get along and not allow spats and arguments to develop into feuds. In harbours on the other hand,

...people tend to come and go and disappear and all that sort of thing, you know? The harbour's different. There's nothing wrong with the people, I think. It's like a car park; you can just come and go as you please.

Figures 43 and 44 show how little fishing at Cadgwith has changed in over a hundred years. The boats are now motorised but apart from this the basic composition and size of the fishery has remained relatively consistent. The facilities for the fishermen are used in common and recently they received EU grants for a new tractor and ice facilities. However, although providing a picturesque and romantic setting for tourists, the residential side of Cadgwith cove has changed dramatically. The thatched roof cottages are now so sought after in the property market that they are mostly holiday lets and none of the fishermen live in the cove itself. Whilst at Newlyn, there are many fishermen using the port who also live in the village. Despite this contrast, Nigel Legge, whose grandmother lived in one of the Cadgwith cottages when they were more like 'slums' and 'full of rats', could still say 'the fishing community' at Cadgwith had changed little.

Even from the earliest days, the development of fishing harbours has reflected the interests of the wealthy and powerful. Newlyn today, as a contemporary example, is a 'Trust Port', which means, in theory, that there are no share-holders or owners, but

that it is managed for the benefit of stakeholders who are all the users of the port and all those having an interest in the operation of the port (DfT 2009b). In practice some residents and users of the port feel there has been abuse of power in the harbour over the last twenty odd years and that the family fishing firm W.S Stevenson and Sons have unfairly influenced the Harbour Commission and monopolised the operation of the port for their own interests.

Local ideas of history tend to settle on several distinct periods as being of particular significance: most mature fishermen remember the herring and mackerel booms of the seventies and eighties; some of the older ones will particularly talk about decline and depression of the interwar years and the changes that occurred during and immediately after the second world war; a few, and they tend to be non-fishing locals with a particular interest in history, will talk about the days of the sailing luggers of the nineteenth century and the years leading up to the thirties during which they were gradually disappearing. Each period highlights extensive organisational changes in the fisheries – in capital, technology and community. The era of the luggers probably has the most appeal in the community at large, taking into account all the stories and images that circulate. The particular appeal of this era is partly a consequence of the evocative power of the materials and images of the time. However it is also because the period is identified with a culture of cooperation that is contrasted with the absolute competitiveness identified with subsequent eras and it is this idea that I explore in this chapter. Note the historical images raised in the following two interview extracts when I ask local maritime history expert and former apprentice fisherman and merchant navy man Tony Pawlyn and the Superintendent of the Fishermen's Mission (Newlyn branch), Keith Dickson, about cultures of cooperation and competition in fishing.

#### **Interview with Tony Pawlyn**

TM: I'm looking at the connections between technologies and wealth and employment and so on, and I was wondering if you might say that luggers were part of a more cooperative culture, or whether they were as fiercely individualistic as..?

TP: Yes certainly... In its way, they were certainly communistic, with a small c. They're very much group effort, luggers, very much relied on family, or friends, I mean they weren't entirely family, don't get me wrong, there were luggers with completely different surnames in the crew, but there were often several who were related. And certainly the lugger finance thing was single boat working... well in as much as most of the skipper-owners only worked one boat, you know there weren't

very many in the sailing lugger era that, there weren't many *fleets* of boats. Not as far as West Cornwall was concerned. There were one or two owners who might have owned three or four boats, but that was about it. There were quite a lot of owners who would own a mackerel driver and a pilchard driver and worked them different seasons, because of the way the seasons began to pan out around the turn of the century.

### **Interview with Keith Dickson**

TM: ...if you look at fishing communities historically, somewhere like Cornwall, it was pretty cooperative, it seems to me... or is that, do you think that's a misconception?

KD: Well, I mean there was riots in the Newlyn fish market in the years gone by. I mean that wasn't very cooperative. The St Ives guys don't like the Newlyn guys. I mean how much of that is spun up, or fixed up, I don't know but... I think, yes, in a place like Mousehole, in years gone by, when it was you know, the sailing luggers that went out fishing... Yeah I think there was, because you had to work together as a fishing community to feed and to get a wage, but I think that you know as soon as boat's could disappear off, and you know had their own diesel engines and could do their own things, I think it became an extremely cut-throat, you know... no, I don't think it's ever been cooperative, unless in the very early days of fishing, when you needed eight men to man the sails and pull the oars to go to sea, to handle it. But yeah I think, other than that, it's always been super competitive.

In this chapter, I highlight what I call the *architecture* of fishing, which includes boats and other structures which influence the way land and sea encroach on one another – ways that 'domesticate'<sup>41</sup> the sea and make it accessible and manageable. Such structures, therefore, also include quays, harbours, lifeboat stations, railways, roads, homes, and gardens, boatbuilding yards, Fishermen's Mission houses, processing, curing and storage facilities and markets. I develop themes opened up in Chapter Three about the changing political economies of fishing which is reflected in patterns of topography and also institutions. This chapter moves the account forward through examining the shift from a traditional to a capitalist and occupational mode of organisation and the consequences for class and community relations both 'within' the industry and within Newlyn as a place. Aspects of the former way of life have continued or been recreated, not only in the form of material culture, historical images and narratives but also as economic institutions and forms of work consciousness. Beginning with the biography and social history context of *Ripple*,

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<sup>41</sup> I use the term *domesticate* as a way of referring to the processes by which human concerns and the maritime environment shape one another, and through which the sea is made into a habitable and/or exploitable environment, if only in a very transitory way.

the reconstructed lugger, I explore harbours and boats as spaces for overlapping cultures of conflict, competition, co-operation and community.

## Luggers

*A bit of courage and good fortune led me to meet John Lambourn, restorer of the Ripple. It was wonderful talking to John in the growing gloom of night enveloping the village, standing in his yard, him stopping his work cutting wood to share with me his thoughts and words – me shuffling my feet to keep warm. I felt that solid companionship between men at the end of a day’s work outdoors. It reminded me of day’s end when I was a quarry labourer – satisfaction making you hardy to any physical discomfort. No boredom and no hurry, alive to the feel and sounds of the evening. Knowing you’ll be home to light, warmth and food soon enough. I went home after crawling around in that boat with John and Mervyn. I recall now the smell of wood shavings and resin – the solid feel of the interior, the dark night and stars visible through the hatches; our conversations in the glow of the work-lights.*

(Field-diary entry, 18 December 2008).

John completed the restoration work on the Ripple in a yard opposite the harbour in Newlyn (Fig.45). The yard was owned by the firm W.S Stevenson’s and Sons and was lent to him to assist his project which was part of the ‘heritage’ component of the Newlyn Fish Industry Forum (NFIF) regeneration plan. The yard, in the centre of Newlyn, is very visible, and John would get interest from many passersby during the building. In time, the Stevensons requested that John give back the land as it was a prime lot for development. John refused, and even though Ripple is now moored in the harbour, he has left his makeshift timber-frame roof and tool-shed in place as a way of occupying the site, stating to me that he would not move until ‘Stevensons get legal’.

In many ways, luggers were part of a techno-social system that was perfectly adapted in the context of Cornish fishing. On my trips out with John on Ripple, he would say that boats like her could have been ‘built in your back-yard’. The phrase captures a sense in which John sees these boats as having provided direct links between domestic units and the sea at their backdoors – the sea as a profitable,

exploitable resource accessible through self-reliance and self-sufficiency. They were easily built (in the sense that boat-building materials and expertise could be locally sourced), not a large amount of capital was required, they provided employment for a large number of people (fishing crew, boat-builders, sail-makers, rope-makers and blacksmiths), and their design was perfected for local conditions and for speed, giving them range and competitiveness. Cornish-built boats were in demand not only for local commissions but for buyers throughout Britain.

### **The Trevorrow family of boat-builders**

The centrality and visibility of the Ripple rebuild, is reminiscent of how Ripple would have originally been built in the nineteenth century. Boats were built on the harbour fronts and even on the beaches – Peake’s yard in Newlyn, and Kitto’s boatyard (Fig.46) and Oliver and Sons in Porthleven. Notable fishing boat builders in St Ives were William Paynter, the Trevorrows, Robert Bryant and William Williams. Trevorrow’s yard was at Porthgwidden beach in St Ives. Such a yard implies only a temporary appropriation of space that would not have belonged to Trevorrow in any formal sense of ownership. The boat builder would have required little more than his tools and skills in order to carry out the commission. The Henry Trevorrow who worked this yard in the 1920s was a third generation boat-builder, and the third of three Henry Trevorrows. It was either him who built Ripple in 1896, or his father, or they built it together – his father is recorded in the 1901 census at the age of 77 as ‘boat builder’, although now with the specification ‘[wood] boat builder’ added showing how the boatbuilding industry was diverging into metal.

Henry’s great-grandfather William Trevorrow, born about 1794 in St. Ives was a fisherman. In the 1841 census, he is recorded as living at Pudding Bag Lane with his wife Mary and five children. The occupation of his son, Henry Trevorrow, is recorded as ‘joiner’. His age is given as ‘15’ but this must be a mistake as it would make his birth-date 1826, whereas all other records would suggest he was born in 1824. Other occupations listed for households on Pudding Bag Lane in 1841 include six other fishermen, a washerwoman, a mariner and a labourer, and on adjacent streets, a mariner, a publican, a tailor, a baker and two more fishermen. By 1861, Henry had his own household on Fish Street, where he lived with his wife Mary and three children, all listed as ‘Scholars’. Children in relatively poor working families

were registered as being schooled from as early as age three, but the census records indicate they tended to be in employment by their early teens. Henry's occupation at this time is listed as 'Ship Builder'. By 1871, Henry and his family were living at 'Jon Kign's Place', his occupation listed as 'Ship Carpenter'. The census records for this street indicate that the family's income had increased, as other occupations listed for this street indicate more highly skilled and higher earning jobs than those at Pudding Bag Lane, where he lived with his father. Occupations recorded at Jon Kign's Place include: Shipmaster, Master Joiner, Carpenter, Cabinet Maker and Dressmaker.

In 1881, Henry Trevorrow was living at Academy Place with his wife Mary and now five children, including the second generation Henry, who is by now, at age twenty three, registered as 'Ship Carpenter'. In 1891, this younger Henry is registered as living at a boarding house in Plymouth, occupation 'Shipwright', having gone to seek work in the Plymouth dockyards. In the same year, his son, Henry the elder's grandson, also called Henry is born in St. Ives. He continued the family tradition of boatbuilding and lived out his life in St Ives until his death in 1970. Academy Place still exists today, but some those other streets where the poor working community of the nineteenth century lived can no longer be found. Pudding Bag Lane for instance, was demolished during the 'slum' clearances of the 1930s. The fishing quarter was right in the heart of St Ives centred on the harbour. The streets were closely packed and quite crowded, with terraces of small houses occupied by large families. Today, walking around in that old quarter, some of the narrow and now neat terraced rows remain but the some of the busyness and chaos has gone, although one can sense that it was once a hive of activity. It is now really the artists' quarter and has a different kind of busyness as a thoroughfare and curiosity for tourists. Many of the cottages are let to holidaymakers and display symbolic markers of their former association with fishing – buoys and nets, and quaint names painted on drift wood signs.

### **Lugger design**

In a single life span Henry Trevorrow (b. 1824) contributed to the development of lugger design in a way that perfected it for Cornish fishing at that time and also witnessed the beginning of the end of this craft. By the time his grandson was of

working age, luggers had become almost redundant. Any that were still in use after the Second World War were by then relics, finding some use into their old age through motorisation. Many were sold to Irish buyers with whom the Cornish had built links through following the Irish fisheries. They included the *Water Lily*, built by Henry Trevorrow and said to be the fastest lugger ever built in Cornwall (Harris 1983). The 1920s and 30s saw the decline of the herring fishery and the mackerel fishery also declined in the 1930s. Ripple was sold in 1933, the year of the depression, and only survived through being maintained as a gentleman's yacht and a house-boat.

Luggers were heavily framed carvel-built boats known in Cornish as *scath nos* (net boat). The *carvel* design sets Cornish boats apart from other traditions of wooden boat building in Britain. 'Carvel' refers to a design where the planks of the hull butt up against each other, fixed with the use of wooden pegs or tongue and groove, rather than the overlapping 'clench' or *clinker* tradition. Maritime historians believe clinker design to have stemmed from Viking and Scandinavian Europe, whereas the earliest known examples of 'carvel' are associated with the Eastern Mediterranean – the Phoenicians and Greeks, and gradually emerging further west via the Venetians, Romans, Iberian traders and Bretons. The method was used in the building of the *cok*, a boat used in the drift-net Cornish fisheries up until about the early seventeenth century. By the late seventeenth century high-peaked lug-sails were in use. In the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century the *chasse-marée* style of the Breton trading ships had been adopted. Cornish smugglers, many of whom were fishermen or connected to fishing communities, are credited with bringing home the influence of these boats, fast enough to outrun the revenue cutters. By 1870, the three-masted design of the *chasse-marée* vessels had been dropped for two masts, which was more suitable for fishing as it cleared the deck (Fig.18).

Particular traditions of lugger design varied between regions of Cornwall, as well as between ports. West Cornish luggers were traditionally double-ended (curved at front and rear/*forward* and *aft*), whereas East Cornish luggers were built transom-sterned (square-ended aft). Differences also emerged between Mount's Bay boats

and St Ives boats. In the latter, hull development is more ‘advanced’<sup>42</sup> than in the St. Ives example but by the late nineteenth century Mount’s Bay vessels had taken over those of St Ives. Situated on the north Cornish coast, St Ives harbour was much more exposed to the elements. As they grounded on the ebb tide the boats had to withstand heavy pounding and conditions were too rough to use wooden support legs. Therefore St Ives boats were of heavier construction to cope with this stress, both fuller-bodied and flatter on bottom to sit upright on the beach. Mount’s Bay boats by contrast were able to be made finer with more graceful lines for a more agile and speedy performance. Whilst they would still be grounded on the ebb-tide until the harbour piers were built, their masters could attach legs for the boats to sit on in the more sheltered conditions.

Competition to race to the markets and in the trip home from distant fishing grounds was fierce, both to secure the best prices and the reputation of the boat and her crew. A plaque on the St Ives harbour records that one vessel achieved a record journey time of twenty-six hours from Scarborough home to St Ives. Regattas were also common, with competitions held within and between ports. Smylie (2009) notes that at an 1850 regatta, Mount’s Bay fishermen learnt from St Ives fishermen (who in turn had learnt from the Bretons) that a boost in speed could be achieved by the addition of a *mizzen* sail. Sailing regattas like that participated in by Ripple recently were also a feature of life in the nineteenth century when these boats were primarily used for fishing. Ripple was originally built as a pilchard driver, but late in her fishing career in 1927, she was lengthened by having 10 feet added to her middle, making her fit for mackerel driving. At the same time she was fitted with two 26 hp engines, replacing the single 16 hp engine that had been fitted in 1915.

### **Lugger finance**

Whilst merchant capital was invested in the drift fisheries, the low capital investment required enabled many more fishermen to own or have a share of property in their ventures. The traditional Cornish share system by which earnings of fishing boats were distributed also facilitated the starting up of a fishing operation with a small amount of capital. This meant that wages did not have to be guaranteed

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<sup>42</sup> By ‘advanced’ maritime historians such as Smylie (2009) seem to refer to development of graceful lines, speed and manoeuvrability etc.

as they were by merchants in the newly emerging fisheries of ports like Grimsby. Shares were divided between the 'net share' (paid to whomever owned and maintained the nets), the 'body share' given to the crew (of which the skipper and deckhands drew equal shares but only adult men got a full share, boys much less) and finally a 'boat share' distributed to the boat owners. The share division typically ran: 1/7 boat share, 3/7 net share and 3/7 body share<sup>43</sup>. The share system in boat ownership also facilitated the starting of fishing ventures and provided another link between profits and the community at large in the Cornish context. The net share was an important share, because a set of nets cost as much as a new boat and had to be repaired or replaced frequently, being much more likely to get damaged. Net-making and maintenance also called on the skills of spouses and were an important income for a young fishing family as well as widows, as Tony Pawlyn explained to me.

Young man comes in as a boy, age of twelve, thirteen, fourteen, works three or four, five years as a boy, literally on pocket money. Ok? He's then deemed an able fisherman, so he gets his body share. He may be nineteen now, something like that. And he's on his body share. He won't have any nets. At some stage he starts to go courting, and if the girl's keen on him, she starts to make him some nets, you know when he's at sea or something you know, she'll start making some nets in the evenings for him. And so somewhere between, maybe after a couple of years and before he might get married, he might have one or two bits of nets. When he marries, within a year or so of being married, the wife would have made a full set of nets for him. And so he starts off with a body share, a body and a piece of net share (not a whole net share), and then as a fisherman, the highest thing he's ever gonna get is a full net share, and a full body share. And hopefully within five, ten years he'll start saving up enough money to start buying his own boat perhaps.

The Ripple, built 1896, is listed in the *St Ives Fishing Vessel Index 1882-1902*<sup>44</sup> as owned by Betsy Barber, Mastered by William Barber, a 1<sup>st</sup> class lugger, using nets, and crewed by five men. She was built, John informed me, by Betsy for her second son William, who had come of age and was no longer happy working the boat already owned by the family in the charge of the elder son. Fishing Vessel indexes only list the principle owners and so we do not know if any others held shares in the case of the Ripple. Historical knowledge about nineteenth century fisheries is inevitably partial and incomplete. It was not until 1869 that the Sea Fisheries Act was passed requiring that all fishing boats should be officially registered. Until then,

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<sup>43</sup> Tony Pawlyn (interview April 2010)

<sup>44</sup> St Ives Merchant Shipping Records (MSR IVES), Cornwall Public Record Office, Truro

port authorities had their own local systems of registry, no records of which have survived. One of the ways historical details can be learnt about the organisation of fishing in the nineteenth century is through the merchant shipping records. These were admiralty records held for each customs area – a customs area being defined not by a particular port but by a coastal area. Therefore the Penzance register included all the harbours of Mount's Bay – Newlyn, Mousehole and Porthleven as well as the port of Penzance itself. Fishing boats were not required by law to register on the merchant shipping records but were able to do so if their boats exceeded 15 tonnes. Some fishing boat owners and masters chose to do so, as a status symbol, confirming their ownership or charge of a 'ship'. For others the advantage was one of gaining an official certificate of registration which served as a kind of title deed to the vessel which could be used in negotiating sales and mortgages.

The ports of Cornwall in this period were very busy places. Roads were poor and the railway was not extended from Devon until 1859. The sea provided all the primary routes and connections. War at sea was an ever present threat - the Napoleonic wars only ceased in the early decades of the century and the Crimean War broke out in the 1850s. Between the wars, admiralty vessels were put to use in an effort to finally stamp out smuggling and privateering. Ports therefore heaved with naval boats, coastal traders, privateers, smugglers and fishing boats. The merchant shipping records include sailing vessels of all kinds: sloops, schooners, brigantines, luggers, yawls, smacks and ketches. By law, property rights in shipping vessels were divided into sixty four shares. Shares were commonly divided between the principle or 'subscribing owners' and a number of other owners, of which there were often many, especially in the case of the profitable trading ships, drawing in a circle of investors and benefactors who tended to be from the middle merchant strata of Cornish society such as yeoman and shopkeepers etc. These share owners extended beyond the ports to other villages. In the case of fishing luggers, the number of owners tended to be smaller and drawn from a narrower section of society, mainly those within or connected to the fishing community, shipwrights, mariners, fishermen, coopers and rope-makers etc. In almost all the cases I noted in the St Ives Shipping registers, share owners for fishing boats are listed as residing in St Ives, showing how fishing capital in this century was concentrated within discrete fishing communities.

Shipwrights are commonly listed as owners of luggers in the registers. If a person wishing to have a boat built for a fishing venture, could not supply all the necessary capital, than a boat-builder and prospective boat owner may have negotiated a deal, whereby the shipwright provided the capital in return for a share of the boat's profits. Some or all of the shares were often also transferred to shipbuilders later in the lifetime of the vessel, in the event of a death or the venture no longer being workable, or to pay off a debt, or simply because boat-builders were in a good position to spot investment opportunities. In the St Ives shipping register, there is the example of the *John and William*; Master: Simon Thomas; subscribing owners: Henry Edwards (mariner) and Nicholas Wallis (shipwright). Shares were transferred to a Richard Grenfell (mariner) and Nicholas Wallis in 1826 and 22 (of 64) shares were later transferred to the widow of Nicholas Wallis. Widows are also common holders of shares in the registers, the boats providing an important source of income.

There is some evidence in the shipping records that merchant capital was also invested by persons from outside the working fishing community, although it still may have been sourced in St Ives. Several records for instance make reference to a William Hitchens, occupation described as 'Gentleman', residence: St Ives. Many more 'gentleman' investors may have in fact been involved than the records suggest for they may have wished their business to remain discreet and unofficial (as 'sleeping partners'). The likelihood of this was suggested to me by John Lambourn who emphasised that the expansion of the fishing fleets in the nineteenth century had to be seen in the context of the imperial economy, the Atlantic triangle of trade of which the Cornish economy was a part, facilitating both the capital and the skills for the building of the fishing fleets. However it is also the case that in the context of St Ives especially, fishing capital became more and more owned by fishermen, their families and other working families in the community, as Deacon has argued (2001), pointing to increasing endogamy and decreasing inter-parish migration as a consequence as fishers sought to keep capital within the family. On the whole, banks were not involved in this local circulation of capital because what it depended on, other than generational continuity, was trust, so that fishing ventures could be undertaken even in the absence of binding contracts. The Bolitho family were merchant bankers in West Cornwall with interests in mining and buying and selling fish. Their banking business was later amalgamated into Barclays Bank and today, it

is a branch of Barclays that sits near the harbour in Newlyn, serving the fishing industry. I asked Tony Pawlyn if the Bolithos had acted as money lenders to fishermen and he gave me some insights into the financial culture of the time:

TM: Would they [Bolitho's] have loaned money to fishermen?

TP: Probably, yeah. There's not a great deal of evidence for that, but they probably did. The few mortgages that appear tend to be between merchants rather than bankers, you don't get many bankers... well put it this way, most of the fishing boats were too small to register as boats, sorry as 'British vessels'. So they don't appear on the shipping register. One or two of the smaller ones do end up on the shipping register because somebody wanted a mortgage on them. And they had to be formally registered to get a legal mortgage. But most of the money lent on fishing boats was unsecured loans, based on the, "I know you, you know me, you'll either succeed or you'll fail, if you succeed I'll get me money back, if you fail I've had it". You know, because there was no alternative place to get the money from.

TM: But who would that relationship have been between?

TP: That would have been between [a merchant and] an owner skipper, who he might recognise or know. Put it this way. Up until the 1880s and 1890s, and even till the turn of the century, the last thing any fisherman wanted to be was in debt to a bank. In fact the whole theory of being in debt was a terrible prospect. They didn't like the thought they were...there was a lot of independence. They liked to think they were free, you know, independence, they could go where they wanted, do what they wanted, and they could meet their own obligations. Wasn't quite like that, they had to have a period of time between when you...few would save up first and buy the boat when they got the money, but most would get enough to start it going and then pay off over a couple of seasons. But, as I say, it wouldn't have been a formal mortgage. It very much relied on the man lending the money knowing the man that was borrowing the money – a personal relationship.

One influential factor in shaping attitudes to money and work amongst fishers and other Cornish labouring communities such as mining families was religion. Whilst Newlyn and Mousehole were initially resistant to Methodist preaching (Mattingly 2009), the message of preachers such as John Wesley and the charismatic Billy Bray – that poor working folk could find salvation through hard work and simple and sober living – grew in appeal. Both men and women packed out the chapels, the men on the upper galley in their woollen sea jumpers, the women below. Women were more likely to be literate than men and therefore able to read the Bible. As Julian Drew, the current Methodist minister in Newlyn explained to me, a common-place notion amongst the men was that they acquired their religion from their mothers. The message of Methodism consolidated the work ethic of the share-systems that organised fishing and mining and it encouraged saving and discouraged debt. Whilst this combination of religion and economic practices bred a peculiar kind of

egalitarian spirit of independence, the expanding drift fishing industry also began to exhibit a pattern of internal differentiation.

### **The story of W.S. Stevenson and Sons**

The growth of differentiations is illustrated by the story of the firm that would eventually become W.S. Stevenson and Sons. That story, as summarised by Perry (2001), begins with a John Stevenson, born in Hull in 1789, who for reasons unknown was living in Newlyn by 1810 when he married a local girl, Anne Sampson, at Paul Church. He became a fisherman and he and Anne had eight children together, three of whom died at a very young age. Their son William married a Jane Warren in 1852 and had ten children, four of whom died in infancy. Of the two surviving sons, one left to pursue a life in mining in Michigan, USA, becoming superintendent of the Atlantic Copper Mines. The elder son, William followed his father into the fishing industry and the family had two luggers and a bakery business<sup>45</sup>, run by his mother. He married a Miss Sara Anne Harvey in 1889, whose father James Harvey was a fish merchant from Great Yarmouth (once again a migrant from an East coast port who had come to Newlyn in 1850s where his wife Elizabeth Johns ran her own pilchard curing business). James Harvey died young in 1874 aged thirty-nine, but his wife continued to run the business arranging the pilchard exports to Italy directly with the foreign merchants. William sold his boat and he and his mother-in-law went into business together. He and Sara had eight children together (five surviving into adulthood), and by the 1900s they owned and acted as agents for fishing boats, cured and exported fish, bought and sold fish on the market and ran the family bakery and shops (Perry *ibid*).

Until Elizabeth Harvey (nee Johns) appeared, the fishing community had always depended on wealthy outside merchants such as the Bolitho's to arrange the export trade on their behalf. Elizabeth was the first fish producer to make these arrangements, who was not of the landed merchant-gentry class. The significance of the Stevenson and Harvey partnership that would later become W.S. Stevenson and Sons, is that it marks both the beginning of the liberation of the Cornish fishers from their paternal ties within the old merchant capitalist order, but also the beginning of

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<sup>45</sup> Many households lacked ovens and therefore bake houses were an integral part of communal life.

marked social stratification within the fishing community itself, as a sub-class of wealthy boat-owners and merchants began to emerge. The fact that the origins of this family firm lay to a large degree on the East coast is not insignificant; but I am hesitant to describe this development as derived from purely external interests and capital. The Stevensons and Harveys' family ties in Newlyn were stronger and more embedded than that.

With the greater integration into the national economy afforded by the railway and the decline of the pilchard export industry, much of Cornwall's great fishing fleets eventually declined. Its surviving industry would for the next half a century be overshadowed by the industrial trawler fleets of the north and east coasts. However by the Second World War these new fisheries had already reached their peak, and by the 1970s and the Icelandic 'Cod Wars', the glory days of the great distant-water ports of Grimsby and Hull were all but over. Meanwhile the trawling fleet of W. Stevenson and Sons was expanding. During my fieldwork it was not uncommon to meet skippers who had worked 'on Stevenson's beamers' for a number of years before getting their own boats. Some spoke of starting out with an 'apprenticeship' in the company stores as 'net loft boys' in the days before nets were manufactured.

William Stevenson or 'Billy' as he's known locally, the great, great grandson of John Stevenson, built up the firm's fleet by buying ex-admiralty vessels that had been used for minesweeping during the war and converted them for beam-trawling and later, he bought second-hand steel beam trawlers from Europe. Now elderly and retired, he retains a strong influence on the family firm but his daughter Elizabeth Stevenson now manages all the day to day running of the firm and I interviewed her at the company offices (Fig.60). As she recalled, at the firm's height they had thirty-five registered fishing vessels in various sizes, some beam trawlers, some netters, and side trawlers, and four under 10-metre vessels. Now they have thirteen beam trawlers capable of working, one small side trawler and four under tens, a total of 18 licensed vessels. Their boats provide work for sixty to seventy fishermen and the company employs forty to fifty shore staff landing, processing, distributing and retailing the fish. The firm are only involved in primary processing and most of the shore side staff are men. Female employees are more common in firms involved in secondary processing (where more is done to prepare the fish for consumption).

## Contemporary Newlyn

The development of a merchant class and of a capitalistic mode of fishing is evident in topographical change in Newlyn. Infrastructure changes began with the efforts of Rev. W.S. Lach-Szryma, the son of a Polish Professor who had fled Warsaw in 1830. Lach-Szryma successfully campaigned for a Newlyn Pier and Harbour Order granted by parliament in 1884. The South Pier was completed in 1886 and investment from the Bolitho family enabled the completion of the North Pier in 1894 and the new harbour road in 1908. With the eventual decline of the lugger building and pilchard export industries, the boatyards, coopers, rope-walks, basket-makers, sail-making lofts, timber yard and iron foundry disappeared and commercial activity became increasingly focused around Street an Nowan. As W. Stevenson and Sons grew over the twentieth century, they invested substantially in the harbour facilities, including the ice works and the Mary Williams Pier opened by Queen Elizabeth in 1980, which enabled deep water and landing facilities for larger, modern vessels. These developments led to Newlyn harbour-side as it appears today, with the most prominent features being the fish market, the ice works, the Fishermen's Mission and the offices of the harbour commissioners and W.S Stevenson and Sons at the head of the harbour, as well as the RNLI lifeboat and station and dockside pubs (Figs.51-56).

According to Julyan Drew, the role of religion has also changed. Whereas seventy years ago seventy percent or more of the fishing community attended chapel or church, this section of the community is now a minority in the congregation. The Methodist minister has retained a strong presence on the quay however, particularly at ceremonial and festive functions such as the annual 'Blessing of the Fleet' and of new lifeboats. However just as religious attitudes and practices were marked by subtle shades of class division in nineteenth century fishing communities, so they are today. Julyan Drew noted that fishermen themselves rarely attend the Blessing of the Fleet. The minister's involvement with them is more often in the context of a funeral following loss of friends, fellow crew members and/or family at sea. Julyan explained that amongst fishermen and lifeboat crews it is more a case of them having a strong 'faith' rather than 'religion' as such: 'When you're coming back [to

harbour] in a force ten people do a lot of praying'. The lifeboat, so often an enduring symbol of solidarity and community also reveals subtle social differences.

The Penlee Lifeboat Station has a history going back some two hundred years and its crews have been presented with forty-four medals for gallantry. Fourteen of its twenty-two current and recent sea-going crew members are active or former fishermen. On 19 December 1981 the Penlee lifeboat *Solomon Browne* was lost with all hands. Then too, many of its crew were fishermen, volunteers drawn from the village of Mousehole. In hurricane conditions it went to the aid of the stricken coaster *Union Star*. It was on its maiden voyage from the Netherlands to Ireland with a cargo of fertiliser. Onboard were a crew of five in addition to the captain's wife and two daughters. Suffering engine failure and in waves of up to sixty feet, the vessel was driven towards the rocky shore close to the Penlee lifeboat station. Coxswain Trevelyan Richards handpicked seven lifeboat crew. Father and son, Nigel and Neil Brockman, had both arrived at the station, but the son was turned away, Trevelyan saying it was too much to lose more than one man in a family. The last radio contact was heard from the *Solomon Browne* with the report that they had rescued four people from the *Union Star*. Wreckage from the lifeboat was later found along the shore. Some but not all of the sixteen bodies were eventually recovered. Two nights before the disaster, crew member Charlie Greenhalgh had switched on the Mousehole Christmas lights. Every year since there has been a remembrance event, which Julyan Drew leads and the Mousehole lights are switched off for an hour as an act of remembrance. The occasion has become a significant event in the annual calendars of Newlyn and Mousehole, but is underlain by a tension regarding whom the event is really for. Julyan Drew said that amongst some of the families of the lifeboat men lost, there had been an element of resentment about the intrusion of the public and the feeling that 'it's not *your* grief, it's *our* grief'.

In a historical ethnographic study of class and social change at Sennen Cove in Cornwall in the early twentieth century, Ireland (Ireland 2004) also found that the lifeboat institution was marked by social division and conflict. Whilst crew members were drawn from the local (and mostly poor) working community, the Ladies Lifeboat Guild included middle-class, recent in-migrants. Given that members of the guild were responsible for fundraising, the paradox embodied in the lifeboat was that it could not have survived without their contribution, even whilst social distance and

tensions grew from these class differences. There is a parallel with contemporary Newlyn. The superintendent of the Newlyn Fishermen's Mission branch, Keith Dickson, explained that the lifeboat is entirely funded by charitable contributions that come from outside the fishing industry. The difference however is that these social differences can no longer be understood through a simplistic rendering of (local) poverty versus (outsider) affluence.

### **The Royal National Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen**

The Fishermen's Mission began as a service for the fleets of fishing boats working in the North Sea in the late nineteenth century. Operating from mobile mission ships, it distributed practical comforts such as warm woollen clothing, cheap tobacco and medical aid. As industrial fishing ports consolidated, a shore-side mission presence was established in some ports, including Newlyn from 1903. With financial aid from the Bolithos, a dedicated building 'The Ship Institute' was opened in 1911. Nora Bolitho spent time in the mission teaching fishermen to read, but her presence was an exception as women were not usually allowed in the building at that time. 'The Mission' today has two levels: the upper includes a meeting room and Chapel of Remembrance (Figs.57 and 58).

with a memorial listing the names of local fishermen lost at sea; there is also an accommodation wing and on the downstairs floor a cafe and snooker tables. The institute retains an important community function as both an informal meeting place and a site for political meetings, state visits and other events. However where once the mission cafe was heaving with fishermen, there is now just a quiet ebb and flow. One hundred years after opening, its future has been called into question as one among a number of mission centres designated to close by 2015. The current superintendent Keith Dickson has a similar role to Julyan Drew at times of tragedy. However his position is unique given that he is a non-ordained person to whom the fishing community (not just in Newlyn but across Cornwall) look in times of grief for spiritual and emotional support and his capacity in the institute reflects a deep familiarity and understanding of the working lives of fishermen.

The Newlyn Court case (which I treat in more detail in Chapter Five) highlighted some ambivalent images of community, fairness, and economic necessity. Following the first sentencing I went in February 2009 to talk to Keith Dickson about my

interest in meeting the defendants. Keith is a Scotsman who has worked for the Fishermen's Mission both in Newlyn and in Mallaig, Scotland. Prior to that, he had other jobs in social care roles. Keith was surprised about my interest in talking to the defendants and wasn't sure that I'd get any response (and he was right). And he was sceptical about what I'd get out of it, emphasising 'the bottom line' (which in his view was that they had broken the rules for financial gain and refused to take responsibility or own up to what they did or why they did it)... 'What else is there to say? They will only repeat their excuses' (the constraints of the system which forced them to breach the rules). Keith suggested that I find out a bit more about the defendants' assets before I did any interviews – get a different perspective. Several are multiple-house owners, he said. He recommended I see Tony Woodhams, project officer at the NFIF. In fact he offered to take me over and introduce me there and then. He seemed to find it all quite amusing. I was soon sitting opposite Tony at his desk, in his office just along the Strand. Tony told me that the history of the fishermen's mission was illustrative of the changes in fishing; it used to be a case of 'preach the word, heal the sick' (geared towards looking after genuinely poor fishing communities)...

...Now ask Keith how many millionaires there are at one time in the mission house drinking subsidized tea. Some of the defendants settled up their fines immediately by cheque... There's a romantic notion of fishermen as hunters – its hogwash, balls. Fishing's a commercial enterprise. Looking at a haul, where we would see fish, fishermen see pound-notes.

I was frankly a little bit surprised by this view Keith and Tony were giving me. I had expected them as persons in local public office with community concerns to have emphasised the needs of the community, not its excesses. In fact they were challenging my naive assumption that the problems facing fishing communities were problems between 'the community' (as a relatively homogenous entity) and external structural constraints. Rather, their jobs have entailed grappling with the complex structural inequalities that run right through the fishing industry. In April 2010 I went back to visit Keith to ask him more about his views on social and economic stratification in fishing in Newlyn in order further to understand how fishing society changed between the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries. I include extracts below from the interview which are valuable as the views of someone with a unique position of being very involved in the social side of the fisheries and having

experience of working in both Scottish and Cornish fishing communities. However Keith asked me to stress that they are his own subjective and personal views, and not necessarily the views of the Fishermen's Mission.

Keith felt that 'there is a real stratification in the fishing industry and wherever you go pretty much':

At the bottom of the food chain is your deckies, the people that work for the Stevensons, the people that work on all the boats. They have no... nothing other than what they earn. Ok? Now in days gone by, even on certain boats there is now, that's a jolly good wage. A deckie in Mallaig in the 70s, when the herring and everything were plentiful were making a thousand pounds in their hand – a week. Ok, at that point they didn't pay tax, they didn't declare it you know, but a thousand pounds is a fair whack of cash in the seventies, and Mallaig was an extremely affluent place.

He recalled, (figuratively speaking) 'three day millionaires at Lowestoft':

...the guys that did the deep sea fishing before the Cod War, would go to sea for a month, come in for three days, and they too would be pulling in a thousand pounds plus. And like the Mallaig people this boom time was seen to be a constant – it would always be the same, it would never change. You know, herring would never stop landing in Mallaig, like we'd never stop fishing up near the Arctic Circle.

However these periodic high earnings were also spent just as quickly:

I mean, people would land, three day millionaires, spend their money in the pub you know, maybe see the wife, give them fifty quid, down the pub, you know come next Monday they're sailing, they're going up to ask for a sub to get ciggies for going on the boat. In Mallaig these guys would go to Fort William, Inverness, and they would buy a sheepskin jacket, you know one of the big flying jackets, two or three hundred pounds, they would get to the boat on a Monday, and they would wear it on board the boat as working gear. Right, do you see that kind of idea? The "cash, splash cash, who cares?" So that kind of culture for the deckies very much evolved.

In Keith's experience, this 'deckie culture' has persisted today, although the high earnings are less consistent. It is this strata that mainly call on the services of the mission when in need:

... The people who don't have an investment in the boats themselves spend money. That's a generalisation, and it's a huge generalisation, but it's generally true. Ok so they'll spend their money in 'The Star', or 'The Dolphin', or wherever, 'Swordfish', without necessarily saving for tomorrow. And the people that come to the mission, more often than not, is that strata. The strata that have the money coming in, I mean they still make a living wage... they can still afford to go on holiday; they can afford to drink in 'The Star' and 'The Fish'. You know, so they're earning a reasonable amount of money, but they're spending it as quickly. And then when that stops, because of bad weather, because of illness, whatever, there is nothing... there's nothing in the bank, there's no fall back. So they come to the mission. So we have a lot of contact with those deckies. You know and a lot of those are from, not indigenous fishermen, maybe they've been here a long time, but from Lowestoft, Grimsby, Hull, you know, all those kind of places that were the deep water ports, the blue water ports, with the North Atlantic and the Arctic Circle. So that as I see it, is

one strata, but within that not all deckies are the same. Some deckies are very astute, they'll save their money... and we don't see those few so much.

The next strata Keith identified were skipper-owners:

And they made a lot of money. I mean, because they not only got their share for doing the voyage, they got the boat share. And they've got investment. They've got the boat itself. And they on the whole, we don't have a huge amount of contact with because they have assets. They will tell you they're poor, but I tell you what, they got ten, fifteen thousand pounds in the bank. And they go on holidays, and maybe they've got a house in Spain... you know, they have assets. And we don't see them an awful lot at all, unless it's more the pastoral and emotional side of the job. You know, and they've, the boat's money comes out first and it's the biggest share. You know, so they've always got, even if it's a bad trip, the boat's paid for itself, they get their share and they'll get the money on top of that. So they've always got a pretty good income coming in...

And finally, Keith identified a third top strata:

...The ones that made the big, big money, like the Stevenson's, you know, they own multiple boats. At the height of the harbour, in the eighties and such like, they couldn't find enough to spend their money on. I've been told that the last time their assets (before current slump), the last time they were assessed, they were worth about a hundred and thirty million pounds. And that money that came in, they just spent it, they brought everything they could see. So they own half a dozen farms, they own houses everywhere. So they've got quite a diversification into different areas. And they just made money hand over fist... just a huge amount of money that they made... The people that make money consistently, even in the bad times, are your buyers and sellers. You know, the people that own the companies, maybe not the smaller companies, but they still make a reasonable income. But your biggest companies they make huge marks up on fish. I mean, I've seen fish, mackerel, go for fifty pence on the market, and they're five pounds in Stevenson's shop. I mean come on, there's no legitimate business argument you can make for that mark up. And they make money hand over fist. And that's how I see, how it stratifies down.

The boat owners involved in the Newlyn court case would fit into Keith's idea of the middle tier of boat owners who he identified as having a reasonable level of income and holding assets. The image this conveys contrasts with the image that was portrayed by some of the media and the defendants themselves, of hard-up, struggling fishing families, beholden both to an absolute dependence on nature and the constraints of the regulatory system. Out of all the strata, Keith's portrayal of the deckhands most fits the historical image of the itinerant, impoverished fisherman, who holds nothing in the world but the ability to ply his trade; except that the life of the deckhands of the modern-day era has been distinguished by periods of conspicuous wealth (as in earnings quickly disposed of, rather than assets). Keith emphasises conspicuous markers of status in describing the different stratum – lifestyle, holidays, and multiple home ownership – suggesting cultural values

relating to consumption as a marker of identity. This is maybe one feature common across the modern day fishing community (and society as a whole) and distinct from earlier periods – a change from having an identity drawn from belonging to a community bound by occupation and necessity to a more materialistic and lifestyle-orientated culture, seeking freedom from necessity, and looking outward to the dominant cultural ideals and fashions of market-led society.

This shift is partly a result of broad changes in society over the last one hundred and fifty years, however it is also a consequence of vast increases in capital in the fishing industry within the context of a declining labour force. Fisheries are on the whole wealthier, but there are far fewer people fishing, as capital has become more and more concentrated. It is this concentration of capital and contraction of labour that distinguishes fishing in the twentieth century onwards from earlier periods. Otherwise, the basic organisational structure would be essentially the same: a share system in ownership and profit distribution and a three-tiered social and economic stratification. In the earlier period the top tier was occupied by merchants and the landowning class who had interests in mining and the seine fishery. The drift fishery was the pursuit of the lower two tiers of fishermen and boat-owners. During the twentieth century, certain fishing families and merchants accumulated more and more capital, moving up the economic ladder. But there was another radical change which was both an outcome and a facilitator of increasing capital in the fisheries and directly linked to the transition to diesel-engine boats – a change in the share-system.

This change was explained to me by Tony Pawlyn, maritime historian and, for a time in his youth, apprentice in the Stevenson's firm. Fundamentally this comes down to the fact that with the transition to diesel-engine fishing boats and bigger nets, the capital input of the fisheries was so high that the boat-owners took steps to protect and guarantee a return on their investments. At some time during the early days of the Stevenson's firm, the share-system changed. No longer were the boat's share and the crew share equally dependent on the outcome of the fishing trip. From then on, the boat's share was subtracted no matter what the outcome of the fishing trip was. The remainder was divided between the crew. The effect of this was to guarantee at least the security of the boat-owners investment and transfer all the risk to the crew. As Tony Pawlyn explained, the changes began when steam-powered winches came into use for hauling the nets. An extra share was allocated to cover the

expense of the winch, which became known as ‘the iron man’. Then the boat share, originally a variable proportion of the catch, gradually became a fixed-cost to cover the engine and fuel expenses. And whilst ‘officially’ (in Tony’s words) Cornish fishermen were supposed to be free adventurers with the skippers dividing the shares on board, ‘unofficially’ fishermen on the Stevensons’ boats were collecting their share in the form of a pay-packet from the company offices. An additional change to the share system was also made in that the body share was no longer split equally, with the engineer, the mate and the skipper taking higher percentages.

In my interview with Keith, he expressed his view that relationships between deckhands and skipper-owners has changed for the worse, with deck-hands more and more being treated as an expendable commodity – again, challenging the image of the co-operative family fishing enterprise evoked in the Newlyn court-case and a radical departure from images of solidarity and camaraderie from earlier eras. Keith painted a picture which shows how changes in the economy of fishing, has had direct consequences not only for employment and inequality in wealth, but also relationships within fishing enterprises, crew morale, welfare and safety.

The same day I interviewed Keith he had been talking to a skipper and his wife about one of their crew members who had died recently and whose body has just been discovered in the harbour. They had been very concerned about their crew member and Keith found this to be rare in his experience, especially his recent experience. For example the centre had supported a crew after their boat was swamped. One crew-member ran up quite a lot of debt. Keith approached the skipper about this and the skipper denied any responsibility for his crew member.

Now that’s a far more common problem amongst skippers, that deckies are disposable, no, *expendable* assets, than the skipper and his wife this morning who were really concerned about this crew member who died, getting an appropriate send off and is remembered. That’s very unusual. In my experience, and again it’s purely subjective – and that’s my experience and maybe I’ve just hit that 5% that are right pains in the necks, and the rest you know... So, you know, deckies are expendable, or have been in the past, expendable. ‘Cause there’s always someone waiting at the end of the quay who wants a job. And I think as long as it’s that, that there’s deckies waiting at the end of a quay they’ll still be expendable assets. I mean there’s one guy who, went over the side, got caught in a net, miraculously survived, transpired that he hadn’t done any of the safety courses, at all – shouldn’t have been at sea, completely illegal. Skipper got him back in the boat before he’d done all the courses... he goes over the side again. So what? Skipper did nothing. As far as I’m aware the skipper didn’t actually contact him between him going over the side, and when weeks later that guy contacted him to say “Can I come back on the boat?”

Keith felt the one of the consequences of increased economic stratification therefore was the direct impacts on the risk levels fishermen face at sea. He gave the example of life raft certificates being falsified in order to save a bit of money and highlighted also the poor safety records of some of the company owned vessels which have regularly broken down and had to be towed back to harbour.

I can think of a few where crew are respected and they stay with them for a long time, and they tend to be surprisingly, the successful boats, through the thick and thin, they're the ones that make the money, that keep the crew, and look after their crew, respect the crew. So yeah, but I think certainly there's been a... all the money and assets have come in the hands of a few. And I think it's probably happening more and more as well. Because your deckies never gonna raise the money to buy a boat, or buy a licence for goodness sake.

Thompson, Wailey, and Lummis (1983) also found that amongst the capitalist distant water trawling fleets of the east coast ports in the early twentieth century there was social distance between the skippers and the deckies. They became members of different unions and when strikes over wages failed, some of the deckhand unions blamed the skippers for not backing them. Onboard the skippers kept themselves isolated from their crews in their cabins and in some incidents took violent action against crew members who were undisciplined in any way, in one case a man was tied to the mast. However Thompson et al were describing a context of wage labour, in some cases brutally indentured. In the context of the share-system in Cornwall, a different ethos predominates. Similar to Thompson, Wailey and Lummis's description of Marshside in Lancashire, as 'an inshore village within a trawler port' (ibid: 90), in Newlyn there are overlapping moral registers and forms of work consciousness. Each fisherman is technically a self-employed share fisherman and even on the company-owned boats, each vessel has a large degree of autonomy. The name of the vessel is associated strongly with the personality of the skipper, but also with the crew as a whole. Even though company-owned boats can allegedly come back from a bad trip in debt to the owners, like Rule's notion of 'quietism' (2006), this dominant ethos mitigates against political action.

I established earlier on in this chapter that borrowing by fishermen in the era of the sailing luggers was largely a matter of face-to-face loans granted between merchants and fishermen. In later periods it has been more common for loans to be secured from banks; however the merchant loans have persisted as have the obligations of such arrangements, with merchants using them to their advantage to

increase their commercial power. They maybe personal relationships, but they were then as they are now, also business relationships. Tony Pawlyn described how 'pure money lending' in drift fishing does not occur until just before the First World War following the government loans scheme originating in 1910 to assist Cornish fishers with installing engines in their boats. By 'pure money lending' Tony is referring to formal contractual loans via banks and is making a contrast with earlier forms of lending:

In the past there were loans but they tended to be, loans from fish salesmen on the market who were handling, selling their fish for them. Because invariably, you hired someone to do your auctioneering or whatever, you paid a fee for them to sell your fish. And those people, the merchants if you like, acquired more money than anybody else. They're the people that tended to lend to fishermen to do work or repair or whatever. And usually it was on the understanding that all your fish was sold through their office and so they got their percentage, they got their money back gradually and they also got a percentage of all your earnings because they got a share of the fish sales, you know.

Here we have continuities with a more recent period, as Keith Dickson describes:

If you talk to any of the guys, they'll tell you about 'going up the stairs to Billy' [*William Stevenson*], for money. And there's two ways you look at it. Well, it always was a business transaction, right? Billy never did it out of the goodness of his heart. So there was always interest involved. And that's probably the best you can say of it. The other thing is that Billy owns a lot, gained a lot of influence, through lending to other people. Draw your own conclusions from that.... You know... Competitors have never done well in Newlyn... ever. They always tend to, well they have always struggled. But I don't think...the lending certainly was a business arrangement in that they paid interest on the loan, which is fair enough. But I've always had my personal feeling that Stevenson's used it to gain a position in power over people. You know, if you've got a fifty thousand pound debt, you're not really going to gain say them, you're not going to go against them are you? Well, most of them wouldn't. So I think there was more than a little of that in it. But you'll get people who'll argue that Stevenson's saved Newlyn time after time, after time. And it's only Stevenson's that kept them going, because Stevenson's lent money to people, or loaned money to people, when they needed the money to keep going. And then you get the other half of people who say that Stevenson's only did it to get the power of position. I don't know where the truth is, in that at all...

One difference however is that borrowing in the earlier period was between fishermen and mainly non-boat-owning merchants. In the later period of the Stevensons, the merchants are also fishing boat owners, and not just of one or two boats, but a whole fleet, with consequences both for relationships with independent boat owners, relationships within crews and relationships between owners/management and crews. As Keith said, there are a variety of views on the

firm's commercial role. This was the view of a fisherman from Cadgwith on the issue:

I don't care who knows this but the Stevenson's, yeah okay, they made money out of fishermen, but on the other hand, they've helped a lot of fishermen as well, and I had a boat that broke down a long, long time ago. I met Tony Stevenson and just started chatting to him and he saw the bloody boat's broke down; the engine's gone wrong. He said, "It's alright; there's a boat here if you want to borrow it." It's was a big boat; I'm not used to big boats! "If you want to borrow that you then you can have her." And also Harvey Shellfish people, another big firm, and people moan and groan about them but they financed the new engine. And we pay back so much a week in cash. So they aren't all bad. It's very quick and very easy to stick the knife in but it isn't quite like that. And in those days, we didn't have bank accounts and things years ago. It's slightly different now. But any of these fishing boats here now on the beach, if they had a major engine breakdown, W. Harvey & Sons would put new engine in one of their boats.

One fisherman working from Hayle harbour on the other hand, was more inclined to a view of the Stevensons firm that was similar to Keith's, distinguishing the way they did business from Harvey's firm:

The other side of it is fish merchants have always looked for a reason to pay little. This is at Newlyn. Newlyn has not been a good market to land to... If it wasn't for the Stevenson's there wouldn't be any ice, there wouldn't be any fishing. You got to say that... Ronnie Harvey was a shell-fish merchant. If you brought a boat, he would let you have the gear free and you would pay him back as you went. So they always helped. Stevenson would come along and if your boat was in debt he would pay it off but he now owned a percentage of the catch. And you'd go to pay the two thousand off and he wouldn't have it. Newlyn harbour itself... to be a commissioner, you had to live within a certain circumference of the harbour. The Stevenson's brought all that property up. They put their own boat skippers in the properties. So they were the boat owner, they lived within the property, and they were commissioners. But of course they did what they were told because it was their job and their house. That's how Stevenson controlled it. If you... One or two men actually went to the government and said the prices on Newlyn market were rigged. And they went far enough into it being surveyed and that. After that, when they put fish on the market, nobody would buy it. Fish merchants just walked past his fish. Cause he stepped out of... We're serfs, that's all we are. We are real serfs.

This fisherman's statement 'we are real serfs' (beholden to merchants and landowners), resonates with the comparison that during my fieldwork people sometimes drew between the mine-owners of the past and the Stevensons in Newlyn. Like some factory-towns in the north, mine-owners in Cornwall rented out cottages to the workers and they also issued them with tokens to spend in their shops. Similarly, it was sometimes alleged that the Stevensons were employers, landlords and owned the pubs where fishing crews spent their 'wages'. However in the context of any large capitalist firm and its workers, there will always be complicated

patterns of loyalty, obligation and sentiment that can never be captured by a too simple narrative about exploitation or inequality.

I asked Elizabeth Stevenson if she felt the firm had good relationships with their skippers:

ES: On the whole I think so, and there's always an element of, it's a fine line that you can't cross when somebody is working for you. There's an element of, there's a line that you have to keep at a certain distance but I think we've got on the whole a very good relationship. I mean loads of them, when they've got something wrong, they've got my mobile phone number and they phone me, they know when I'm at home, that sort of thing. They stop me in the street, if they want to ask questions that sort of thing. They see me on the quay, they phone me up, they text me, fax me, call me, so I think, you know, we've got a sort of, as good a relationship as you can get between owners and workers.

TM: Do they have a certain autonomy in terms of where they choose to decide to go fish and how much of things is their own initiative?

ES: Yeah, it's their own initiative so long as they are allowed to go there, that their licence allows them and the quota permits them to catch whatever it is they want to catch wherever they want to go, yeah. The minute, the boat leaves the Harbour that's it, it's their vessel.

Masters of 'their own vessels', more 'ships', than 'boats', it is skippers that have tended to become 'men of renown' rather than their crew-members. The skipper of the *William Sampson Stevenson*, for example, Roger Nowell (Figs.62, 63) who died in 2010, had starred in a BBC TV series and accompanying book. Even without this publicity he was a well-respected man in Newlyn and in the wider fishing community and known as a 'proper character'. I commented to Elizabeth Stevenson on the strong identification that came across in the book between Roger and the company vessel. She replied:

Roger was a complete sort of character, I mean, we would have huge rows where he would go storming out and shouting and then 10 minutes later he'd come in and I can't remember exactly what he used to call me, yeah he used to call me EC and would come in and put his arm around you and asked you a question. You know, it was a slightly sort of volatile relationship sometime because he was quite a sort of strong character as was his brother. But yeah, they were good fisherman as well. Complete pains in the backsides of times. Hated being told what to do, hated regulation, legislation, hated paperwork, but both very well read, both very clever chaps. And in fact, when he was diagnosed with cancer and had not very long to live, I saw him, I went to his house and visited him about, I don't know, a week before he died so, you know, that shows you have got a relationship with them.

Whilst Stevenson's crews are technically self-employed, share fishermen ('adventurers' before the law), they also have an ambiguous position as the responsibility of the firm drawing its profits from their labour, as captured by Keith

Dickson's views on the lack of concern Stevenson's have shown for their 'employees'. Keith's exact words were that the Mission effectively 'acts as the HR department for the Stevenson's and has done for the last thirty or forty years of their existence', supporting their crews and dealing with their problems. However Keith felt that this service had not been reciprocated by charitable support from the firm:

I can quantify the Stevenson's support to the Mission in totality in the last ten years – and that's a fifty pound box of fish to our fundraiser in Truro. So now we've kept their crews going, we've kept their crews you know, out of jail, in accommodation, you know, there to go to sea to earn the Stevenson's money. Yet their sole support is a fifty pound box of fish. And that's not apocryphal, that's not me forgetting things, that's one hundred percent fact. They've not supported the mission...ever. To me, I don't understand that... And there are lots of instances of people in other fishing communities supporting the local mission – big time. Strangely not a lot of fishing people, but other people in the communities have actually supported the mission.

Keith identified one exception to this generalisation, the fish processing firm FalFish, based in Cornwall.

...If you want to talk to people who have got their heads screwed on and who understand the industry, understand what they're doing, and value their work force, FalFish are the people to see. And surprisingly, they're the ones who most support the Mission! That's not why I like them, but they are actually some of the most turned on, you know, they understand... and their flaming good businessmen, and they understand the fact that it's not a totally benevolent philanthropic gesture, when they support the Mission. They're actually looking after their own interests...Because if the boats ain't landing the fish, they ain't got no fish to process. Do you understand? It's a bit of quid pro quo. We're supporting you, 'cause we know you support us. You know, and even that attitude isn't amongst the fishing community.

The problem is one that the Fisherman's Mission as a whole is trying to grapple with. As Keith explained they only receive three percent of their funding from the industry which they serve and support. He felt this was indicative of an attitude in which fishing firms do not on the whole recognise a need to support their crew. Could this be because of deeply entrenched ideas of fishing as being an intrinsically competitive and individualistic pursuit, each man for himself within the freedom of the high seas? If so, it is also combined with the way in which the fishing industry operates within an informal and marginal space, geographically and socially and where dependence on 'time and tide' also creates dependence on middlemen, carried to the extreme in the case of capitalistic 'deep-sea' fishing.

I mean you talk about cooperation, there's story after story about Billy stopping boats going to sea, competitive boats going to sea. By one means or another. You know, boat breaks down, competitor's boat breaks down, they get the boat booked into the engineers to get the problem fixed, low and behold, Billy comes up and says, "next Tuesday you're doing the independent boat, no you're not, you're doing my boat. You

don't do my boat, you'll never get any work from me again in the harbour". And that's not apocryphal, that happened. And it has happened more than once. So I'd say, yeah it was cut-throat. They'd quite happily... what's the quote? "Nature is red in tooth and claw".

## Conclusions

I have drawn extensively on the experience of Keith Dickson as a public figure in a unique position to assess the industrial stresses and strains affecting the people he has come to know intimately. From other perspectives, different stories might be told, and examples of close relationships of mutual concern between owners, skippers and crews on company boats will also be found. I have tried to present a balanced view of the tensions as they were presented to me. However when placed in a historical perspective some patterns do emerge. The consequences of the technological and economic transformations outlined in this chapter have increased income and living standards for fishing industry producers. Class division within the industry has simultaneously developed, and whilst competition and conflict have always been features of life in fishing communities, some of the social support systems – mutual aid, share ownership and profit distribution – that facilitated fishing ventures and provided a cushion in difficult times, have either disappeared or been modified. In the context of large commercial organization, it seems there has not been a concomitant development of employee rights and welfare provision. Instead the onus of fisher wellbeing in Newlyn has been taken up by charitable organisations such as the Fishermen's Mission and the lifeboat institution (RNLI) which depend on the financial support of a broader community beyond the fishing industry. This chapter has therefore highlighted that at least some of the political issues facing what is now an occupational community of fish producers are internal class divisions – inequalities in ownership, safety/risk issues and the returns fishermen receive for their catch – highlighting a lack of unionization or economic alternatives such as fisher co-operatives.

Meanwhile fragmentation of community has also occurred on shore. Keith Dickson felt that the economic pressures in the industry and the growth of inequality had contributed to increased levels of violence in Newlyn, in the pubs and in the home. In addition whilst fishing may be 'no longer an attractive career' for many local young people as Keith put it, the degradation of labour associated with

concentration in one type of heavily mechanised fishing is also a likely factor. Coupled with the loss of economic diversity that the lugger era facilitated we can conclude that the growth of Newlyn as a peripheral village marked by relatively high unemployment, poverty and lack of mobility, is a modern phenomenon. The village is now socially more diverse and the relationship between its various sub-populations loosely connected through central institutions such as the lifeboat, the Fishermen's Mission, the harbour itself, and above all, the presence of the fishing fleet. Although powerful symbols of solidarity, on close inspection these also reveal complexity, conflict and social distance.

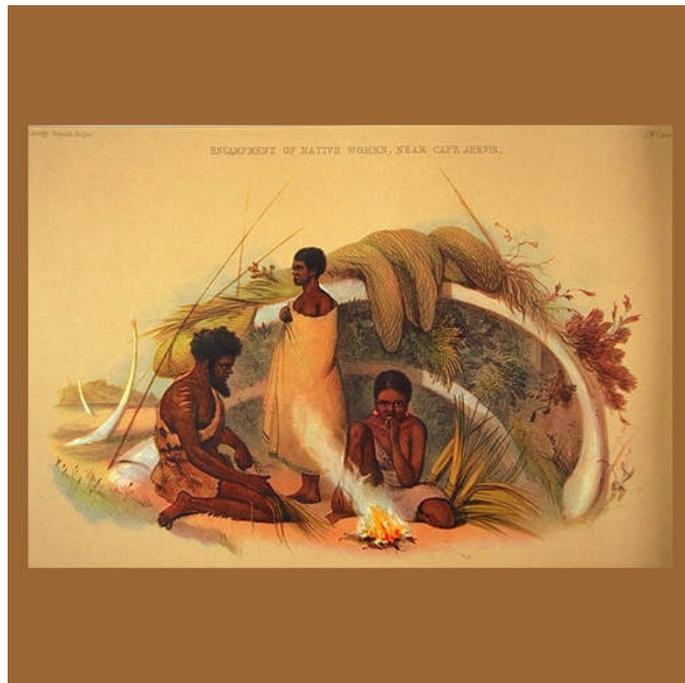
**Figure 38: Lighthouse, Mevagissey harbour, 2012.**



**39: Fishermen at Porthleven pulling a lugger out of the harbour, c.1900. Collection of William Stevenson.**



**Figure 40: Natives of Encounter Bay, Making Cord For Fishing Nets, by George French Angas, from South Australia Illustrated (1847).**



**Figure 41: Newbiggen beach, C.19<sup>th</sup>. Old boats were turned up to make homes for the poor. Collection of Newcastle City Libraries.**



**Figure 42: A boy carrying a coracle to fish in the Towy Estuary in Wales. Photograph by Laurie Sparham (Marshall 1986).**



**Figure 43: C. 21<sup>st</sup> postcard depicting Cadgwith c.1890. Published by Lyonesse Designs. Original photograph from the Gibson Archive.**



**Figure 44: C. 21<sup>st</sup> postcard, Cadgwith Cove. Published by Celtic Scene.**



**Figure 45: The yard in Newlyn where Ripple was rebuilt, 2009.**



**Figure 46: Kitto's Boatbuilding yard, Porthleven 1912. Postcard<sup>46</sup>.**



<sup>46</sup> (<http://freepages.history.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~helstonhistory/porthlevenboatbuildingpage.htm>. Accessed 19/10/12).

**Figure 47: Newlyn fish market wharf and harbour, 2012.**



**Figure 48: Newlyn fish market, 2012.**



**Figure 49: The ice works and fish distribution lorries, Newlyn, 2012.**



**Figure 50: *Ripple* (on the far left), moored next to *Barnabas* and the Penlee lifeboat (to right), Newlyn, 2009.**



**Figure 51: Penlee lifeboat and new small boat pontoons, Newlyn, 2012.**



**Figure 52: The old Penlee lifeboat station, now a memorial to the crew of the *Solomon Browne*, 2012.**



Figure 53: The crew of the *Solomon Browne*<sup>47</sup>.



Figure 54: One of W.S. Stevenson and Sons' trawlers lit up with Christmas lights, 2009. Photograph by Laurence Hartwell.



<sup>47</sup> (<http://www.cornwallcommunitynews.co.uk/2011/12/19/lest-we-forget>. Accessed 19/10/12).

**Figure 55: Newlyn post office, formerly the coastguard building, hence the wide door for launching a boat, 2012.**



**Figure 56: Trawlers moored alongside the North Pier with engineering workshops and stores, 2012.**



**Figure 57: The Chapel of Remembrance, Fishermen's Mission, Newlyn Branch, 2012.**



**Figure 58: The Chapel of Remembrance, Fisherman's Mission, Newlyn Branch, with speaker's lectern and model boats by Ted George, 2012.**



**Figure 59: The W.S Stevenson and Sons vessel *St Georges* in a repair dock at Penzance, 2012.**



**Figure 60: Elizabeth Stevenson at her firm's office in Newlyn harbour, 2012.**



**Figure 61: W.S. Stevenson and Sons harbour office with many framed photographs of their vessels, 2012.**



**Figure 62: Roger Nowell at the helm of the *William Sampson Stevenson*. Photograph by David Secombe (Nowell and Mills 1993).**



**Figure 63: Roger Nowell with 'Billy' Stevenson in the office of W.S. Stevenson and Sons. Photograph by David Secombe (Nowell and Mills 1993).**



# 5 MEASURING MEN AND MANAGING FISH

The current Common Fisheries Policy is broken. It has not delivered its key objective of an economically viable fishing industry which minimises impacts on marine ecosystems. The health of fish stocks and profitability of fishing businesses have deteriorated, while centralised bureaucracy has proliferated.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)<sup>48</sup>

Fisheries in the waters around the UK and other European countries are managed under the EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), of which the principle management tool is a quota system. Quotas in fishing are a typical example of an environmental management issue where those people whose livelihoods are directly influenced often feel a sense of conflict with public attitudes that influence policy, and more directly, with the tools for implementing those policies. As anthropologists have shown, what may be contrasted are not so much conflicts of interest, as *ways of knowing* (Harris 2007; Theodossopoulos 2004; Gray 2000; Cruikshank 2005). Protagonists defending their perceived livelihood rights, relate their way of knowing to their way of *working* – their practical labour, whether cultivating land, rearing livestock or fishing at sea. This is how one fisherman described the knowledge and experience he feels defines the fishing way of life:

There's something about fishing, and I imagine farming's very much the same and those sorts of jobs, gamekeeper if you like...Where you're out there, in the wilderness, you know. You watch the world from afar... You're living on your wits, you're using your ingenuity, you have to be creative in a practical sense, you got gut instincts you go by when it comes to weather, you're dealing with the natural environment, and you've got to understand that environment. And it's a long way, if you like from society. Fishermen are a long way...they're not, you can come in and integrate into it, but we're a long way from what society has become.

Knowledge acquired through such activities may be informed by science and statistics, but is often distinguished as something implicit, tacit, and instinctual. However whilst the politics of environment might lead fishers, scientists and policymakers to take up positions in which forms of knowledge are opposed, in practice there may be significant points of convergence, exchange and similarity. Just as scientific knowledge arises from forms of tacit as well as explicit, epistemic

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<sup>48</sup> (<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/marine/cfp/>. Accessed 14/08/12).

knowledge (Polanyi 2009), so fisher knowledge may be equally driven by both forms of knowledge, as well as by curiosity, experimentation and observation. Furthermore through formal schemes such as the Cefas Fisheries Science Partnership<sup>49</sup> and in more diffuse ways, fisher knowledge and scientific knowledge inform and shape one another. However the ‘formal’ knowledge of the ‘expert’ stands on an unequal political footing in contrast to the ‘practical’ knowledge of the lay person, and increasingly so in a technocratic, ‘risk’ focussed Europe (Lash, Szerszynski, and Wynne 1996).

Cruikshank (2005) has written about the various forms of knowledge produced through the co-construction of nature and people in Northwest Canada. Through a historical and ethnographic methodology she traces the confluence of indigenous, colonial and contemporary scientific and environmentalist narratives focused around a shifting glacial landscape. Cruikshank takes up the view that all knowledge is ‘local’ and exists in the encounters of human and non-human agents in specific places and times. However following thinkers such as Walter Benjamin, Mikhail Bakhtin and Harold Innis, she also examines uneven geo-political flows of knowledge (between state and province, centre and periphery). ‘Encounters’ are frequently also conflicts; and *narrative* (stories, oral histories) becomes a powerful means of countering the dominant knowledge-systems through which states govern.

In *Seeing like a State* (1998) Scott draws a distinction between *techne* and *metis*. Tracing an etymology that is the inverse to Ingold’s use of the term ‘techne’ (2000), Scot’s usage refers to the abstract knowledge of the state and its agencies, hegemony of which, Scott aligns with high modernism. ‘Metis’ refers to forms of knowledge more embedded in local experience, which we might refer to in common parlance as ‘know-how’, ‘common sense’, having a ‘knack’ for something. The term ‘metis’ has Greek origins and the English translation is something like ‘cunning’, or ‘craftiness’. Scott’s application of the term is very similar to Sennett’s notion of craft and craftsmanship (2009). Both see this knowledge which makes use of ‘head’ and ‘hand’, intellect and manual application, as an important aspect of problem solving and a valuable counter-part to formal, epistemic knowledge. Scott provides the

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<sup>49</sup> A scheme in which the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) a government agency, aims to encourage fishermen and scientists to work in partnership and share knowledge.

example of maritime navigation, where upon nearing port and entering coastal areas of sandbars and rivers, ships captains have traditionally passed navigational responsibility to local pilots. In that context, general cartographic knowledge of oceans is no longer sufficient but must be supplemented by local knowledge, not of all rivers, but of *one* river in particular. However in 'high modernism' such collaboration is undermined or obscured by an 'imperial scientific view' and leads to the kinds of social and ecological disasters Scott identifies: monoculture forestry and agriculture, Soviet collectivisation, Le Corbusier's planned cities. Scott argues that the more remote a context is from the state, the more important and prominent 'metis' will be, because without it, self and/or communal sufficiency and innovation would be impossible.

In development studies a concern with livelihoods has led to a large body of literature on the relationship between forms of knowledge imposed by states and other formal bodies and the 'local/indigenous/traditional' forms of knowledge of those people and places subject to development projects. As Hobart discusses (1993), imperial discourses of development create their own object – by modelling 'problems' and 'solutions' in particular ways. The subtitle of Hobart's collection is *The Growth of Ignorance* and on the front cover is an illustration of a schoolmaster lecturing to a schoolboy and a manual worker, one submissive, cowed, the other shouldering a bag containing a saw, perhaps signifying a practical, vocational ability vs. the abstract sciences represented on the blackboard. The image reminds the reader that the issue of knowledge gained vs. knowledge lost is not only one that occurs across a West–the Rest / North–South / developed–under developed world axis. In Britain and Ireland, the rise of Anglocentric universal education also led to new standards of language, culture and knowledge that had to be forcibly imposed especially in the non-English speaking peripheries of Wales, Ireland and Scotland. This was a project that can equally be seen as progressive and colonial. The consolidation of the nation-state in the twentieth century and of fishing as a distinctive occupational (rather than traditional) activity led to changes in the place of fishing within the nation and different expectations and living standards amongst fishers. At the same time fishing became perhaps a more self-conscious career choice for young men who felt more able and driven on a boat at sea than in the class

room. So the issue of 'formal' vs. 'practical' knowledge also raise issues of class, education and learning.

The present chapter and the next both concern the management of fisheries. The first examines the CFP and more specifically its quota system, firstly by placing it within its intellectual and political background and then by looking at an example of the system in action through a court-case. Chapter Six considers some examples of how fish producers in Cornwall understand and experience science and regulation, and their narratives highlight contrasts between the way they see/know the environment they work with and a more abstract, top-down managerial view. The European Common Fisheries Policy is an example of state-led managerialism which has received a lot of criticism from the fishing industry, governments and environmentalist organisations for its reductionist, top-down implementation of measures that are incompatible with, or inadequately reflect local conditions, in addition to the objections to 'horse-trading' that occurs at the annual round of negotiations between states in Brussels. A reformed CFP is due to come into force in 2013 and regional forms of management (e.g. adapted to particular seas) and participatory governance (with a greater role for input from industry producers) are expected to play a much greater role. However such changes are likely to be slow and piece-meal as one layer of legislature is built upon another and this chapter addresses the experience of Cornish fishers to date. In Chapter Four I identified the emergence of fish producers as a distinctive occupational group and discussed some of the issues around labour, livelihood and class that concern this group. I now turn from the politics of labour to the politics of environment – the most prominent concern affecting this occupational group and also defining its boundaries i.e. in relation to scientists, policy-makers and a broader public. My concern is primarily with the way epistemic differences are articulated; how these reflect occupational boundaries; and how livelihood generates particular experiences and representations of seascapes and marine processes, and whether these can beneficially inform management models.

There is also the broader issue of the political economy of quotas as forms of property rights. As Mansfield argues (2004), current fishing quota systems reflect an enclosure of ocean resources and space that has to be understood not only as an example of neoliberalism but within a particular history of marine resource

economics and science which has converged with market economy approaches. How do evolving quota systems interact with the kinds of economic stratification discussed in Chapter Four and with different forms of fisheries organisation, such as firms, household and kin, owners and crew? This is an open question that has not yet been sufficiently addressed by social science research. In Chapter Seven I explore one example of adaptation to the quota system amongst a fishing family.

## **Fisheries science and management**

At the 1883 International Fisheries Exhibition in London, T.H Huxley famously stated, ‘I believe that it may be affirmed with confidence that, in relation to our present modes of fishing, a number of the most important sea fisheries, such as the cod fishery, the herring fishery, and the mackerel fishery, are inexhaustible’ (Huxley 1884: 1-22). There were at the time a number of scientists who disagreed with this belief in infinite abundance, including Professor Lankester who set up the Marine Biological Association. Nevertheless it was not until the 1930s that scientists began to be able to prove that Huxley was in fact incorrect. For example the British government-employed scientist E.S. Russell published a paper on ‘the overfishing problem’ (Russell 1931). During this period scientists such as Russell and others, mainly employed by governments (in Britain by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food or ‘MAFF’, now Defra), studied the problem of what would constitute ‘rational fishing’ where as Finley has described how ‘fish stocks and fishermen would be managed together’ (2009). Theories generated by such studies were incorporated into the principle of ‘Maximum Sustained Yield’ (MSY) as an international goal of fisheries management, adopted in 1955 at an international conference at the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) head quarters in Rome. As Finley identifies, MSY, which has been the most influential principle in fisheries science and management, entailed a number of anthropogenic assumptions such as the ideas that ocean systems were infinitely resilient and that scientists were able to recognise critical points like those of maximum growth from which the highest harvestable yield could be obtained. It also entailed assumptions about fish behaviour, biology and abundance:

The ocean was seen as essentially unchanging, implying steady states or equilibrium in fish populations. Fishing which was seen as part of the totality mortality that fish

faced, played a role in maintaining equilibrium by removing older fish, freeing up resources for young fish that grow faster. If a stock was overharvested, fishing pressure could be relaxed and the stock recovers (Finley 2009)

Agricultural metaphors were also extended to the oceans through the language and principles behind MSY – fish could be ‘harvested’, ‘farmed’ and controlled for human benefit. Theories and strategies of resource management were also at this time heavily influenced by mathematical theories derived from problem solving in military contexts. H.R Hulme had developed an equilibrium equation whilst working in RAF operation research, which according to the scientist Sidney Holt (2008), he had first written out whilst sitting on the turret of a tank in Normandy, plotting the distribution of shells and bombs. Whilst in America, George Dantzig refined the mathematics of optimisation through developing linear programming techniques. His ideas came out of his efforts to optimize training and logistical supply services as Mathematical Advisor to the US Air Force Controller in the Pentagon during the Second World War. Smith (1994) has argued that MSY was based on three partial theories published by scientists in the early 1950s: the yield per recruit theory of British scientists Raymond Beverton and Sidney Holt, which aimed to estimate the maximum yield from each age-group of a fish population; the spawner and recruit theory of Canadian William Ricker, estimating the optimum number of spawn in each age-group; and the surplus production theory of the US scientist Milner B. Schaefer. Schaefer’s bio-economic theory not only assumed that fish populations provided a surplus population that could be harvested and that if the optimum harvestable yield was exceeded, and fishing temporarily ceased, then the fish stocks would recover, he also assumed that markets would ensure that fishing operations would cease for particular stocks as soon as they decreased so much as to become uneconomic. Schaefer’s model was popular with governments as it seemed to prove that restrictions on fishing were unnecessary. However the model assumed that markets were open and did not account for the fact of the huge amounts of government subsidies that would be directed into fishing, or the sociological context in which it was difficult for fishermen to pursue less marketable fish or move into other forms of employment. Finley has argued that MSY may have incorporated scientific theories but in fact was largely driven by policy concerns and never represented a unified scientific theory. Rather it was utilised by governments to maintain the ‘right of individual nations to fish anywhere their technology would

allow' (2009). Some scientists, including some of those scientists that were employed by MAFF, disagreed that attaining a maximum harvestable yield should be the goal of fisheries management. Michael Graham was among those that opposed the MSY consensus at Rome. He was instrumental in the early formation of the fisheries laboratory at Lowestoft and came from a farming background, a Quaker family in Northeast England. His politics and scientific work were infused with a Fabianist belief in the rational, but equitable and conservative, use of natural resources. Neither his objections nor those of one of his protégés, Sidney Holt, made much impact at the 1955 Rome conference.

### **The Common Fisheries Policy**

The post-war industrialisation of fishing resulted in a tripling of the world fisheries catch between 1948 and 1968 (Cooper 2002). In a period during which many nations were trying to rationalise their fishing to strengthen their territorial claims, several European countries were keen to maintain their access to the fisheries of the Northeast Atlantic Continental Shelf, the waters around Britain – Europe's richest fishing grounds. Therefore when the Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath took Britain into the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973, one of the conditions he submitted to was that EEC countries would have access to all members' fisheries which would be shared as a common-pool resource – only the six mile territorial limit was maintained. Cooper argues that one of the reasons the CFP, has lacked legitimacy and effectiveness is that right from the beginning, it was really only a “bastardised” policy of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The 1952 Treaty of Rome included the products of fishing within the general category of agricultural products and within the same objectives of the CAP: ‘to increase productivity, stabilise markets and ensure security of supply and reasonable prices to the consumer’<sup>50</sup>. There were no common rules for EC fisheries until 1983 when declines in landings were beginning to suggest that there were too many boats with too much capacity chasing too few fish. Technical measures such as minimum sizes for net meshes were introduced as well as other gear limitations, limitations on fishing effort (mainly through quotas) and reductions to fleet sizes (through

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<sup>50</sup> [http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/fisheries\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/fisheries_en.htm) (accessed July 2010).

decommissioning). The quota system introduced in Europe was that of Total Allowable Quotas (TAC). Quota licenses were given to all existing vessel owners calculated on the basis of their fishing history. A system of finite quota has meant that all new fishing operators need to buy or lease existing quota. Quota gives each vessel owner a right to a certain amount of quota per month for each species. Each nation's TAC is decided at the annual round of fisheries negotiations in Brussels in theory on the basis of scientific recommendations by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES). In Britain the TAC is then allocated to each fishing area (see map, Fig.64) by Defra with the advice of its fisheries science agency Cefas. The quota is allocated to individual members or to local Fish Producer Organisations who allocate the quota to their members. Since 2002, when the CFP underwent reform, the EU (in theory at least) has adopted the Precautionary Principle in setting quota limits. This revised the MSY principle of fisheries management, setting instead harvestable yields that were below safe limits in order to reduce the risk of 'overfishing'. In 1992, the cod fishery of Newfoundland came to a sudden stop when the fishery failed at the beginning of the season and a moratorium was announced. Over 40,000 people subsequently lost their livelihoods. This event provided a stimulus for fisheries management reform, and along with the precautionary principle, other concepts like 'ecosystems based fisheries management' (EBFM) and 'co-management' were introduced with the 2002 CFP reform. The CFP is currently under reform again and we can only as yet speculate, but it seems likely that the EU will follow the example of countries like New Zealand, Australia, Iceland, Denmark and Netherlands, and adopt an individual transferable quota system (ITQs). Quotas under this system would continue to be allocated to fishing vessels but they would represent a fully tradable, private asset, shifting the conception of rights in fishing as the property of the state, to the private property of individual vessel owners. As the anthropologist Pálsson has said, using Kopytoff's (1986) terminology, 'boats and quotas... now have separate cultural biographies' (1996: 84). A study of world fisheries trends found that ITQs halved the probability that a fishery would collapse (Costello, Gaines, and Lynham 2008). However there are also concerns that there is unfairness in the neo-liberal system of

ITQs in the way that shares are allocated initially<sup>51</sup>, and in the way they play out, tending towards the marginalisation of smaller-scale producers and overall quota concentration (Pope and Symes 2000). The evidence for this trend is a matter of some debate (Hentrich and Salomon 2006), but Pálsson has said of the Icelandic case that, ‘the quota system has instituted a new level of social inequality’ (1996).

### **Perspectives from the academic literature: the ‘cultural biography’ of quotas**

The literature most relevant to the research questions at hand is that which has attempted to analyse quotas as part of a history of evolving ideas about the relationship between society and nature *and* the transformations of the world which such ideas effect and in turn respond to. Quoting Gudeman (1992: 151), Pálsson (1996) has argued that quotas are an example of a ‘modernist production regime’, based on the idea ‘that the human and natural world can be organised and subjected to rational, totalizing control’. Pálsson draws on the example of Icelandic fishermen to show how fishermen’s moral discourses about quotas reflect concern about the role of money and monetary exchange in fisheries management. These arguments connect because of the way quotas are an outcome of an idea about a human-environment relationship, which is translated into law (in this case property rights), which in turn is used to influence markets. The main moral concerns that Icelandic fishermen have about this system Pálsson identifies as follows: (1) a concern that quotas violate the fisherman’s rule of capture (i.e. that property in fish is realised at the point of possession); and (2) a concern about the role of money in determining fishing rights (regarding quota markets as corrupt institutions and quota-leasing as leading to undesirable patron-client type relationships). Pálsson also refers to the issue that the notion of common access in the seas of Iceland is one with a ‘heavy symbolic and ideological load’ (p.79) given the national struggle for independence. Anthropology, as Pálsson points out, has had a wide engagement with discourses about money, exchange and commoditisation and he cautions against a tendency towards utopian primitivism in the work of some modern critics of commoditisation and the assumption that market approaches ‘obliterate egalitarian sensibilities and communitarian notions of responsibility’ (p.80). I follow Pálsson’s example in

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<sup>51</sup> Daniel Pauly (University of British Columbia) quoted by the BBC  
(<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7623341.stm>. Accessed 01/06/10)

seeking to show how fishermen's perceptions and rationalities arise from specific histories of individual and collective labour and in interaction with the dominant ethos guiding fisheries management. Biological science he notes, may influence the limits on which TACs are set, but quotas are informed most of all by the science of resource economics.

The development of resource economics within the context of fisheries has been outlined by the historian Arthur F. McEvoy (1986, 1988) who places it within a general schema of changing attitudes to nature, markets and law. The *laissez-faire* view predominant in the nineteenth century produced a system of common law that mainly sought to attribute blame to individuals or groups in disputes over resources. It failed to see that the non-human environment also participated in social change. Just as it naturalised ecology, it also naturalised markets. McEvoy (1988) refers to the case of the British handling of conflicts over declining fish stocks in the North Sea. The Royal Commission (along with their spokesperson T.H Huxley) proclaimed fisheries to be inexhaustible and reassured dissenters that if stocks were to decline, economics would compel fishers to find new grounds therefore resting the previous stocks. Regulation would in the commission's view not only impinge on fisher's rights of free enterprise, but also might 'disturb in an unknown manner the balance existing between the conservative and destructive forces at work' on the stocks (quoted by McEvoy *ibid*: 217). This bio-economic theory amounted to a belief that;

Fishing in the long run could have no meaningful impact on the ocean environment, and in any case was beyond human understanding and thus not a socially cognizable thing. Unfettered competition, meanwhile, was the mode of social interaction most consonant with essential human nature and thus not to be interfered with (p.217).

McEvoy identifies the next stage in the evolution of attitudes to natural resources as that of 'Progressive conservation', which was predominant in America in the first half of the twentieth century but also heavily influenced a similar creed in Britain. Interdependence became an acknowledged feature of human-natural systems and was translated into a resource management strategy that emphasised 'impartial scientific expertise, economic efficiency, and centralised planning in the public interest' (p.219). This was the era that led to the concept of Maximum Sustained Yield. It differed from the *laissez faire* approach in that it recognised a dynamic between resource productivity and harvesting activity. It was considered the job of scientists to calculate MSY for each stock, which would inform the laws that

government would pass to limit the harvesting to that level (and also government's role to develop productivity to the optimum). Importantly, McEvoy relates Sustained Yield theory to scientific experience of the particular fisheries that were problematic in the nineteenth century – seals and halibut.

They are large animals, have relatively orderly life histories, and are relatively tolerant of short-term changes in the environment. The kind of fish that became commercially important in the early twentieth century when fossil fuel engines and mechanised processing made more intensive fishing possible behaved very differently (p.220).

However the model remained the same, with some devastating results such as the collapse of the Pacific Coast sardine fishery. Being lower on the food chain, the sardine is much more sensitive to environmental changes than a seal or a halibut, a condition unaccounted for in the Sustained Yield model, which only considered one variable – economic effort. The 'tragedy of the commons' model developed out of criticism of these early twentieth century failures in resource management. The name derives from an article published by Garrett Hardin (1968), which used the example of the way pasture is utilised on the feudal common to argue that lack of private property rights was the root of all environmental problems. In Hardin's example the commoners all graze their cattle beyond the level that the pasture can actually sustain in the long-term because each is only concerned with his short-term interest and sees himself having no long-term interest in the common land itself. As McEvoy points out (*ibid*), this is an ahistorical and universalising narrative that actually bears little resemblance to the way commoners in pre-enclosure England actually managed their affairs. Nevertheless the model gained wide currency in the 60s and 70s leading to the notion of 'Maximum Economic Yield' that would presage the development of the European quota system in the 1980s. McEvoy identifies several shortcomings: (1) the model again contains only one variable (economic effort) and one meaningful output (monetary return); (2) it contains an implicit view of government's role as observer of nature and arbitrator of interests which it is regarded as being above, and (3) it presents a one dimensional view of human nature and society –

The farmers on Hardin's pasture don't seem to talk to one another. As individuals they are alienated, rational, utility-maximising automatons and little else. The sum total of their social life is the grim, Hobbesian struggle of each against all and all against the pasture in which they are trapped. Culture and community are not relevant... (*ibid*: 226).

The shortcomings of the predominant resource ethics and strategies outlined above are evident most of all in accelerating biodiversity loss and environmental change with consequences especially for vulnerable sections of the human population. They are also evident in the lack of legitimacy of centralised, techno-bureaucratic systems of environmental governance (like the Common Fisheries Policy) and feelings of disempowerment amongst producers. As Cooper (1999) has remarked, disempowerment and subsequent uncertainty amongst fishers make it unlikely that they will support reduced catch levels as they cannot be sure of benefitting from such restraint. Alternative theoretical approaches can not only reveal the limitations of linear, one dimensional models claiming universality, but can also open up conceptual spaces for alternative strategies. Urry and Macnaghten (1998) have critiqued the implicit assumptions and hegemony of contemporary environmentalism and the role that social science has conventionally played in relation to science and government. They see environmental sociology in particular as having conformed to the 'Biology and Science First' model which depicts the role of social scientist as 'addressing the social causes, impacts and responses to environmental problems which have been initially and accurately described by the natural scientist' (p.6). By contrast they highlight a number of recent alternative approaches in various disciplines including anthropology (Douglas 1992; Milton 1993, 1996); but Ingold (2000), Croll and Parkin (1992), Ellen and Fukui (Ellen and Fukui 1996), and Descola and Pálsson (1996) could also be included since all have attempted to ground conceptions of nature within socio-cultural contexts. Macnaghten and Urry's own approach is to consider the,

...specific social dwellings, which produce, reproduce and transform different natures and different values. Such social practices embody their own forms of knowledge and understanding and undermine a simple demarcation of objective science and lay knowledge (ibid: 2).

This is an approach also evident in some recent sociological writings on modernity, postmodernity and cultures of risk (Beck 1992; Lash, Szerszynski, and Wynne 1996). Identifying three historical doctrines that inform modern environmentalism: 'environmental realism', 'environmental idealism' and 'environmental instrumentalism', Macnaghten and Urry (ibid: 1-2) trace the historical development of an abstracted idea of nature as *singular* contrary to a diversity of lived experiences, highlighting the nineteenth century as the pinnacle of

juxtaposed nature and society, where nature represented ‘a realm of unfreedom and hostility to be subdued and controlled’ (p.7). The sea in particular they remark was in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries regarded as an immense untamed wilderness, but was rapidly tamed and domesticated: ‘Piers, promenades, beaches, bungalows, swim suits, and swimming soon exerted the mastery of nature on the margins of society’ (p.13). They rightly include only the sea’s margins in this picture of leisure, for unlike the enclosure and improvement of land in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the law of the seas remained a largely open and unregulated affair with its own traditional moral codes, until twentieth century developments like modern fisheries management defined territorial rights and the predictability and profitability of marine resources. Furthermore, calculating and planning production from a laboratory or bureaucratic desk was a very different matter to taking everyday risks in the pursuit of livelihood. For fishermen themselves, physical danger and unpredictability remained a feature of their perception and experience of nature.

From the more managed conception of nature that was beginning to shape science and environmental law in the nineteenth century, Macnaghten and Urry trace the development of the sustainability approach emerging in the late twentieth century. They express concern about the modernist agenda behind much contemporary science and social science and the assumption that ‘nature sets clear and measurable limits to what humans can achieve’ (p.15). Such a view, they argue, has become part of a common shared post-Rio agenda, referring to the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, also known as the Rio Earth Summit. An idea of a ‘global nature’ has emerged facilitated by key intergovernmental treaties, conventions and documents, for example Macnaghten and Urry cite ‘the WWF-inspired *World Conservation Strategy*, the UNCED Bruntland Report *Our Common Future*, the Rio-inspired *UNCED Agenda 21*, and the EU’s *Fifth Environmental Action Programme for the Environment and Development*’ (28). From the limitations of the sustainable development model of one singular nature and one social ‘consensus’, the acknowledgement of many natures and many forms of human dwelling might also, as Macnaghten and Urry conclude, prompt consideration of the many times and many spaces, or ‘timespaces’ (May and Thrift 2001) human-nature relationships entail. The language and strategies of the ‘sustainable development’ discourse may not only obscure aspects of human

experience such as the particular time-space dimensions produced by capital (Harvey 1996) or quotas, but also as earlier models have done, they may fail to recognise the particular time-space dimensions of nature and the dialectic of social ideas, social change and natural change.

## **The trial**

Like mourners at a funeral wake, the accused fishermen and boat owners gathered with an air of humble defiance. The lofty marble white waiting hall of the courts did nothing to warm the assembled from the clinging chill of the cold January morn, but several men and women stood in a circle shuffling their feet, conversing and joking. One stood particularly proud, chest puffed out, chin high, mouth grimly set, as if he was standing at the helm of his fishing boat, anticipating an icy squall. The older folk sat on the stone benches, looking more anxious and wearied. At last the call to court came and all filed in.

On one side of the court room, in two lines, sat the fourteen defendants. Facing them on the opposite side were the members of the public. In the middle were the clerks, the barristers, solicitors, the journalists and Elizabeth Stevenson representing the firm W.S Stevenson & Sons. The firm's sentencing had been delayed to a later date. The defendants to be sentenced were the 'masters and owners' of six fishing vessels based in Newlyn and one auctioneer at the Newlyn Fish Market employed by W.S. Stevenson and Son. All were charged with offences relating to the landing of fish. The charges related to the period April to September 2002 during which all vessels were operating as *gill-netters* and papers for the landing of fish were allegedly falsified so that the fish would not count against the quotas available to the vessels. The maximum value of fish on a single landing was £8,665 and the average on specific counts was just under £3000 worth of fish per landing. The total value of fish at auction was £128,127. The regulatory system depends on Masters reporting their catches on log sheets and landing declarations; however spot checks are also carried out by Defra and the Navy. In this case the Masters and Owners of the six vessels involved were convicted of 'failure to submit landing declarations'<sup>52</sup>. The

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<sup>52</sup> 'Prosecution Opening Note' Sentencing Hearing 5<sup>th</sup> January 2009, before HHJ Wassall in the Crown Court at Truro, Cornwall.

auctioneer was convicted of ‘aiding and abetting W.S. Stevenson and Son’ who in turn had been convicted of falsifying sales notes for the sale of the falsely declared fish through their market. An example of these offences provided by the prosecution is as follows; ‘on the vessels log sheet and landing declaration a catch of hake would be recorded as a non-quota species such as turbot. This allowed hake in excess of quota to be landed and sold through the Newlyn Fish Auction for profit without detection’. Such fish is commonly known as ‘black fish’. The prosecution regarded these offences as a ‘wholesale and systematic operation to breach the limits. These were deliberate and well-organised deceptions. Paperwork was systematically falsified to hide the landing and sales of fish in excess of quota and thus to profit commercially from overfishing’.

The defendants had pleaded ‘not guilty’ up until April 2007; one of them informed me that they had been forced to change their plea when new ‘hear-say’ evidence was submitted that made their case indefensible. However they continued to ask for leniency on the grounds that they were merely trying to make a living in the context of a depressed industry and tight quota regulations. Furthermore, operating in a ‘mixed fishery’, they claim they were unable to target particular species and that any over-quota species would have had to have been discarded had it not been landed (thrown back into the sea dead). The judge dismissed these pleas. Focusing in particular on the discard issue as the fishermen had themselves done in defence; he found the excuse to be unacceptable. Even if, as the fishermen claim, they were unable to target non-quota species, the charges relate to a period at the beginning of the annual allocation period (the financial year) and therefore they would have had sufficient quota available to them to provide for any quota fish landed<sup>53</sup>. Under share-fishing arrangements, vessel Masters (and their crew) and vessel Owners share profits. Amongst the 16 defendants were several fishing families including some pensioners amongst the Owners. The statute provides that where Masters are guilty of an offence, Owners are also guilty. The prosecution pointed out that this was no mere technicality but ‘reflects their obligations to control

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<sup>53</sup> There is some dispute over this argument. The Cornish Fish Producers’ Cooperative (CFPO) whose responsibility it is to allocate quota to its members is reported as stating that virtually no more quota was available in 2002. (‘How Defra crushed British fishermen’ by Christopher Booker. *Telegraph* 17 January 2009)

Masters acting for them AND the fact that the Owners will be profiting directly from their offending'<sup>54</sup>. The judge admitted to some difficulty in balancing the seriousness of the crimes against the means of the defendants to pay fines. The statute provides that fines must not cripple a person or prevent them from maintaining their livelihood and £50,000 is the maximum penalty allowed on summary conviction<sup>55</sup>. The *Western Morning News*<sup>56</sup> reported the sentences in full for each of the six vessels.

### **An interpretation**

At no point in the court-case begun in 2002 had the defendants been allowed to speak in their own defence. However representations could be made via their lawyer. During the sentencing and prior to the judge calling a break in session to decide on the punishments, a peculiar discussion had taken place in which the lawyer acting on behalf of the defendants had pleaded for leniency on the basis that the client's actions had taken place in the context of a depressed industry and that the fishermen were doing a difficult job, battling with the elements. The judge did note these pleas, recognising that the 'bottom had fallen out of the Spanish export market', that fishing in foul weather was something you cannot know unless you have done it yourself, and that Cornish fishermen who have been independently pursuing their livelihood for generations must resent the intervention of government and law. This discussion seemed to me bizarre at the time. Surely, none of those issues made any difference to the fact that the defendants had breached the rules? In his final sentence the judge did show that this was indeed his stance but why was it necessary at all to indulge in what suddenly seemed like sentimental myth? In the cold formality of the court-room, it seemed that the judge was paying lip service to a guise invoked by the defendants for their own protection.

Reflecting now, it seems evident to me that the defendants and the judge were not merely trying to manipulate certain images to defend their positions, but were

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<sup>54</sup> 'Prosecution Opening Note' Sentencing Hearing 5<sup>th</sup> January 2009, before HHJ Wassall in the Crown Court at Truro.

<sup>55</sup> *Masters and Owners: Log sheet and Landing Declaration Offences – Sea Fishing (Enforcement of Community Control Measures) Order 2000*

<sup>56</sup> *Western Morning News*, 7 January 2009

seeking a common language within which to express concerns that could not be captured within a rule-based discourse. Despite his final judgement, the judge was attempting to acknowledge the defendants' pleas that this was not only a criminal or industrial affair but a family affair, with family and community consequences; that quota rules were one amongst many factors that fishers have to take account of when fishing, alongside unpredictable forces of nature (including weather and variability in fish populations) and market fluctuations; and that fishing in Cornwall has a long history and is rooted in tradition. In the end, the judge claimed also some leniency in imposing fines on W.S. Stevenson and Sons who were finally sentenced in July 2009. The firm were given a confiscation order of £710,220 plus a £1 fine for each one of 45 specimen charges. A two-year conditional discharge had also been issued in June but was later dropped owing to an Appeal Court judgement which ruled that a confiscation order under the Criminal Justice Act 1988 could not be attached to a conditional discharge. The judge is reported to have said at the trial in June that whatever happened in the case could have considerable knock-on effects for others involved in the fishing industry in and around Newlyn<sup>57</sup>.

Defra must have been considered the fines negligible compared to their costs incurred during the seven years of investigation and trial. Defendants and members of the public who I spoke to at the trial understood the costs to have run into millions. In my conversations with Don Turtle, one of the defendants, the fact that the government was willing to throw such huge sums of money at punishing fishermen in contravention of quota regulations was less a reflection of the government's commitment to protecting fish stocks than their commitment to 'getting rid of fishermen by ruination' in a new politico-economic climate where British interests in fishing count for less than the demands of European integration and political bargaining. Don gave me a copy of a statement he had written for the press. It was an eloquent and powerful letter that highlighted his sense of victimhood. The letter ended with the reflections of an old man who feels he has been deprived of a peaceful retirement because his way of life no longer has a place in a changing world and he perceives this experience to be a kind of betrayal:

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<sup>57</sup> *Western Morning News*, 15 July 2009.

We have paid very dearly for the prosecution hanging over us like a ruinous sword of Damocles for the incredible time of 7yrs, put us out of business, ruined my wife's health; hopefully the end is now in sight.

I am a WWII veteran well into my years, as I reflect the past in 1940 when Britain stood alone. We are in as perilous position now governed by laws taking precedence over parliament with much of our sovereignty signed away. My shipmates lying in a watery grave might ask, "Did we make the ultimate sacrifice to end up with the status of a vanquished nation"?

Don's protests were supported by his wife, who again drew the attention of the press, being an eighty-three year old pensioner, and saying to the *Western Morning News*<sup>58</sup>,

I cannot believe I have ended up in court as a criminal when all I have done is tried to support my husband and family... Can you imagine throwing one-third of your wages in the dustbin? It was need not greed...The gut feeling of having to throw dead healthy fish over the side when you could not avoid catching it – I can't imagine how it was.

In the previous chapter I discussed how underneath the idea of the 'Newlyn fishing community' there is an organisation that approximates a three-tiered stratum which incorporates wide differences in wealth, power and security. I found that the boat-owners involved in the Newlyn court case are regarded locally as belonging to the middle strata of fishing asset-holders with a reasonable income (i.e. as 'Owners' they draw profits from a fishing enterprise without necessarily going to sea themselves, operating their boat using a share-fishing crew under a skipper or 'Master'). They may not be wealthy as such, but are regarded by some people I spoke to in Newlyn as not driven by poverty or absolute economic necessity and therefore having no justification for breaking quota rules. To review the particular ownership details at the time of this case: the *Carol H* was owned by Barney and Cynthia Thomas and skippered by Philip Mitchell. They also owned the *Ajax*, skippered by Raymond Knight. The *Girl Patricia* was owned by Leonard Williams and his son Arthur Williams who also was skipper of the vessel. The *Ben Loyal* was owned by Donald and Joan Turtle and skippered by their son John Turtle. The *Ben My Chree* was owned by Doreen Hicks, Jonathan Hicks and skippered by a James Hicks. So from another perspective, the boat-owners in this case were managing *relatively* small fishing enterprises in which boats were held as property between spouses and as a multi-generational income within families in the case of at least half of the vessels concerned. In terms of the law, and indeed of local common fishing

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<sup>58</sup> *Western Morning News*, 7 January 2009.

practice, the defendants can be reductively described in terms of their economic relationship of Masters and Owners. However Don and Joan's disbelief, anger and distress can be easily understood when their individual cases are not reduced to the barest possible legal facts. Their boat was a source of income for Don and Joan themselves as the owners, their son as skipper and his family, plus their additional crew and their families. So a single boat can be source of living from the sea for a whole network of local people. Whilst in Cornish fishing, fishermen receive a share of the catch and not a wage, Joan expressed the obligation they, as owners, felt to the boat's crew as the necessity of paying 'the men's wages' – terms she obviously believed would be better understood by the newspaper's wider readership. However many fishing enterprises, of all sizes and scale are family businesses – from single boat-owning businesses (including boats of any size – from under 10m punts, to medium-sized trawlers, netters and long liners, to huge multi-million pound vessels like the family-owned purse-seiners at Peterhead) to merchant fishing firms like W.S Stevenson and Sons (who are fleet-owners, agents, processors, and buyers and sellers). Many of these firms hold considerable wealth and fishing capacity and profit from the legal and, in some cases, the illegal activity of smaller enterprises. Furthermore, persistent breaches of quotas by even only 'small-scale' producers may be enough to completely undermine their aims for stock sustainability. Therefore when considering issues of fairness and justice in fishing and regulation, it is important to look beyond a simple association of family fishing and victimhood or the perception that family production means necessity must be put before responsibility. Some of the current problems of the fishing industry are historically rooted in political arguments that fishers are constrained by necessity, which may be social or economic, but ultimately originate from their dependence on nature.

Don's letter expresses a view in which his idea of 'Britain' is that of an island nation bounded by the seas, but no longer secure in its sovereignty, identity or territorial rights (including its adjacent fisheries). Like many fishermen of his generation and before, his wartime service was fought at sea using the skills he had learnt in fishing and as far back as Elizabethan times, fishermen and fishing fleets have been valued as a naval reserve. In fact their perceived place in this schema of national territorial value, celebrated alongside an idea of heroism in the face of natural and foreign adversity, their absolute dependence on nature, and historical

experiences of economic hardship and poverty, are perceptions held by and about fishermen that have been used by them and political representatives for centuries. Such arguments have formed the basis of subsidies, bounties, grants and loans that have been secured for fishing interests since at least the seventeenth century (although how much these benefits have reached the lower strata of fishers is another matter). Bounties on salt taxes were granted for pilchard exporters in the seventeenth century (Rowe 2006), nineteenth century bounties were granted to boat owners to expand the fleet, early twentieth century government loans were granted to fishermen in the south-west to help them install engines on their boats, and subsidies continue to the present day. The fact that European governments (including Britain) have subsidized the fishing industry and continue to do so has been a major factor on producing overcapacity in the industry and the serious depletion of fish stocks. Furthermore, as I discussed in the earlier literature review, quotas can be seen as embodying a modernist production regime and an instrumentalist perspective on the human-nature relationship and are therefore not really a break with the dominant philosophy of the past but in fact a variation of it generated to attempt to fix the problems caused in part by earlier versions.

Don and his family's sense of victimhood as a result of the trial, and images projected of families persecuted by the system, articulated concerns and issues that were more than merely a plea for compassion. Their complaints also expressed concerns about more complex issues to do with, firstly, the perceived limitations of current scientific knowledge used in setting quota limits and the practical and moral difficulties of conforming to quota rules (including the issue of waste); and secondly, concerns about the fairness of the ways quotas (and therefore access rights conceived as 'territorial') are allocated between nations as a 'common-pool' resource to be shared by the European community. In the present and subsequent chapter I have taken the first set of concerns as my focus.

## **Conclusions**

The court-case and Don's evocations of a bygone sovereign fishery highlight how the historical experience of modern fishing communities (including the 'overfishing problem') is really inseparable from the scientific and managerial developments in

the higher governmental echelons of society. Fishermen like Donald Turtle began their early fishing careers in the post-war years, many having done service in the Royal and Merchant Navy. To some extent their outlooks were of their time and they shared certain commonalities of view with people like Michael Graham at the MAFF laboratories – an enthusiasm for the adventurous, outdoor life and a belief in the possibility and value of fully utilising natural resources for the good of the nation. Where practical difficulties arose, such as how to slow the rotting rate of cod during the time it took to get it from distant water fisheries and onto the market, it was believed they would be solved through strategies of technological and logistical ingenuity. However the Cornish fishers, with their particular outlook of independence and restraint, may have found more in common with the philosophical and socialist-minded scientist Graham and the novelist and Inspector for South-West Fisheries Stefan Reynolds (1881-1919) than with the dominant consensus that emerged in international fisheries management in the 1950s. The political arguments that were used to secure subsidies for expanding the fisheries may have rested in part on stoking the public's romantic image of the heroic fisherman, but the idea that fishermen are dependent on nature was much more genuinely held onto by fishermen themselves. Dependence, danger and unpredictability remained dominant features of their experience of nature, but their differences of perspective from the politico-scientific consensus which saw the oceans as a thing to be tamed to man's will and utility was concealed by the rhetoric from which, for a time, both parties benefited. Now that the dominant neo-liberal and utilitarian consensus has been carried to its full conclusion in the form of quotas and the sustainable development discourse, the deficiencies of this view, in terms of ecological impact and social inequity, is being contested by fishers who all the time were really working with constraints and outlooks not shared or predicted by the dominant models.



## 6 WORKING THE ‘WESTERN APPROACHES’

It is vitally necessary for the fisherman and particularly the type known as the “longshoreman”, the man who does not go out of sight of land to do his fishing, to know the rules of the sea, and to know what the bottom of the sea is like, in order to be able to decide what particular type of fish finds the particular type of ground to its liking, and consequently may be expected to frequent it. For fish are more susceptible to a set type of sea-bottom than are sheep or cattle to a set type of pasture. The large black conger clings to the black rock, his protective colouring being made full use of accordingly; similarly the large brown pollock loves the area where the brown, ribboned seaweed languidly sways in the undertow, while its nearest relative—locally known as the “whiting pollock” from its silvery resemblance to the whiting—is a roamer not branded by any local colour: he takes the silver and grey of the great sea. The crab, the lobster, the crayfish, each possesses its “home ground,” and it is the discovering and marking of these grounds that is a great part of the business lore of the longshoreman (Cowls n.d.: 36).

In the particular case of the Newlyn Court Case, the defendants highlighted the issue of waste generated through fishing quotas. This presents something of a paradox. How can fishers complain about waste which is arguably a product of *their* activity and unselective technology? To understand that, and the limitations of the quota system, it is necessary to look in more depth at the way fishers conceive the environment in which they make their livelihood and the way they conceive of value and reward. In this chapter I argue that the kind of environmental determinism that is politically invoked in negotiations over fishing livelihood and industry (with variants emphasising social structure or technology) is a kind of simplified, blanket version of complex local ideas through which fishermen understand (1) the kinds of environment (or natures) they work in and with; (2) the kind of work they do and knowledge they have; and (3) the way they evaluate the science and management of fish quotas.

## **‘They’re dictating to me what I can catch... I might as well go and drive a bus’**

At the time of our interview in 2008 Jonathan Fletcher was a shell-fisherman working pots off the Lizard, operating a small boat single-handedly out of Cadgwith cove. In his mid-fifties, Jonathan has lived on the Lizard since age three and became a fisherman in his early twenties. I asked him about the kinds of pressures and constraints that influenced how fishermen make a living. He said that there were forms of fishing that had been gone into that were now ‘grinding to a stop’ as a result of the combined pressures of fuel prices and a shortage of fish in the sea. In his view however, shortages of fish are a political problem in that there has been a lack of regulation. He saw regulation as necessary to control technological change and expansion in fishing capacity and efficiency that was inevitable in a competitive economic environment. In the 1970s and early 1980s a mackerel boom in the South West led to fleets of Scottish mid-water trawlers and purse-seiners descending on waters off the Cornish coast and landing to European and Russian factory fish-processing ships. Jonathan said that at the time Cornish fish producers called for limitations to be placed on the industrial scale fishing that was occurring. However, in his view the government was slow to respond leading to the stock almost being wiped out.

Although the fishermen roundly get blamed for it, they say “well you went out there and caught the stuff, it’s your fault” – you can’t not do it. You know if everybody else is going up the motorway at eighty miles an hour from London to do business in Worcester, and you’re competing with him, you can’t get on your bike, and go up there and expect to achieve the same results, because he would have done three day’s business before you got halfway there. It’s an analogy that I think is fair. You have to...you have to keep up with the rat race. What you need is someone to slow the rat race down.

Jonathan often used analogies in our interview to show how the fishing industry was the same as any other industry or trade in terms of the pressures and incentives to develop, grow and beat your competitors. As such, his argument went; it would be unreasonable and unrealistic to expect fishermen to self-limit their activities. In all forms of fishing, the imperative remains the same and therefore, politics must stand above the labour. However, the dilemma that fisheries regulation presents, as

Jonathan saw it, is that competitiveness between fishermen was intrinsic to the way of life and is undermined by catch limits.

You're taking away the pioneering, go-getting, catch-hunting thing that fishermen do, because you've dictated to me what you're going to earn. You know, I might as well go and drive a bus and know what I'm going to earn at the end of the week and have the weekend off. So it's really very difficult...

So whilst on the one hand explaining how fishing is like any other commercial enterprise, on the other hand Jonathan was also at pains to underline how fishing was distinct, and therefore difficult to reorganise.

There are people who have been fishing for generations, you know seventh generation, small fishing village, family fishermen, and they do it because that's what their family did and that's how life is. And they can't..., it's not that they don't have, or couldn't acquire skills to do anything else; they'll still keep fishing because that's what they do. It's a totally different way of carrying on..., along with many others. I appreciate how the miners felt when they got clobbered...; it's a whole way of life when all the people in your village are centred around one industry.

(TM): Is it that communal aspect of it that makes it quite a special kind of livelihood?

(JF): I don't know, I find it very hard to pin down... it's a basic thing..., it sounds like a cliché but it is the old hunter-gatherer thing, where you actually do go out and achieve something, off your own skill and patience and work... and get a return. I'm never quite sure, but it's the achievement and it's the freedom of the life as well, you know what I mean... totally self-reliant and free of the issues that accrue to being in an office or a financial institution or what you will.

In Jonathan's account, it is not only the multi-generational, community-centred characteristics of fishing that make it a distinct kind of work and one difficult to move out of, and neither is it purely the competitive element. It is also the fact that profit accrues as a fair reward for endeavour, hard-work and innovation, and for no other reason. As he paints it, this is man pitting himself against nature – a free, self-sufficient and non-exploitative enterprise. However whilst the fisherman looks to nature for his living, he looks even more to the market, for it is the market that ultimately determines the price he will receive for the products of his labour. The fact that fishermen increase their technology and their capacity as a part of competitive business often not only depletes the stock but oversupplies the market, which is especially a concern with a perishable commodity. The issue, for Jonathan, comes back to the same dilemma of how you impose limitations without killing the spirit of the enterprise.

You've got the problems with the fishermen seeing interference right down to what they can catch, and if you come through the gaps, when you come home to harbour and there's ten of you, ten boats, two men on each boat, and you've all got exactly the

same amount of fish, because that's what you're allowed to catch... [Sighs] that's not what it's about. It's got something to do with competition, you don't want to do the other man down, but you want to feel that you, if you've been more clever, or worked harder, that you've got a bit better return for it. That's human nature I think. I mean the same would apply for any trade I suppose. Look at the unions in the seventies, talking about parity, but in reality everybody wanted to earn a little bit more than everybody else, otherwise you end up living in a row of semi-detached houses, where you've all got the same furniture, you've all got the same cars, what is it that separates you from the man next door? You're either going to go out and drink and fight, or you're going to go out rock climbing, or you know it's your hobbies and the rest of your life that separates you from the sameness of that sort of existence. That's the sort of existence you might be imposing on fishing, which won't sit easily with it.

On finishing school, Jonathan had started out in an insurance office in London but he found it unsatisfactory work.

You've got to have something in your life – well people who work in drudgery, for about five days a week, a lot of them will go fishing, won't they, for their sport, or hobby. Strange that. But it's pitting themselves against nature and achieving something, isn't it.

Jonathan talked about the competitive 'race' between fishermen and the time constraints of dealing with a perishable commodity and he evoked all sorts of images using analogies. However while there is a sense of a particular time-space dimension at work, there is little sense here in Jonathan's narrative that either the competitiveness amongst fishermen – or the related market conditions that create the sense of a 'race' – has a historical dimension. When I talked with a fish merchant in Newlyn, some similar themes came up but with a more historicised slant. Robin Turner, again perhaps in his late fifties, owns and manages a wholesale fish merchant business J.H. Turner and Co. describing themselves as boat owners and agents, auctioneers, and exporters and retailers, J.H. Turner and Co. has been in business in one form or another since the late 1700s. Our discussion began with how Robin perceives the greater patterns in the ocean cycle.

## **Fish in the Western Approaches: 'they all live together here'**

Robin described a seven year cycle in the Atlantic, similar to the El Nino effect in the Pacific Ocean. The cycle fluctuates, but its somewhere between seven and nine years.

We have influences and influxes of fish here on the shore that are really obvious when you look back through your fishing records or buying and selling records, where you have the large influxes of small fish over the course of two to three years, then the predators that follow them in tend to be superior if you like and tend to be the top dog for the next couple of years after that, and then they vanish where you have two or three years where you have not very much fish. Then all of a sudden it all starts against again. Now it has absolutely nothing to do with climate change, it has actually nothing to do with global warming, it is something that happens. Where the fish go, where the fish come from in the first place, is still one of the mysteries that surround us.

In Robin's view science is not yet able to offer any concrete theories on where the fish go when they disappear. He suggested that the majority of fish stocks in the Western Approaches are not pelagic fish (tuna etc) that migrate and therefore are living in the region all year round. However,

..You're looking at 3600 to 4000 square miles that these fish can inhabit. So they don't have to move very far to become invisible. They also cannot be fished on certain terrains of the sea-bed, so it's distinctly possible they may go there, but nobody can offer an exact location for these fish when they suddenly vanish or suddenly come back. It's something that nobody can offer an answer to yet. And we have years of plenty and we have years that are pretty lean and barren, and that has happened through my great grandfather's, great, great, great grandfather's time, right through to the present day.

I asked Robin what fishermen in previous generations did to cope with these fluctuations:

Basically they looked at years of dearth as it were as something where they could make crab pots or possibly build themselves a new boat. I'm going back a lot of generations. More recent times have left people sort of out on a limb because unfortunately the world is less forgiving, time wise now and less forgiving financially. If you have a commitment, unfortunately it gets paid every month, whether you be earning, or not, so the world itself has evolved, into more of a race, whereas in the past if there were years of not so plenty, people could work in agriculture, on the land, etc, rather than going to sea. So there was always a principle there that you could find yourself other employment. Nowadays I think things are a little bit less forgiving.

(TM): And do you think Newlyn's changed itself as a place because of that, the social structure and that kind of thing, the social life?

(RT): Yeah, I think it has. I think Newlyn has become far less rich because of the particular dilutions that have happened through pressure. The speed of life, I wouldn't say has got any faster because the speed of life in fishing has always been damn quick. You've got to be quick to go to sea, you've got to be first out there, the first shot, the first back into catch the market, so it's always been very, very fast. The speed of life that I'm talking about, is sort of the pace of everything else, when its time off, there's just not so much of it, I don't think it's quite the quality that it was, and I also think that we've encouraged, through people's perception of the fishing industry as rather a low grade industry that requires very few qualifications to get into; the devaluation of that particular part of it has led to a social stigma almost where we get everybody that gets off the train-line at Penzance thinks that they can find themselves a job in fishing. Consequently we have a cosmopolitan society here that

we didn't have a few years ago. And unfortunately quite a lot of those people do not work. And it causes us quite a lot of problems, socially. So yes we have changed. But I don't think we're alone in that.

Right from the start of our discussion Robin identified certain ecological patterns he believed were predictable and regular in character and which were evident to him via empirical observation over time. And I found this level of observation and interest in how oceans worked as systems could be often found amongst fishers I encountered or heard about, especially the more innovative ones, who would be keen in their observations of factors like water temperature and fish feeding habits. This attitude invariably co-exists with recognition of mystery in the workings of the ocean, and acceptance of the limits of what we know but also openness to discovery. Having long standing family roots in the fishing industry of Newlyn, Robin also had interesting responses to my questions about history. The great flux of nature which for fishers has played out as regular periods of dearth and plenty has had different consequences in different periods. In earlier periods, there was a much greater chance of going really hungry, but there was also greater employment mobility in terms of a pluralistic and more seasonal division of labour. In addition to seeing a loss of the rounded function of the traditional fishing village, as evoked by Jonathan, there is also a sense in Robin's narrative that there has emerged more of a race as a consequence of the greater dependence on fishing as a full-time, year round occupation, alongside greater market pressures. In other words, it is an example of a kind of time-space compression (Harvey 1996), in which there are greater demands on human and natural time and resources, which calls for more to be produced in a given amount of time and more consistently over the seasonal round – a trend not to be mistaken for increased efficiency, given the concomitant production of waste (Alverson et al. 1994). The imperatives created by the time-space rule of the 'first to the fishing grounds and the first one back' are incorporated into the broader time-space constraints of an increasingly demanding economic situation. In Robin's view this scenario has primarily been created by the bulk produce world food market which is currently exerting greater pressure due to declining fossil fuel supplies. Like many other fish merchant firms, J.H. Turner and Co. export fish from Newlyn all over the UK and Europe – Spain, Belgium, France, and Italy. Robin described 'a fragile state of affairs' where the economics of the fishing industry were finely balanced with the economics of transport. The day of our interview, the firm was

unable to export anything due to strikes over fuel prices blockading French ports. A large perishable cargo was at risk.

I think everybody's got to wake up to the fact that we're going back probably, one hundred and fifty years, out of 'world food' probably back into more seasonal, local food – sustaining ourselves, because of the hard price levels of transport.

The picture that emerges from Robin's narrative is of a dynamic between the determining influences of nature and markets – a dynamic that shapes the price of fish (an outcome of both the nature of fish as a quickly perishable commodity and an outcome of the supply and demand ratio which, which when combined drives fishing competitiveness) and a dynamic between fuel as a finite natural resource input and as a market commodity (again predicted by rules of supply and demand amongst other factors). Then there is a third dynamic, between the local variability of the natural resource and the rigidity of a government (rather than a market) imposed ordering of time-space. The conditions that Robin articulates as being primarily part of the natural environment (species diversification, stock predictability) rather than being an outcome of social organisation or technology (e.g. non-selective trawling gear) are identified as being as basic a factor as markets. Quotas on the other hand, although in practice interacting inseparably from these other concerns, are as we shall see conceived as subordinate, or secondary, to influences conceived as originating in nature or the markets. I had asked Robin whether he could explain the way things worked in Newlyn from the fish getting caught at sea, to being sold on the Newlyn market and then their onward journeys.

It began, he replied, with fishermen waiting for the opportunity (that nature would provide) to go to sea and fish, 'when the tide's not too strong or too busy to get out there and fish with a net and the guys go to sea'. The boats go to specific areas in the 'Western approaches',<sup>59</sup> where they have fished habitually for years. He gave the example of one beam trawling family that had fished the same three areas of sea for twenty-five years. In his view, this demonstrated the sustainability of the fishery. Rather what was at question in its viability was the cost of fuel over the price of fish

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<sup>59</sup> The term 'Western Approaches' refers to an area of Atlantic ocean off the western coast of Great Britain and is most commonly used in the context of naval warfare, especially relating to the First and Second World Wars. In the context used here however, Robin Turner may be using it as a colloquial term specifically for a smaller area of ocean off the South West coast of Britain, otherwise known as the 'Celtic Sea'.

they are landing: 'That will dictate their future'. There is a high species diversification in the catch – twenty to twenty-five marketable species per trip. Species caught but then discarded because they are not marketable amount to another ten to fifteen. The high diversification is a result of five currents meeting off Lands End – the North Atlantic current, the Gulf Stream, the Irish Sea, the English Channel and the Bristol Channel.

...They all bring in different feed fish, at different times and with different predators. Therefore when they all meet off Lands End they all live together. So, rarely could you say that we can catch one fish and one fish alone when we go fishing. We can target a fish, but very rare are they found to be on their own swimming, especially if you're trawling. If you're trawling you're likely to get over twenty mixed species, as an average. If your hook and lining for mackerel you'll probably get one, maybe two species, because that's very, very species specific. If you shoot a net over the side to catch pollock you'll probably get another six or seven species alongside it. So, you know even something as simple as crab potting, you'll probably get spider crabs, swimming crab, brown crab, you'll probably get lobster, you maybe get a crawfish. You can also get conger eel, in the pot. So already, even with something as simple as a pot you've got seven species of fish. So you know, it's a very rich fishing area and very diverse in species base – that's a strength.

Robin reiterated that the biggest threat to the industry was 'the economic situation'. Shrinkage of the industry over the last fifteen years has otherwise guaranteed the industry's future by reducing overfishing. Other than the influence of fuel and fish prices on profit margins, he envisaged a 'sustainable' future for the industry where it will not exceed a 'workable quota'. However he argued that a workable quota has to be averaged over a number of years and adapted to local contexts, in order to take account of the level of diversification and fluctuations in fish stocks, saying that 'A fish does not understand twelve months, a fish does not understand two years. A fish does what it does'. Like Jonathan, Robin presented the view that fish producers in Cornwall were more proactive than reactive in regard to regulation and that it is the government that is slow to respond. An example he gave was Trevoise Box, an area of 3600 square miles, seasonally closed each year to protect an important spawning ground off Trevoise Head in Cornwall.

We've been shouting about for thirty years. It took government twenty six of those years to react to it. The industry itself has wanted to shut that area for over thirty years... We're very proactive ... The ideas that we have however to put into practice are sometimes limited by a short-sighted approach from Whitehall, or non-adherence to their audit trail. Now adherence to an audit trail is bloody great when you're a mathematician. It's bloody great if you are an accountant. But an audit trail does not apply to the natural world. I have never seen an audit trail be applied to mother-nature and be right – whether it be prediction, whether it be comparing reality to what

someone thought might happen. I often find that it's so different that, you know, it's so totally out of kilter, it does not marry up.

Robin said that fishermen in Cornwall were keen to report their level of discards, provided a reporting system was set up that would not further penalise them. This would give a true picture he believed of the local stocks, allowing them to negotiate a higher quota aggregated over a number of years.

What we're not getting at the moment, we're not getting any trends because we're catching up to a quota, finishing, catching up to a quota, finishing. So we've got a straight line graph. And you're arguing about a straight line. Now that doesn't work. We're saying there's more out there and the scientists are saying "well there isn't – look at the graph". You do have a problem. And again it's all to do with an audit trail, and I go back to that every time. It's making figures work by somebody that's driving a desk, not someone who's living or working with the natural environment, which provides at times actually oodles and plenty and at other times, will starve you.

Robin's account supports the impression I got that many fishermen were, like Jonathan Fletcher, not anti-regulation, anti-science or anti-government. In a study of Chesapeake Bay Fisheries, Paolisso (2007) also found that 'watermen' were not anti-regulation but were against mechanisms depending on the scientific assessment of stocks, believing that this interfered in the relationship of providence between God, man and nature. Robin's account supports the kinds of objections to the quota system that were at issue in the Newlyn court case: that quotas (in their current form) are difficult to apply in a mixed fishery; that quotas are not adapted to local contexts; that stock levels on which quotas are set are measured according to the flawed system of measuring only landings (which are themselves influenced by the quotas); and that one of the consequences of quotas is the production of waste i.e. discards (fish that must be thrown back into the sea dead). However what this account also does is to naturalise conditions that are actually the result of a way of life and a form of production developed within a particular socio-economic and historical context. For example, it is apparent that fishing (in industrial forms at least) produces waste, even without the constraints of quotas – grading for higher value fish being a common practice (Alverson et al. 1994) and by Robin's own admission, trawling (over the course of an average year) can result in catches of up to fifty non-marketable species beyond the twenty to twenty-five marketable species, and presumably these non-marketable fish are discarded at sea. Robin is keen to negotiate a system of regulation that takes account of, and helps to solve, issues relating to by-catch and discards, but his account shifts the burden of responsibility

onto the quota system (or the government) to adapt to what he portrays as natural conditions, rather than placing the responsibility on fish producers to modify their production strategies. And this issue of waste also highlights the fact that fish producers seem to make a distinction between waste of fish that has no or very low market value, and waste of fish that does have a potential profitable return. Once again, as in Jonathan's narrative, this suggests, that fish producers see value in natural entities as arising only from the combined outcome of their endeavour and the market. As I described in Chapter Three, the Newlyn Fish Industry Forum officer Tony Williams painted the image of fishermen hauling in the catch and seeing only bank-notes where others would see fish. I think that fishermen's perceptions of value and of nature are more complex and nuanced than that, but it is a provocative image which recalls the common conflict in environment debates between conservationists who attempt to argue for an idea of some intrinsic value to nature and producers who are concerned with sustaining nature as a resource.

The particular relationship that has evolved between fishing communities, markets, and environments and technologies (including high fuel dependence) does however pose several challenges for fishermen and places constraints on their production strategies. At the very least, this means that forms of fishing (like trawling) have become distinct ways of life, within the more general way of life of fishing, and entail many acquired skills, traditions and values that are often transmitted down through generations. The case of the father and son fishing enterprise that Mike and Paul operate on the Newlyn trawler *Sapphire* is sufficient to illustrate the issues for the purpose of this chapter.

## **'We don't need to tell lies. The bigger boats do'**

I headed down to the harbour for a 9.30 appointment aboard the *Sapphire*. It was a bright, blue, breezy day but not one for fishing. The harbour was chock-a-block with boats. It had been a stormy night. It was still cold and fresh, and the weather forecast predicted worse to come. On board I learnt that Paul is the boat's mechanic and one of three crewmembers with father Mike and deckhand Martin. Paul had been fishing since the late 1980s, and has crewed on the *Sapphire* ever since his father brought it from Holland in 1991. It is the oldest beamer in the harbour and probably only the

second oldest trawler after the Stevenson's wooden vessel, he told me. Nevertheless it has probably the best and most up to date electronic systems on board, including a 3D ground discriminator and an A.I.S system<sup>60</sup>. Their fishing grounds normally begin about 40 to 50 miles south-south-west. Where they go from there, he couldn't say; it varies. I asked him what factors might influence their movements from there.

(P): Quotas, tides, currents, what the other boats are catching. Also you have to consider your fuel expenses. It takes 1800 litres of fuel per your average trip of 6 to 7 days, about £10,000 average fuel costs per trip, plus an average of £3000 in expenses. The combined pressures of quotas and high fuel prices mean that you have to always maximise your returns. It used to be that you could pretty much go anywhere you like, take risks, try out different spots. Now however you can't take that risk of steaming somewhere new and not finding anything. When you find fish, you stick to that ground. The bigger boats are under even more pressure, because they have high expenses and they get the same quota. The CFPO do a pretty good job of dividing the quota equally.

(TM): How has the job changed during your time?

(P): You have to maximise everything you do. The social life has changed, in the 80s you would work 4-5 days and earn £1500 pounds. It was good money and you had the time to enjoy it. The pubs here in Newlyn used to be packed; now you can fire a gun in those pubs and not hit anybody. Some boats are landing up in Plymouth now but it's not something we've been doing. We tend to try and target megrim and monk for which there are good quotas and there is not much of a market for those up in Plymouth. The quotas for sole and cod are tighter.

I then asked about the issue of fishermen catching over-quota fish and dumping them overboard.

(P): In a mixed fishery it's not entirely avoidable. However throwing back is a practice I don't agree with. We move areas to ensure we only fish up to our quota. Discards pollute the sea with dead fish. Initially, there is an increase in fish in that area, where they are feeding on the dead fish. However over time, the dead fish suppress growth. So it's a case of short-term gain and long-term loss. We witnessed the other day, a Dutchman or Scotchman, throwing back hundreds of tons of fish.

(TM): Have you had scientists on board at all?

(P): Yeah we've had some, but on the whole they are a waste of time

(TM): Because of what they're trying to do, or how they're going about it?

(P): No what they're trying to do is assess fish stocks, I respect that. It's their methods I have a problem with. It's no good surveying one or two vessels. You have to survey every vessel. Either that or they have to start taking a measure of discards.

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<sup>60</sup> A 3D ground discriminator generates information about the lay-out of the seabed and water depths and an A.I.S. System gives skippers information about the location of other vessels

We went up to the wheel-house and Paul showed me a bewildering array of electronic equipment including several different screens. One of these screens showed a map of the surrounding area with the depths indicated by different colours – reds, oranges, greens and purples. This was the ground discriminator. Another screen showed a map of the waters around the Southwest and evidently a huge amount of information indicated by clusters of shapes and lines. The lines represent a record of the tow paths the vessel has made. Paul explained that they try not to tow up-hill as it uses more fuel (‘uphill’ meaning dragging the gear up a rising gradient on the sea-bed). He also explained that the map represents different fishing areas, which have different allocations of quota. Some trawlers, if they have caught their quota in one area, will steam to another area with a catch of fish so they can claim it under their quota allocation for that area [boats are satellite tracked by Defra<sup>61</sup>]. Paul tells me that this practice is known as ‘taking the fish for a ride’. However, Paul assured me, their own operation was honest, explaining that, ‘We don’t need to tell lies. The bigger boats do need to tell lies’.

Paul illustrated to me how quotas as a constraint interacted with the more pressing concerns of fuel and market prices. Trawler operators, it seemed, rather than changing their predominant strategies were in fact digging in. The combined pressures of fuel and quotas meant, especially with the larger scale technologies (the bigger boats), meant that skippers – in Paul’s words – ‘need to tell lies’. In other words they are acting conservatively and not taking exploratory risks. Robin had already suggested that some trawler skippers habitually fished the same grounds and that this might become part of family fishing knowledge, tradition and access rights. Under the pressure of fuel prices, trawler operators are now stopping as soon as they find shoals of fish and exploiting them to the maximum. If they reach their quota, rather than moving on to new areas, many (by Paul’s account) are merely passing through other areas afterwards so they can claim the additional fish was sourced in that area rather than risking the additional expenses of fuel and *time* in exploring for fish in those other areas. In terms of their own priorities and constraints these

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<sup>61</sup> Quotas are allocated for different areas of the sea. These areas have been determined by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES). Defra satellite tracks all UK vessels over 10 metres so they can compare a vessel’s movements with their log-sheet declarations and also ensure vessels do not enter areas closed to fishing vessels.

trawlermen are acting efficiently and rationally, but they are not acting within the particular model of efficiency and rationality on which the quota system is based (the idea being that limits on fishing and the creation of property rights would lead to fishers either making changes to production that would sustain fish stocks over a longer period of time or be forced out leaving only more 'efficient' producers). The latter eventuality may well be occurring to some extent, but it does not allow for a hardcore of operators who are clinging to a way of life as best as they know how. On the other hand, my interview with Paul and Mike also showed that even within the constraints of the trawler system of fishing, there is the flexibility for different approaches. Their account of their own strategies challenges the notion that in trawling, dependence on conditions regarded as natural, which is incompatible with, say, targeting fish species to conform to regulations, is by far a foregone conclusion, and depends as much on learning processes such as inter-generational transmission as it does on either nature or technology.

### **'They weren't caught, they changed their ways'**

From the perspective of an outsider to the fishing industry, as I have been throughout the course of my fieldwork, it was significant that I gradually learnt that fishermen do not have a one dimensional view of the sea which stops at the surface of the water, under which murky depths conceal their quarry that they can only hope to capture by some kind of mystical intuition or by sheer luck. In fact fishermen have a very rich and complex view of the underwater world through which they know and can visualise all kinds of creatures, their habits and the physical features of the underwater landscape. Trawlerman David Stevens described the trawling method he uses and the habitats they work in great detail and he disputed the common conception of trawling as being highly destructive of the sea bed and marine life such as coral. They especially target areas of soft sand and will alter their gear for areas of rocky ground but at all times try to have as little contact with the bottom as possible and avoid damage to the nets. The main causes of damage to the nets he said are man-made obstructions such as telephone cables and lost cargo containers, although sometimes damage is due to fishing in stony areas where glacial melt created river beds underneath what is now the English Channel. Reporting being able

to see the traces of the glacial rivers through ‘biometrics’ and sonar readings, this fisherman provided yet another example of how technological aids to vision mediate knowledge – go-betweens of vernacular, tacit knowledge embedded in practice and more abstract modes of regulatory, cartographic and scientific systems (Marchand 2007).

Fishermen’s knowledges and perceptions of the oceans are determined by their economic strategies, their methods and technologies. It is also clear that the knowledge and perceptions they have, which are contingent on production, are elaborated into a wider moral and ecological view. Whilst fishermen may not always recognise the contingency and limits of their own views, this is also a concern that fishermen have about scientists. Robin, Jonathan and Paul all expressed a view that the scientists’ views of the oceans were limited by their methods, such as statistical analysis, and a broader distinction was made between the epistemologies generated through the different forms of work that fishing and science constitute (the former conceived as the practical, ‘on the job’ knowledge of the lay person working with nature and the latter conceived as the academic knowledge of the expert working from a desk or a laboratory). This perception was also very clear in my interview with Peter Pearman, a retired inshore fisherman who had an unusually rich knowledge of the underwater seascape as a result of his earlier experience as a diver. Like Robin Turner, he particularly placed emphasis on the tendency of fishes to ‘change their ways’ or periodically move in and out of visibility and range. This was one of several reasons why he felt fishermen needed to be consulted and listened to.

(TM): What’s been your experience in all this time of the government and their attitudes, policies and interventions?

(PP): Again we come back to this, I’m a fish scientist (whether I’ve just come out of university, or whether I’ve been one for thirty years), and I think, I don’t know, “look at the landings, [whistles] they’re going down, they’re going down, we better restrict this”. They haven’t gone to a fisherman and said, “Why are these landings dropping”, and he says, “Well we’re not fishing for them anymore because these ones are worth more money”... “We’re not fishing for them anymore because they haven’t come to us this year; you know there haven’t been any”. But nobody will listen.

From a fisherman’s point of view, I’m not going to fish for it, if nobody wants it. And if I’m fishing for them and the stocks go down to such a level, I can’t catch enough, I stop fishing for them and go and fish for them. That in fact rests this lot and this lot pick up again. I think the scientists have a place but they got to get the information from somewhere else, other than their statistics, and landings, ‘cause landings don’t show you anything.

(TM): From what you're saying, science and government haven't actually had a big impact on what fishermen actually do. Fishermen will just continue to chase whatever's profitable.

(PP): No, no. You fish for what comes to you. You fish for what's in fashion.

## Conclusions

It is evident from considering fisher representations of their work and the way they perceive ecology and socio-economic influences such as quotas and markets, that there is a great degree of complexity at both the level of ecosystem and producer. One could say there is a kind of synergy between markets, the environment and inherited or life history based patterns. A greater degree of complexity needs to be allowed for in systems of fisheries management. Amongst Cornish fishers there seems to be a recognition that some form of regulation is necessary, but faced with uncertainty, disempowerment and demoralising, ineffective policies they may revert to the kind of laissez-faire, bio-economic theory predominant in the attitudes of nineteenth century scientists and lawmakers. It is clear that fishers are not the kind of wise ecological stewards that ecology-minded romantics critical of the state may envisage. However neither are they the one dimensional, rational, economic being that neoliberal models of resource economics may assume. Fisher's ecological perceptions and conceptions of value derive from their often uncritical use of certain technologies that may be highly intensive and from their dependence on markets. However that reality only serves to strengthen the argument that fishing is driven by complex cultural influences. Undoubtedly there is a tendency amongst fishers to think only about fish in terms of their ability to provide food and livelihoods, a kind of physiocratic approach applied to the perceived wealth of the oceans. However this is an important and pragmatic approach in light of national and world food needs and the local circumstances of living in a region where communities depend on the sea for a living and where there are few other opportunities. Fishers cannot be depended on to provide all the answers to the problems of fisheries management and neither can scientists and policymakers. The former (fishers) operate very much with the view that oceans are a source of danger as well as utility (and a realm that invokes wonder and respect), whilst the latter (scientists and policymakers) are commonly working within a modernist

agenda and an illusion of omnipotent managerialism. The discourse of ‘sustainability’ continues to anthropomorphise the ocean environment as consistent with the perceived holism of the interests of fish, fish producers and consumers. This may be rooted in the kind of farming metaphors and managed conception of nature that has predominated fisheries management for the last century.

In recent years marine ecologists and other scientists have increasingly voiced the idea of recovering former ‘pristine’ ecosystems informed by building datasets about the past e.g. (Pitcher 2001). One building block of such an approach is the concept of ‘ecosystem based fisheries management’ (EBFM) which has filtered down to become part of mainstream fisheries policy. This is progressive in some ways but also a manifestation of the notion that the oceans can be fully tamed and domesticated – a view that is not common amongst fishers. Alan Longhurst (2006), an oceanographer, has cautioned against the concept of sustainability that is part of the ‘EBFM mantra’. The EBFM philosophy informs contemporary fisheries management and its proscriptions including quota, Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and integrated marine spatial planning. Critics such as Longhurst remain wary of the idea that simply reducing effort and placing total protection on large areas of target species range can revert ecosystems back to near pristine states. His case rests on several arguments:

(I.) Common ‘reference to the 400 years of apparently sustainable cod and other fisheries in the NW Atlantic’ are incorrect and misrepresent history. Newly arrived European fishermen were astounded by the wealth of the resources and compared them to the residual resources of the European shelves. Over the next four hundred years they then decimated populations of large species of marine mammals as well as the halibut fishery and also had a heavy impact on the cod stocks. He argues that the entire history of fisheries has been one of depletion and moving on;

(II.) Any fishery will truncate the age-structure of the target stock. This has long been acknowledged by fisheries science and assumed that such modification increases density-dependent productivity. However scientists are becoming aware of other consequences of the truncation of the age-structure and a fishery may ‘impose new values for each life history parameter: longevity, age at maturity, fecundity etc’ (p.109) – in other words, rapid genetic changes with unpredictable consequences for the stock and the ecosystem;

(III.) Given such modifications, no level of stability can be assumed in the internal, between species-dynamics of the ecosystem, especially given the range of other variables.

We are like farmers Larkin points out, except that the marine ecosystem cannot be managed in the same way as a farmer manages his fields: we cannot select the species mix that grows there, and we cannot manage the rate and distribution of fertilizers, which in the sea depend on the oceanographic processors that force the highly variable production of plankton and benthos (p.2006).

We know also that climate change is affecting ocean systems and that species lower down on the food chain – feed fish like anchovies and sardines (which are being put under heavy pressure in order to produce protein-meal for aquaculture) – are particularly sensitive to changes in the environment. Whilst the idea of ‘turning back the clock’ through restoration ecology seems to smack of the kind of high modernist engineering Scott (1998) is critical of, ecosystem-minded regulatory mechanisms such as Marine Protected Areas may have greater appeal to fishers than crude numerical mechanisms such as quota. As Acheson and Wilson (1996) argue, the nature of oceans as chaotic, complex systems, as fishermen well know, calls for *parametric* systems of fisheries management (such as spatial measures) that can allow for such complexity and the unpredictability of multiple variables interacting in unknown ways. As with the Trevoise Box example in South-West England, fishermen have in the past supported these kinds of measures.

An alternative management system that fully involves fishers, or some form of self-governance, may not only encourage responsibility amongst producers for long-term resource viability issues but also will be a source of more reliable knowledge about local conditions. Palsson has highlighted how skippers’ knowledge is the result of many ‘years of practical enskillment, the collective product of a community of practice’ (1996: 83). He also argues that skippers’ accounts of their productive strategies emphasize dynamism and holism, ‘allowing for flexibility in time and space’ (84). As Peter Pearman said to me, ‘There is this division between the fisher-folk and the ministry, or the scientists, and unless one or the other becomes one or the other, you’re never gonna get the answer’. Some development of fisheries-based ‘barefoot ecologists’ (Prince 2003) may well be the answer. Skippers’ knowledge may enable management systems to cope with ecosystem fluctuation, contingency and complexity. However I have also shown how fishers can be constrained by

markets, reliance on certain forms of technology and inputs and inherited and/or habitual patterns. All these things can also be the source of innovative production strategies. It is not enough therefore only to understand the science better but also we need to understand fishermen's specific social practices and tacit ideas and to recognise the ways these have emerged out of histories that are shared, and distinct, from those of fisheries science and management. Many fishermen are forward thinking, but if fisheries are to be viable and innovative, something of the fishing way of life must also be maintained. When fishermen evoke a bygone era of unfettered competition, it can to some extent at least be seen as an expression of the way current regulatory systems undermine the freedom they feel is required to participate constructively in their own futures.

## 7 FISHING LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS

The concept of ‘livelihood’ entails notions of ‘making a living’ as well as ‘a way of life’. In its common usage in development studies this encompasses the skills, tools, resources and capital employed by actors in the process of material production. The term implies a perspective that goes beyond a more narrowly defined work situation typical of wage-labour, but extends to include aspects of home and other social life. This view is especially relevant to subsistence-orientated and ‘occupational community’ contexts – hunter-gatherers, peasants, farmers, miners, fishers, and crafts-people – and indeed to any situation where workers have a significant degree of autonomous control over the production process. However because livelihood is also about ‘a way of life’, and not only ‘making a living’, it also has symbolic aspects. Gudeman (1986) for example has described ‘*models of livelihood*’ as ‘cultural constructions’, involving ‘social metaphors’ and particular views on how human intentionality shapes material practices – and, I would add – environments.

In this chapter I explore in further depth the subject of fishing *livelihoods* and ties between knowledge/skills, place, personhood and economic organisation. In Chapter Four I highlighted some of the issues related to inequality and concentration in resources. In addition to these issues Keith Dickson, the Mission Superintendent, also has described to me a sense of rupture – boats unable to go to sea because of the price of fuel, or because they haven’t got the crew, or a combination of both. The underlying causes were not clear. Robin Turner, a Newlyn fish merchant, also pointed out that when fishing boat owners had not been able to employ locally they were employing Eastern European labour. Now that living standards were rising in Eastern Europe relative to the UK, he believed that many of these migrant fishermen were returning to their home countries and taking their skills with them. Both Keith and Robin highlighted a sense of rupture in the local transmission of skills. Keith acknowledged that the popularity of TV shows like *Deadliest Catch* and *Trawlermen* do bring in some young men who get a certain impression and want to try their hand at it, but they’re joining it as a ‘job’ rather than a ‘career’: ‘You know, a career is long-term; a job is something you just do to get the money at the time’ Keith stated.

These new recruits don't tend to last in the job very long, in his experience, and this is partly because the money is no longer there, which is also affecting the retention of experienced fishermen.

KD: Over the last seven to eight years, we've lost those who are less competent, less capable. But with the real downturn in the last eight months, particularly, caused by the rising cost of diesel, what you're losing now are not your bottom 5%; you're losing your top 5%... We're losing a lot of very good guys. A lot of guys I've really gotten to know well were skippers and suchlike who are really competent, very, very, good guys, and they've gone to take on other jobs.

In the face of low and unpredictable incomes, he reported, fishermen are leaving the industry to work in the North Sea energy industry for a decent regular wage and the more predictable rhythm of 'one month 'on', one month 'off'. They tend to work on the standby vessels that provide North Sea operations with supplies, transport, medical and rescue aid etc.

KD: We've been losing that kind of skill base. And it's a skill base that's very difficult to get back if it's all gone, because....fishing is as much an art as it is a science. A lot of people, they learn...they fish by the use of GPS, the sat-nav, and all this, to find fish. But there's a few people here that *know* how to find fish...and that's learned through, because generally, they've been here for generations. You know, you grew up with a father, and they learned the art of fishing rather than the science of fishing. And they're the good fishermen. And once you lose that kind of...they are getting closer to retirement, you know, all those guys. But [new recruits] they're joining it as a science, you know, they're going to this college and it's quite basic at Southport. And they're being taught how to fish; they're being taught fire fighting, sea survival, navigation...which are great things. And they're good skills, but the art of being a fisherman, what it is to be a fisherman, to go to sea; they're not getting the experience.

The following discussion draws on data from two mini case studies (for one of which the data was gathered by observation and interviewing during a fishing trip) and two in-depth life-history accounts. All four examples concern independent fishermen who currently are or formerly have been single boat-owners and skippers, and all four are, or were, highly respected fishermen in the industry, regarded as being successful or 'good skippers'. High fuel prices and high fuel consumption, especially on offshore trawling vessels, is a particularly heavy economic pressure on fishing crews and also on stocks as huge catches are required to recoup costs and make any profit. A study on the Newlyn fishing fleet (Abernethy et al. 2010) found that independent boat-owner skippers (in contrast to skippers on company-owned boats) reported greater success in adapting to this pressure and were generally more optimistic and felt more secure about their futures. In addition, their crews tended to

be more stable and their vessels likely to be newer, better maintained, and up-to-date. The case studies examined here therefore provide an opportunity to consider innovation, adaptation and forms of work-consciousness in the context of small-scale / independent enterprise (although with a focus on owner-skipper rather than crew relationships). In particular I examine the role of *craft*, or the ‘art of being a fisherman’. The biographies and narratives have lots to say about transmission, kinship and intergenerational relationships, however they also feature accounts of migration, rupture, change and individual initiative. So whilst it maybe a common assumption that ability and success in fishing relies on strong intergenerational relationships, this is a notion that I am able to interrogate through fisherman’s own biographical accounts and conceptions of expertise. The reliance on *narrative* as the primary source of ethnographic data also focuses attention on the role of memory and stories in reflecting and creating fishermen’s sense of place, personhood, and the ways they *locate* the acquisition and application of skills.

Ingold (2000) draws a distinction between *technology* and *technique*. He explains that ‘technology’ is a compound derived from two words of Greek origin: *tekhnē* and *logos* (the latter meaning a ‘framework of principles derived from the application of reason’ (p.294) whilst *tekhnē* refers to ‘the art or skill we associate with craftsmanship’ (skilled making) (ibid). However Ingold argues that in modern usage ‘technology’ has become disassociated from *tekhnē*, to mean ‘the application of the mechanics of nature derived through scientific enquiry’ (p.295) or a ‘corpus of generalised objective knowledge... capable of practical application’ (p.315). As a form of knowledge, skill (or technique), is different in kind from technology (p.316). Skill is ‘tacit, subjective, context-dependent, practical “knowledge how”, typically acquired through observation and imitation rather than verbal instruction’ (ibid). Technological knowledge on the other hand is ‘explicit... objective...context independent... discursive... “knowledge that”’ (ibid). Ingold draws attention to the links between locality, practical knowledge and the human subject – the fundamental emplacement of such knowledge and its ties to personal and social identity.

In thinking about the role of craft in fishing, I am not only referring to a kind of deep sensorial engagement in a task, although this may be a feature in specific contexts. Rather in the manner of the previous chapter I am referring to combinations of skill and technological knowledge (‘practical knowledge and knowledgeable

practice' (Ingold *ibid*: 316) that provide a 'technique for conducting a particular way of life' (Sennett 2009: 8). The etymology of 'craft'<sup>62</sup> as a verb meaning 'to make skilfully' is from the same source as 'craft' in the noun form. In its original sense the Old English 'cræft' meant 'power, physical strength, might' and was of Germanic origin. The sense was expanded in Old English to include 'skill, art, science, talent (via a notion of "mental power")', which led to the meaning 'trade, handicraft, calling'. Use of the term for 'small boat' is first recorded in the 1670s, 'referring either to the trade they did or the seamanship they required, or perhaps it preserves the word in its original sense of "power"'. Finally it is also interesting to note the development of the word 'crafty': ('from O.E. cræftig "strong, powerful," later "skilful, ingenious," degenerating by c.1200 to "cunning, sly"'). In the etymology of 'craft' there are several associations that arise as themes from the following narratives. Although the term 'craft' is not itself used by my interviewees it nonetheless seems to encapsulate the interweaving of these themes: of good seamanship and skill in making; of self-sufficiency (strength); and of *craftiness* in the telling of a good story and emplacement of one's history (the craft of place).

## **Learning, movement, place and memory**

Anthropology's historic engagement with the sea reflects the motifs of travel and the voyage, with man's major marine technological accomplishment – the boat – imagined in its capacity to make connections between cultures. For example, building on Malinowski's earlier work on *kula* exchange (Malinowski 1922), Munn's *Fame of Gawa* shows how acts of hospitality 'constitute a mode of spacetime formed through the dynamics of action (notably giving and travelling) connecting persons and places' (Munn 1986: 9, cited by Casey 1997: 41). Casey (*ibid*) points out that the most symbolically significant event in such circuits must be the construction and launching of canoes, an act invested with magic and ceremony as Malinowski described. In this act, the beach itself is constituted as a threshold or liminal zone between island and island / island and ocean. As such these are examples of studies that have approached maritime life in its capacity to extend the boundaries of culture. Simpson however (2006) takes a different approach in his

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<sup>62</sup> Quoted from Online Etymology Dictionary (<http://www.etymonline.com/>, accessed 21/08/12).

study, *Muslim society and the western Indian Ocean* which looks at the sea as a realm for the transformation of personal self and the *division* of cultures through cycles of apprenticeship and material exchange. In a different way, the imaginative possibilities of the sea for conceptualising states of becoming has been explored in philosophy too, especially by Deleuze (Phelan 2007) who reflects particularly on Melville's *Moby Dick*, and the metaphorical transformation of Ahab into his quarry.

All these readings of the sea are important and I attempt to navigate a route between the earlier and latter trends – between seas as spaces of connection and division. Admittedly, it is difficult to interpret 'effect' and 'affect' in maritime labour, given that we can't see the same production of order that is visible with the human struggle with the land (e.g. Theodossopoulos 2004); although the way the environment and practice constitute one another at sea may be more readily identifiable with the way place is inscribed on marginal land e.g. Gray's analysis of shepherding practices as creating forms of dwelling and attachment in the Scottish Borders (1999). The perspective that I bring to my own material is one in which the sea, and boats, are conceived as significant in shaping, narrating and making sense of change through time (in the life-course or journey's of individuals and collectives).

In the narratives examined in these chapters, role models, competition for status and rites of passage are particularly important, with each successive fisherman, defining himself both in image and in contrast to his father, or other mentor. Such narratives highlight the dynamic relationship of rigidity in structure and of breaking away from structure, which Victor Turner (1969) referred to as *structure* and *communitas*. He identified this dynamic in all societies and especially with rites of passage, where *communitas* refers to a liminal state, temporarily freed from the conventions of society. Whilst for Turner the *drama* of rites of passage essentially maintained a static social structure, in some of my own material we see structure evolving as changes in the fisheries interact with the passage of a young fisherman from the shadow of his father, to a status of his own. Furthermore, we see that with the decline of fishing as a communal way of life, the role of memory at work in invoking the past becomes important, in creating links with a sense of past structure that tradition provides, and as a way of legitimating status in the present. In that sense, learning and narratives about learning, maybe as be much about loss as about transmission, but where loss or nostalgia is evoked as an agent in the present.

Turner drew on Arnold Van Gennep's tripartite notion of rites of passage, as separation, liminality and reincorporation, in which the transition from one state to another was literally marked by movement from one place to another, a physical crossing of a threshold (Casey 1997). Such passages are evident in the narratives explored here, for example where the movement from one boat to another marks important life-history transitions. The language of 'going places' used within these narratives mark not only life-cycle transitions but also processes of learning. One interviewee described how, on finishing school, he '*came* fishing', or elsewhere the career of fishing was described as to '*go* fishing', communicating the sense that to take up a fishing career was not only a movement away from communal territorial life but also a movement in the sense of a life-journey. In this fashion, fishing and the knowledge of fishing is something that is *grown into*, rather than being *handed-down*.

These cross-generational patterns of learning that occur as an aspect of growing up in a particular environment, is a phenomenon recognised by many Newlyners as an important and distinctive cultural aspect of the fishing port. For example several young sons of well-known local fishermen, between the ages of about seven and twelve, regularly take a punt around the harbour fishing for shrimp and crabs and so forth and earn money doing it. Such experiences were also recollected in Billy Stevenson's memoir, *Growing up with Boats* (2001). This form of learning in fishing, compared by one of my interviewees to farming, where 'you were learning small things from an early age' (such as tying knots) has been termed in social science as 'legitimate peripheral participation' (Lave and Wenger 1991). In the following narratives, my interviewees identify these informal learning processes with specific places, which I refer to as sites of *habitus*, and they include harbours, fish lofts and boats. These places have a strong association with 'communities of practice' (Wenger 1998) in fishing.

That acquiring fishing and seafaring skills may be analogous to going on a journey, has been highlighted by Palsson (1994: 29), who found that Icelandic fishermen spoke of overcoming seasickness as 'getting one's sea-legs', therefore providing a metaphor for the corporeal nature of gaining competence at sea. Along with Ingold (2000), he has used the term *enskillment* to denote this kind of knowledge acquisition that comes from active engagement with the social and

physical environment. The term can be located within a growing school of thought shared by anthropologists and cognitive psychologists, which as Gudeman sums up (2001: 39), ‘...influenced by Vygotsky and Bateson, and by pragmatism, have been exploring this communal practice under terms such as situated learning, shared reason, or social cognition’. Gudeman collectively terms such faculties and processes as *situated reason*, a notion difficult to specify and define but which, in various guises, he finds in the work of Levi-Strauss (*bricolage*), Schumpeter (*innovation*), Veblen (*workmanship*), Diderot (*art*), Locke (*complex ideas*) and Aristotle (*practical wisdom*). That list provides an indication of the persistent and evolving task of defining ways of knowing that has engaged thinkers for centuries.

Astuti (1995) has provided an example of a duality of structure and process in forms of identity, in her ethnography of the Vezo fishing peoples of Madagascar. To be *Vezo* is a category of identity that depends not on origin but on technical and physical abilities such as swimming and fishing. In other words, it’s ‘created contextually in the present through what people do and the places in which they live’ (p.3). *Vezo* literally means ‘paddle’ (‘to struggle against the sea’). The Vezo also have a second category of identity that depends on descent and therefore is rooted in the past. The communal village life organised around fishing is in some sense an object of the past for my interviewees, but one that remains powerfully influential in the form of collective memory. It is made present through ongoing but ambivalent village based social relationships, and links through stories and memory with the fishing villages of yesteryear. The past may thus be involved in a partly imagined sense of structure through activities in the present. In the words of Janet Carsten, writing about kinship from her experiences of Malay fishing peoples, ‘It is because relatedness is always in the process of being created that it can provide an idiom of attachment to place and people for those whose attachment is in fact transitory and contingent’ (1997: 281).

As Stewart and Strathern have noted (2003), the anthropological study of identity has largely shifted from a focus on community (for instance Cohen 1982), towards identity as linked to place/landscape and memory. Casey (1997) has argued that the reason the language of place is so evident in narratives about change and life movement, is because places happen, they are an event. Similarly I regard memory as a trace of change and transformation and not an attempt to recreate things as they

were, in a static way. Landscape or place is evoked in the narratives discussed here is neither in the sense of an aestheticised rural scene, nor an object of romantic nostalgia. I have found Bender helpful (1993) in pointing towards Naipaul's use of landscape in his meditation on his experience of rural Wiltshire *The Enigma of Arrival*. Naipaul uses landscape to explore 'the worlds contained within myself, the worlds I live'. The phrase recalls the Freudian influence on our conceptions of human mind and self as layers of place, time and experience (Pine, Kaneff, and Haukanes 2004). The way these narratives evoke place reflects the way that landscapes (or seascapes) accumulate within memory, like the grain running through wood, or the sediment of a river. Harbours, coves, fishing grounds, boats, the ebb and flow of the seasons – these all constitute the ground of being for a fisherman, which is endlessly distilled and conjured up through stories. In this sense I follow Casey (1996) who attempts to articulate this multiple and ingrained character of place as existing within, and transcending, speech and personhood. In other words, places dwell within people, as much as people dwell within place. At the moments in interviews where I attempted to enquire about some political point, the interviewee would often say, 'I'll tell you a story' or 'I'll answer you in another way'. In these cases the only true or meaningful way of answering for my informants was to refer back to an experience, a place and a time, perhaps demanding of the researcher the capacity to 'listen *for*' rather than 'listen *to*' (Cruikshank 2000).

Bender reflects that 'Naipaul never resolves this conflict between an imaginative (and romantic) sense of time past, one that enlarges appreciation and that is part of the process of change and flux, and a fear of contemporary change – something unfavourable, disruptive, symptom of decay and decline rather than flux' (1993: 5). I see my informants as wrestling with a similar tension as I also am in my interpretations. As he becomes more familiar with the country, Naipaul has to question his assumptions about 'the rootedness, the antiquity of the English countryside' (ibid: 6) such as identifying the character of Jack, the farmhand and cottage-gardener, as a survival of a timeless agrarian way of life. This resonates with my own experience of conducting fieldwork. My interviewees repeatedly state the importance of evolving, adapting and being flexible, whilst also themselves reaching back through memory to establish links between themselves and men now past. Part of their experience of decline is witnessing their way of life become increasingly

marginal – in the political or economic life of the nation, and in making the local environment productive. This has not merely been a squeezing out of a way of life from the outside, but also a transformation from within – the decline of industry in Britain and the contraction and concentration of labour and capital in fishing.

### **Gender and space**

The narratives I discuss are from men and in these narratives female presences are mostly absent. The emphasis is very much on a male domain – ideas of masculinity, and influences from father to son. However it would be a mistake to interpret such an emphasis as the age-old values and practices of the fishing way of life. They do present a picture where the marginal and demanding physical environment of the sea and the task of fishing is one that is constitutive and rewarding for tough, committed and adaptable men. Skills, practices and forms of association understood in masculine terms have become the primary way of expressing anxiety and frustration connected to isolation and political and economic vulnerability. However this perspective is arguably a contemporary development as much as the decline of fishing is. Part of the detachment of fishing from communal life in the twentieth century has been that it is no longer as common for the wives and partners of fishermen to have labour roles in the fisheries. Although there are female employees in some aspects of the business, management and processing sides of the industry, it is no longer necessarily a family affair. This contrasts with earlier periods where the wives of fishermen would have almost certainly brought in an income from fishing, both from gutting, curing and packing and making and mending the nets, and combined this with a number of indirectly related and/or flexible forms of labour such as textiles and agriculture.

If the idea is pervasive that fishing is a male enterprise, because men roam the wild seas hunting the prey, then it is a modern one. As we saw in Chapter Three, up until the twentieth century it was common for a newlywed wife to make her husband a set of nets without which it would have been difficult for a property-less deckhand to progress in his career. The fineness of her fishing craft would have been an integral part of the success of the enterprise, much like the way Bodenhorn (1993) argued that Alaskan Inupiat women sew to attract the whale. This led her to assert that in that case ritual and not labour is gendered – ‘Whales, not men, make

community' (p.201). As in Bodenhorn's example, different kinds of fish in Cornish fishing (such as pilchard, herring or whitefish) also have been connected to different labour and market structures at different times. Bodenhorn questions the assumption that labour and space is necessarily gendered and the conventional semantic pairing of female with the household /domestic/private domain and male with the economy/wild/public domain. I think we can similarly challenge this binary in the context of Cornish fishing, in its various past and present forms. Not only have male and female roles regarding labour and the socialization and care of children and youth cut across gender divides, but also it would also be difficult to categorise any particular space as part of a distinct 'public' or 'private' sphere. The case that the task of fishing at sea is a private one and that public life is largely constituted on shore and through the house, could arguably be made, as much as the inverse.

## **Case-studies**

### **David Warwick, trawlerman, and crew-member Jack**

I was sleeping aboard the *Valhalla* when at 3.00 a.m. I heard footsteps as the skipper and his mate boarded the boat. The engine was started and we slipped out of the stillness of Mevagissey harbour cloaked in the darkness of a warm summer's night. The skipper and owner of the boat, David, is from Boomer in Northumberland and has fished all his life. He told me he couldn't wait to go to sea as a boy – fishing was all he wanted to do. He started out on his father's small boat potting and netting, then went to Scotland for a few years and became a trawlerman. Now living in Cornwall, he moves around fishing grounds a lot but tries to stay close to Mevagissey and his family. However when catches are not so good there he will visit other parts of the southwest coast and harbour at Newlyn, Plymouth, Brixham or the Scilly Isles. He enjoys the annual summer trips to the Scilly Isles, when they will spend up to ten days sleeping on the boat and he 'knows a lot of the boys over there'. In fact he said he knows just about every harbour-side pub and nightclub from Newlyn, to Milford Haven to Scotland. I had joined David and his young deckhand/first mate Jack to experience a day's trawling.

As we steamed towards the fishing grounds which that particular day were about five miles from Mevagissey and three miles from land, David and Jack had to

change over some of the fishing gear appropriate to the ground we would be trawling. The Valhalla is a 10.7 metre wooden stern trawler. There is a two-drum winch at the rear of the shelter deck, connected via towing warps to a trawl net which is towed from behind the vessel and near the bottom of the seabed. Two metal 'doors' or 'otter boards' are attached to either side of the net. As the water drag positions them horizontally they hold the mouth of the net open. David allows about four hours for each 'trawl' of the sea. Our first of the day started at 4.00 am. Jack went down below for a sleep whilst I chatted in the wheelhouse with the skipper. At about 8.00 am we were hauling the net. It was exciting waiting for the net to break the surface and speculating whether there would be a large catch of fish. A flock of seagulls descended above the net, with guillemots diving in their midst – a good sign. The net was drawn close to the stern and then winched over a hopper and the *cod-end* released. It was a very good haul – mostly haddock and some large cod. It took David and Jack about an hour to grade out the discards and gut and store the fish, which is done immediately to keep the fish as fresh as possible (Fig.66).

They worked with speed and dexterity, with precise, quick movements of the hands. Jack had only recently started on David's boat, having been employed previously as trainee gamekeeper. However he had clearly gutted fish plenty of times before and he said he had always worked on fishing boats, through school and afterwards, on his father's boat and others. It looked a demanding job to do in poor weather and sea conditions – in the cold, wet and a rolling sea. Jack then passed down the baskets of fish (thirteen in total, about sixty-five stone in weight) to David who bedded them in boxes of ice in the hold.

David was very happy with the catch and had high hopes for the day. He got on the phone and started arranging delivery to Plymouth market. However the next haul came up practically empty and David was dismayed to find a large hole in the net created by an obstruction on the seabed – a common and inevitable problem in trawling. He did a quick repair job on the net (*with a beading needle*), and we towed again – but the mend did not hold and four hours later the net was brought up empty again. This time David decided to do a more thorough patch-up of the net, and once again demonstrating dexterous and nimble hands, he fixed the net on the deck (Fig. 65) assisted and closely observed by Jack. Jack later said that it was a privilege to work with David and learn from him, as he was a highly regarded trawlerman. I

asked Jack whether his friends in the village had also gone into fishing after school. Most of them had. ‘There’s nothing that beats it, money-wise’ he said. The sense of optimism both he and David conveyed about fishing and about the future of fishing at Mevagissey was a refreshing contrast to the outlooks conveyed to me about Newlyn.

Despite the bad luck with the net, David felt the day had got off to a promising start and he and Jack decided to go back out that night. We returned to port about 6.00 pm, landed the catch and David gave me a lift to the train station. They would be go back out to sea at 7.30 pm and work through the night, having already worked seven days at sea, two of which they had also worked right through the day and night. David and Jack had demonstrated some of the skills and knowledge-sets required to be a successful trawlerman – good seamanship, a sound knowledge of the seabed and the technical ability to set up appropriate kinds of gear, the ability to mend nets – but clearly this way of life also requires the ability to work very long hours, in demanding conditions, with little sleep. David said that he was happy with his new crewmember because he was young and keen to earn money – willing to go out day after day, night after night and make the most of a good run.

### **Stefan Glinski, ring-netter**

Stefan Glinski is a highly respected fisherman at Newlyn who has been instrumental in reviving the pilchard fishery. I had heard that he was the son of a Polish refugee and intrigued, I asked him about this. He replied that it was a long story but his father had been in a Siberian gulag camp making skis for the Russians, escaped and crossed Siberia, the Gobi Desert and the Himalaya to freedom in British-controlled India. I knew instantly he was referring to the story of one of my favourite books *The Long Walk*<sup>63</sup>. His father sought refuge in the UK and later worked as a labourer on the land. The search for work brought him to Cornwall where he worked on a country estate close to where I grew-up, eventually settling in

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<sup>63</sup> *The Long Walk* (Rawicz 2007, originally published 1956) is a ghost-written story about the escape of Slawomir Rawicz from a soviet prison camp and subsequent journey to India. In 2009, Witold Glinski came forward saying that the story was true but that it is actually an account of what happened to him, not Rawicz. The veracity of both Rawicz’s and Glinski’s account has been questioned by a number of different sources.

St Ives. Stefan described how fishing was all he wanted to do when growing up and he could not wait to leave school and follow this passion. He acknowledged that his family background is not the typical story of intergenerational fishing, but he said what in fact happens ‘when sons follow fathers, is that they starve’. In his experience many of the indigenous Cornish fishermen he has encountered have been resistant to change. Stefan on the other hand (and he has gone away and done other things apart from fishing) has always striven for innovation. For example he introduced the practice of placing freshly caught fish in slush ice rather than hard ice. Hard ice freezes the fish from the outside, but in slush ice fish breathe the cold right into their bodies. The fish is more quickly and thoroughly preserved and the rate of rotting slowed. One of a handful of fishermen now targeting pilchards he is known to be particularly successful. Understanding that the arrival of the shoals in July and August is influenced by water temperature and plankton levels, he gets all the information he can from meteorological and other scientific reports to predict when and where they will come. One merchant told me that fishermen watch to see what he does, and will follow his lead one year and expect the fish to arrive on the same date the following year (‘as if there is some kind of fish calendar!’ he joked). This recalls the example of practical knowledge given by Scott (1996), of New World cultivars consulting their Native American neighbours for advice as to when to plant their crops. Squanto told them to plant corn when the oak leaves were the size of a squirrel’s ear. Scott explains that embedded in this advice is a whole host of ‘finely observed knowledge of the succession of natural events in the New England spring... We almost certainly distort Squanto’s advice, as the colonists perhaps did, by reducing it to a single observation’ (311-312).

Undoubtedly, Stefan has been influenced by his father, but perhaps what is being transmitted in this case is drive and adaptability, which stimulates and/or arises from experiences of migration and hardship. This theme comes up again in the following life histories. In my comparison of two recorded accounts, I focus on particular extracts that I group under the headings ‘Beginnings’, ‘Learning’ and ‘Innovation’.

# Life histories

## Beginnings

### (1) Peter Pearman, retired inshore fisherman

Peter was introduced to me as ‘the last fisherman in Hayle’ – not actually true, but certainly he was one of a few full-time, professional fishermen operating from that port. At the time of our interview he had recently retired and sold his boat. He was glad to have someone interested in hearing and recording his stories. He died just over a year later, eighty years of age. An obituary in a local newspaper reported that it was only in his seventy-ninth year that ill-health stopped him working nineteen-hour days at sea. We recorded the interview at Marazion beach, looking out towards St Michael’s Mount with the panorama of Mount’s Bay before us. We watched the waves breaking on the beach as he told his story which began at that same spot, fifty-three years before:

I was in the army, motor mechanic; come out the army, went back in the garage. Couldn’t settle. I used to go camping every weekend to get away from everything, and eventually I came camping in Cornwall. And I had a tent and a car and just here is where I sat, on that beach against this wall, looking out there and thought “cor, I’d love to live here...and I got to find a way”. So that’s where it all starts from, and it starts with me.

This was 1956. Anyway, I’d always snorkelled, I went out off to Mousehole Island and saw sea urchins, came in and said to the harbour-master, well I won’t get any fish around here with all those prickly things everywhere. “You mean the buzzers!” That’s their name for them. I said, “No sea urchins”. “They’re buzzers”. He said, “we sell them two bob to the visitors you know. Why don’t you do it? Just scrape the insides out, scrape the hooks off them”, and that was it. So that’s my first little site selling sea urchins [showed me a photo].

Here are the first indications that Peter was consciously seeking an ideal way of life that he associated with Cornwall, beginning with a journey from London to the countryside and the sea. With the images of the friendly harbour-master and ‘the visitors’ in the small fishing port I was immediately transported to the enduring scene of the urban outsider arriving in the seemingly cosy and parochial world of the sunny seaside village at the end of the line. There is a contrast with the beginning of the Stevens’ story that begins as a family story (rather than the story of an outsider), but also begins with a journey.

## **Beginnings**

### **(2) David Stevens and son, trawlermen**

David Stevens and his son (also David Stevens) wove a story that reached from their family past in and amongst the cottages of the fishing quarter in St Ives town and meandered to their present lives and residence sharing a complex of converted farm buildings in an isolated rural setting. The encircled lives of the closely-knit fishing quarter had now become the encirclement of three stout farmhouses. When I arrived I found father and son chopping and stacking wood beside a big hanger-style barn. 'What's changed more than anything', David (Senior) began, as I understood referring broadly to British and/or 'modern' society, 'is we've lost that sense of family, supporting one another'. He felt that in some ways they were still living like he and his family had in St Ives, sharing home space, work and family responsibilities, adding 'Only we've got more space now for fishing gear and that', and they agreed the farm setting probably suited them better now.

The family story they shared with me began in the early 1900s and with the stark statement 'the fishing was dying in St Ives'. At that time the pilchard fishery was going into decline and David (Senior's) great-grandparents moved the whole family to Lancashire to work in the cotton mills. After a time, most of the family returned to St Ives and David's grandfather and his brothers started buying fishing boats. Two of the brothers drowned when their boat was run down. His grandfather had the *Sweet Promise* built at St Ives after the war and following that the *Rose of Sharon* built in 1952 at Mevagissey. David senior's father also worked on that boat for most of his life: '...Mostly pilchard nets, mackerel nets, and what we call great lines or long lines. And then in the winter months when there was not a lot doing over here, they used to go to Dunmore, Southern Ireland on the herring'. Observing Scotchmen using ring-nets worked between two boats, they experimented and started using 'one of the first purse-nets in Great Britain. They worked it single boat, and they used to work the tide and the wind'. Eventually all the Cornish boats that fitted out with the purse-net ended up doing it the same way as David's grandfather and father.

## **Learning**

### **(1) Peter Pearman**

In Peter's interview I was given further evidence that he was highly inventive and determined to make his way in Cornwall, turning whatever chance encounter he had to his advantage. He and his co-divers were gradually making their way down the coast, now with an aqua-lung and a rubber inner-tyre tube trailing on the surface with a bag for dropping the sea urchins into. A chance encounter with a diving equipment retailer on a wreck diving holiday helped them to discover the rich cray fishing grounds.

'Lamorna', 'Penberth', 'Porthgwarra' – through gradually extending the range of their still novice enterprise, Peter and his diving buddies were becoming familiar with the small fishing coves of the rugged south coast of the Penwith Peninsular. These are coves known for their difficult entry for boats with rough seas, and no harbour protection. At Penberth there is a large capstan wheel that was used to help pull the boats up the shore. At this stage in Peter's tale, Peter was still strictly a diver and an outsider and was not yet regarded as a fisherman. It would take the bureaucracy of the welfare system to presage a shift in the way he and the local fishermen regarded his enterprise. Down at the labour exchange the official registered them as fishermen-divers, and classified as fishermen they could now claim 'bad weather money' for days when they couldn't be at sea and they could also get insurance. They started to classify themselves as fishermen and Peter was also able to earn some additional respect through an unexpected benefit:

You went into the Labour Exchange, they gave you a form with the days of the week on, you put on all your details onto it, and then you put on the days you went to sea and the days you didn't. And like I was telling you about the Cornish then, because they got to know me by then, they used to wait back till I walked in, they used to say, "You got a pen there? Will you fill mine in for me Peter?" Poor buggers didn't know how. And they were good fishermen, but they didn't have that knowledge...

However there was still some hostility towards the divers. They were selling to the local fish merchant, Harvey's, who exported the catch to France, 'and robbed us', as Peter put it. 'That's the story of fishing', he added, 'and we have to be honest, he was as fair as he could be. There was a lot of prejudice against us, from the ordinary traditional fishermen, and of course he was buying from both sources, and he didn't want to fall out with anybody'. The divers shared their fishing grounds with the local fishermen. They could only dive when the tides were slack, which was also the same

time the fishermen's marker buoys came up. So when the buoys popped up, the divers went in over the side and the fishermen naturally assumed that the divers were robbing their pots.

During this period, Peter and his fellow divers only had the bad weather money to live off in the winter when the conditions were too rough to dive. They would take a winter let in Mousehole or Penberth and split the rent four-ways. Peter's formal occupational status shifted when they began claiming their 'bad weather money', but the main reason Peter began to find acceptance with the local fishermen was through gaining respect for his expertise, especially in diving hazardous but rich fishing grounds. They had started to find they were getting too old to dive. Using a primitive black and white echo sounder, which was uncommon in Cornwall at that time, they found 'the right-shaped ground' where they believed they were likely to find crayfish. Peter's first fishing boat was called the *Olive Branch*.

We didn't have any mechanical aids in those days, and we didn't have any GPS. We did have a hydraulic winch, but to start with we pulled everything by hand. It hadn't been done since pre-war. To find the knowledge of it, you had to go around and find the old men who were still alive who'd done it. And now we were accepted.... They realised we weren't cowboys - that we'd dived in the Longships, we'd dived in the Runnelstone, we'd dived at Pendeen, which were all the vicious holes, but we'd worked the tides out and we were doing it, and had done it. So the old boys started to say well, I don't see the point in you going down there when you can send a lobster pot to do it. But they started to appreciate the skills that we developed. And they opened up.

The knowledge that Peter and his crew were missing was how to set the crayfish nets – a kind of *tangle* or *ground net*, each about five hundred yards long, that lay on the sea bed.

To learn to set them we had to find the old boys. And one of them, who was called Conger Dick, was one of the best there'd ever been. And I went to ask him... and he wouldn't tell me anything. "I'll tell you what I will do Peter". "What's that?" He said, "I've got one tier of nets up in my loft. They're tarred, they're old, they're probably rotten. I'm going to sell them to you for two pound fifty a net. There's six of them. And you'll have everything I ever knew. And I realized he was telling me the truth. So I paid the money, took them home, hung them up and copied them. So that's where it came from... And the other one was a man down at Penberth called Tommy Thomas.

Well he'd been a young lad when the war broke out, but he'd been out with the netters, out of the cove, he had a bad heart that he came back from the war with, and... Tommy taught me a lot. When I was diving, we got along... I told you I lived down there... we got along very well. He said, "Don't talk to me about fish, don't talk to me about tides. I won't tell you". When I turned fisherman, I went and saw him and he said "all right then Peter, what you want to know". And I asked him about the net setting and the knots and that... Now the joke of it is he died. His son... he didn't have a son until, it was quite late in life. So when he died his son was twelve. Say ten years

after, eight years after... Knock on my door. It's the son. [Talking low, quietly] "Peter you're using cray nets are you?" I said "yes". "Will you show us how to set them?" And I laughed. I said "here's the connecting link that's missing between your Dad, cray-nets, and you. Your Dad taught me..." And I took him down to the big fish-loft in Penberth and showed him how to set nets. He ended up the skipper of the lifeboat, and became very successful. He's called Kenny Thomas.

Being an outsider, Peter had to improvise his way into fishing but there was a limit to which he could pursue this strategy. If he was to really make the most economically of the fishing grounds he had discovered through diving he had to learn the techniques fishermen had in the past used to exploit them. There were no texts or formal courses of instruction to which he could go to access this knowledge – it lay in artefacts and as oral and physical knowledge in the minds and bodies of the aging local fishermen. Access to either one alone wouldn't have been sufficient to learn the craft. In order to acquire this knowledge Peter not only had to demonstrate commitment and expertise and earn the fishermen's respect but he also had to gain their trust. Years later Peter himself became an important conduit for this knowledge to the next generation and was able to bridge the potential rupture between father and son created by the father's early death. More significantly perhaps, this form of fishing had actually ceased since the outbreak of the war and it took an 'outsider' to revive it. Therefore whilst the story so far illustrates the importance of intergenerational transmission of knowledge, it also shows that this can proceed in unpredictable and diverse ways and may be stimulated by migration and extension of the boundaries of kin relationships.

Another young fisherman to whom Peter taught cray fishing was his crew-member, Richard. Peter explained that Richard had never got on very well at school.

At twelve years old, has got his own fourteen-foot punt in St Ives. So when the sun shines, he walks out of his class, gets into his punt and goes mackereling. If it's a fine day he doesn't go to school at ALL! So he doesn't do the schooling, but he became, or is now, one of the best mackerel men there is. So he's very successful. And he was walking through the town one day, when he was a grown man, a grown boy shall we say, when he came across his old headmaster. And he said to him "alright sir, remember me?" "Yes, yes I remember you". He said, "I'm the one who would never amount to anything". "Yes, yes, I know that." "How much did you earn this week?" "Well what's it got to do with you boy?" "Well I made a thousand pounds, what did you do?" And this would have been back in the fifties [laughing].

In fishing, there's, you'll always get the king, he's the top man, and, but it changes. But that's just amongst ourselves. And up the line, they call him 'the man'. Down here you're 'the king'. There are men who are like Richard – fishing is in their blood. They are fishermen, they're born fishermen. And then there are people who come into it, as it has come now, to go fishing because they got no opportunity. As they become

unemployed and they get their redundancy pay, they buy a boat. Think, oh, I'll go mackereling. They do so very well, and they follow on behind the main ones. And I mean one family down here, Pascoe's, their father and his brother; no one could ever, ever touch them. No matter what. If you were mackereling, they're boats there, your boats here, and they'd have twice as much as you. Because they were fishermen, and you weren't. Now that fishing's failing, well not failing, it's the expenses really, 'cause all these who follow other people, who aren't fishermen, are falling by the wayside. I was lucky, but, it's got to be in you, I became a fisherman, some of them are born fishermen. It's in them, and you find out that their family go back to 1500, they can go back that far. You know, "And that was my great, great uncle Joe, you know" [adopts exaggerated rough Cornish accent] "lived up there" and all that stuff.

The account of Peter's young crew-member Richard illustrates the class dimensions of the disposition towards formal education amongst fishermen. Fishing attracts young men (particularly, but not only, those from working class backgrounds) often because they prefer being outdoors and at sea to being in a classroom or office and are driven to learn fishing more than pursue academic and other 'bookish' or desk-bound career paths. Part of the motivation is the thrill of the catch and the possibility of being able to earn some cash. Fishing boats, harbours, coves, fish lofts etc constitute spaces of learning as well as production, where markets and the domestic economy, private and public interact and novices learn their trade through observing and practicing the material culture of fishing. There's a large net store on the quay at Newlyn where this process continues. These places also constitute alternative sites of education to more formal sites like schools, and throughout my interviews there are distinctions made between formal education and forms of knowledge, and informal, practical education and knowledge acquired outdoors and 'on the job'. These distinctions sometimes have a political slant, making contrasts between 'our way of life', and influences from 'outside', such as the state or class interest. But they are also distinctions rooted in particular experiences of place – in other words, they have a geography.

However as well as this emphasis on informal knowledge acquired through practice, Peter and other interviewees also emphasised transmission through the language of blood and kinship. How can these different forms of transmission be reconciled? Are they really after all two distinct notions of transmission? On a sociobiological level, perhaps indeed they are. It is entirely feasible that there may be some underlying genetic inheritance, amongst several or many individuals in fishing communities of long standing that predispose them to a high level of competence in fishing. However such a proposition is neither particularly relevant or verifiable in the

context of my inquiry. In terms of learning, identifying an individual as having ‘fishing in the blood’ is actually a metaphorical way of saying that an individual has *grown* into fishing from a very early age. The language of ‘blood’ and birth (drawing on kinship as a ‘core metaphor’ in Schneider’s (1984) terms, is a way of describing how a child or a young person in a fishing environment literally incorporates valuable skills into their physical *habitus* through the all important activities of ‘messing about in boats’ and other forms of ‘peripheral participation’, as evoked also in the Stevens’ interview.

## **Learning**

### **(2) David Stevens and son**

David (Senior): ...It’s a bit like farming.

D(J): It’s a very technical job.

D(S): I mean they would come in aboard the boat, even when I was in the Rose of Sharon, back in from ’83 when I went back in her and what would you have been then, what eight/nine?

D(J): Ten, yeah something like that.

D(S): And they would come in if we was landing, or if they wasn’t at school, or if we landed in a Saturday. They’d come in to help us to land, and clean the boat up to have the weekend off. And they would clean the wheelhouse up and brush it up and things like that, pull the empty boxes around, so it was like farming, you was learning small things from a very early age.

D(J): Like tying your knots, you know, and we used to keep crabs when we were younger, me and Alex, we used go to sea with them, you’d feel sick and that but you know, you kept your crabs, and me and Alex would make sure we got up, done the work, help the fishermen, as much as we could, we weren’t that much help, but we were interested more than anything.

D(S): They would get pocket money, by helping.

D(J): We would then nick the crabs, keep them and we would come in and sell the crabs you know.

D(S): So you know, it’s like farming, you grow up in it don’t you?

David and his son explained that underlying their family history was the influence of religion. His grandfather, originally a Methodist, broke away to join the Plymouth Brethren and David described him as ‘very, very strict’; on Sundays the only permissible topic of conversation was Christianity and he firmly disapproved of the youngsters watching television or reading comics. He was also very money

conscious and did not believe in spending out on new technologies like getting a radio on the boat. However as David (senior) described him 'he was a smart fisherman and he could do anything with his hands'. After retiring he built himself a small boat, made a little trawl for it and he would go out in St Ives Bay and catch a few fish. David remembered being astonished at the amount he was able to catch in that small boat. It was a tradition in St Ives on a Good Friday for the boys to sail their model yachts. The grandfather made David a four-foot yacht, 'with a solid block of wood, dug it out, lead keel mast, made everything, sails, everything. That's the type of person he was'.

It is the influence of this 'protestant ethic' – an attitude to work and money – that David (senior) believed had been passed down through the family:

David (J): What do you think he passed down to your Dad?

David (S): I think... he passed onto Dad, the same as I've done to you – work ethic. That you don't get something for nothing, in life. And to get where you want to get, you got to work.

D(J): Cause that's what he literally had at one time – nothing. They had nothing didn't they...

D(S): Granddad had nothing. The whole family had nothing. When the fishing was dying and they went to Darwin and come back, they didn't have anything. It really was a leap of faith, wasn't it? And they all built themselves up. I mean Granddad and my Dad was the top fishermen in the fifties and early sixties.

David (Senior)'s father was more open and less insular than the grandfather, never forcing his religion on anybody. David felt that his experience of the Second World War influenced him as a young man. When David left school in 1965 and joined his father's boat the men never talked about the war directly with him, but some nights they would be coming in from sea and David would turn in to bed on the boat before they were due to land and the men would start talking amongst themselves about their experiences. David (junior) felt that there must have been a lot more 'loneliness to being a man back then... you had your camaraderie with other men, but they wouldn't have talked about that with their wives back then'. The other place (other than the boat) that men talked amongst one another was the fisherman's lodges and there were four in St Ives dotted around 'the Isle', of which three remain today.

D(J): Women weren't allowed in there. That was man's time, man's talk, you know. A bit like the men's working club, you know.

D(E): All the old fishermen used to smoke a pipe. And they'd be in there cutting up their pipe 'backy and you know, it was mostly for the retired fishermen, or if it was poor weather...

The Isle is a huge granite outcrop that dominates St Ives town and the bay. At the top there is the chapel of St Nicholas, to the east St Ives harbour, to the west Porthmeor beach, and between a warren of alleyways, houses and studios that used to be the residences, cellars and sail lofts of the fishing community. The fishermen's lodges by this account are spaces where fishermen can gather and recreate the atmosphere of life at sea, specifically the talk amongst men in smoky cabins. I commented that it sounded like a 'man's world' and David countered that it wasn't, because women were very involved in fishing labour and economy, through making the nets and suchlike.

## **Innovation**

### **(3) Peter Pearman**

Further on in the account of his life story, Peter drew me back towards the importance of innovation. For example, he highlighted the importance of fine-tuning his gear. This included lures made by a disabled ex-fisherman, which he'd first brought at a car boot sale.

My gear was all very special. You got to look for the edge all the time in fishing. You got to be up with the.., because of our minds, be prepared to accept the lure and look at it and wonder and that is it, and so you just develop it as it goes on and it changes and my gear's the best now, and nobody could touch me because they didn't have the gear.

I liked the idea of the unassuming lure catching Peter's eye and this simple hand-made object becoming part of his finely tuned assembly of fishing technology. As Peter said, 'You got to look for the edge all the time in fishing', but clearly the principle is adapting to purpose, which may involve elements of makeshift, and combinations of 'old' and 'new'. There were other reasons beside his gear that set Peter apart from the rest. Every time he put a set of nets in the sea, he recorded the latitude and longitude of the position, the depths and the species of fish caught there. At the time he was looking for crayfish, but he would record information for other species like pollock. Later when he gave up netting because of ill-health and went fishing for pollock, he had thousands of places he knew he could try.

All I had to do was get out my books, over forty years of fishing, and look where all the 'Ps' were. I got four hundred and fifty good ones. I call it 'the milk round'. Only go there once a year, maybe twice if I can't do anything else. So the ground is rested and I take fish of it and I go away and leave fish.

Since I've stopped fishing, men have come to me and they want to buy my book, and one of them offered me two thousand pounds, and I said I'll think about that. Now you could make...one man on his own, an able man could make four hundred pound a day. Right? An unable man two hundred and fifty. If he's got the right boat. And I thought, and I asked my wife, should we sell the book. And she said "That's your lifetime experience, all those fishes and those bits of ground have given you a good living all these years, your selling yourself. Do you want to do that?" And I thought about it and I thought, no I don't. So I won't sell it now. They were livid. "Oh well we need that ground." "Well you go out and find it the same as I did". 'Cause what's happened now, because they haven't got the boats to go there, they're fishing in this area again [indicating with a quick sketch an area close to harbour]. But everybody's doing it. Now in here, live the immature fish. They're about that big. They're wiping them out and they can't make a living. So they need this book, which is what's out here, where the mature fish live. But I know they will go there and kill it because they've done that inside all ready. But also, my nearest ground they can reach is twelve miles. That's twice the distance they're used to. It would take them at least two and a half hours to reach it and that's the first three places. And the next lot are twenty mile out. They're gonna get caught. Boats aren't bigger enough, on the North coast this is, they're boats aren't bigger enough to be there. North-west there's always a heavy swell, and when the wind picks up, and the wind and the tide go against each other, it's the two forces meeting, the whole lot bubbles, and they get lost. And I said to one, "No I won't". "Oh my boat's alright". I said "No, if you got lost I would feel responsible, because I gave you the grounds to make you go there".

TM: So why don't others have the same kind of boat that you did, why haven't others followed suit? Is there just not the money?

PP: Boats are expensive now. They can get one looking like mine, with a license for about a hundred thousand pounds. That's what it's going to cost you. You can go smaller and get away with fifty thousand but you've lost all the reliability, the safety, and if you're gonna lay out fifty thousand you don't know where to go. I mean, I could have said to you, not being rude, "there's my boat. Go out there and catch fish." You wouldn't know where the bloody hell to go to." And a lot of these men as I say, are not fishermen. So they'll never find it. So that was my decision. And it's not being bigheaded, it's just a fact of life. I had to learn, and because when I started to learn I'd been a diver, I got no help, I was an outsider – no one would give me a job, I'd never worked on another man's boat, couldn't get a job! It's the hardest profession to get into actually, it's very closed. And being a foreigner and then having been a diver. Ooh no, no, no.

There are two issues in this interview extract I want to highlight. The first is Peter's and his wife's notion of his logbook as knowledge/property that is inalienable. Peter also admitted to regretting that he had no young protégée to whom to pass on his boat and experience, echoing the 'old boys' of Penberth and their guardedness about sharing the secrets of their trade until Peter was accepted. The second issue is the underlying moral view on the relationship between expertise and

resource-use (that doing a job well, also implied a subtle conservation ethic) and that this knowledge (in this case to expand fishing range) had to be earned, both to protect the resource and the safety of other fishermen. I shall return to these issues after highlighting some further material, from the second of my life histories, on the subject of innovation.

## **Innovation**

### **(4) David Stevens and son**

The snippets of recollection in the Stevens' interview regarding life on board the boats and on the shore richly evoked a way of life when fishing was still an important industry at St Ives centred around the fishing quarter, the Isle, the harbour and the bay, including the patterns of male association as well as home life. However it is the sense of an inheritance of a 'work ethic' that I want to highlight and indeed which was the thread woven throughout their story about how the family has adapted over time. 'Work ethic' is understood both as a moral value, as well as in terms of abilities and skills (such as being good with one's hands) that allows for self-sufficiency, thrift and innovation. Whilst David and his sons have embraced new forms of technology to which the grandfather may have been more resistant, too, they continue to place value on practices like making and mending (showing how notions of craftsmanship have been expanded and elaborated) as well as the notion of working together as a family.

In the early 1990s, by which time David (Junior) had left school and was working on the first of their boats called *Crystal Sea* with his father, operating out of Newlyn harbour, the fishing industry was in a difficult period – prices were low and there was a lot of competition and not much fish coming in. 'You was getting to a time when you realised the fleet was too large, for the amount of [fish] and there too many boats working' David (Junior) said. During and since this time there have been several big EU decommissioning schemes and a lot of fishermen have left the industry. David (Junior) explained that by this period fishermen had begun to specialise a lot more and no longer had the flexibility to switch between fisheries as they had during his father's time. Such specialisation was reinforced in 1999 when Fixed Quota Allocations (FQAs) formally came into operation. These were allocated to individual vessels on the basis of their track fishing record between 1994 and

1996. The fishing fleet (in terms of number of boats and men employed) has reduced by about a third of what it was in 1990. From 2000, David Stevens and his two sons David and Alec decided to invest in buying quota that was freed up by vessels leaving the industry and eventually they also invested in a new boat. They brought the next *Crystal Sea* second-hand for £600,000 and their annual quota license is worth £500,000.

D(J): ...One of the advantages we've had is obviously, Dad had the two of us, me and Alec, two brothers and that's been a huge advantage by keeping a larger boat, that's how we've been able to do it, because you've had to spread your skill base, because you haven't had time on your own to do it. So the one-man bands have really struggled. And they got out as well. 'Cause they didn't have the family manpower to keep that boat running. So my brother he's very good at engineering, and I keep an eye on the nets, and make sure they're all up to date, and Dad, you know, he's had a lot of experience and he helps who ever needs help. If Alec needs help with the engines you help there, and if I need help with the nets... Dad's ashore now full-time, has been for four or five years now, haven't you?

D(S): Five years.

D(J): But we need someone ashore now. That's all part of fishing now. It's become so professional and so business orientated, that you need a shore-person now I'm sure, who's managing, getting the nets, getting the food for us, organizing the ice...

D(S): Well quota issues take up a lot of time.

D(J): Yeah, you know, your politics side of fishing. And we all lend a hand, and we can all multi-task, you know if one of us isn't there we can all do each other's jobs but, you know, we all sort of specialize in what we can. And Alec's very good at engineering and he skippers the boat, I skipper the boat and I'm good with nets, you know, and all that we've learnt from my Dad.

During the most difficult period, for five / six years, the family made their own nets. If they were not at sea during wintertime they would put in a day's work in their store making up the trawls. On the old *Crystal Sea* they worked the boat three-handed and they had one extra crewman so each worked three weeks at sea, one week off; so the boat could be at sea all the time bar landing and during very poor weather. On the new boat there are six crew, four of whom go to sea and two have a trip off. David, Alec and another crewmember (originally from North East England) do two weeks on, one week off and they employ three Latvians who do six weeks on, three weeks off. The Stevens family pay for their flights home, and the reason they say they employ Latvians is not wages – 'we pay them the same as us' – but their work ethic. They say they cannot find local youngsters to do two weeks on, one week off. David (Senior) described an efficient operation – the boat will land, the

food, ice, fuel supplies will be ready, the catch will be unloaded into the back of a lorry and within two hours the boat will be away again.

David (Junior) described how they'd specialised in trawling and taken it on further since his father's time, who was a 'top trawler' even then. Asked what makes a 'top trawler', the father and son used the words, 'hard work', 'persistence', 'patience', and 'willingness to experiment'. David (Senior) described how because his father had been so successful on the Great lines, he wanted to do something different and make his own mark. He'd tried netting but didn't like it.

TM: What didn't you like about that then?

D(S): I'll tell you in a minute. Margaret was down the beach with them [his sons]. There wasn't no age in them at that time. And it must have been July/August month, Margaret was down Carbis Bay beach, so I come down, and I said what do you think about borrowing a bit of extra money and having these trawls made. "Well if you think it's the right thing to do, do it." So we had these trawls made, two of them with fourteen-inch hoppers, rigged the boat back up for trawling and we started opening the hard ground. And we never looked back since.

D(J): I think with the netting, I think it would be fair to say, you couldn't shine could you. Because anyone can make money out of it, it was more about luck. You get your nets in the right place at the right time, you see with nets, you put your nets down, fish swim into them. Now if you just happen to hit the shoal, you could shoot, Dad could shoot his net just down by that tree, and I could shoot mine that way, and if the shoal of fish decided to swim hundred metres further south, he'd have them and I wouldn't. And there was no element, with netting, it's got there more now, but at that time there was no skill to it, it was just plaster the place with nets, and it was luck of the draw. You know, and you couldn't, you couldn't go out and say I'm gonna be top dog because I'm gonna put that much into it.

D(S): There was no expertise in it.

D(J): Yeah, it was just too easy. And that's one of the things that destroyed, a lot of the boats that went were netters. Because they had such a boom time, and so many boats if you like not quite so professional fishermen were in, if you like, fishing, and 'cause I've never seen such a bunch of lunatics [laughing].

D(S): Riff-raff.

D(J): Yeah, yeah. Nothing wrong with them, nice chaps, but it was too easy. And these gill-nets came along, they was very cheap to produce, and they were annihilating the stocks.

D(S): It made money for people that wouldn't have made money doing something else.

D(J): And they got out when it got hard, cause they didn't know how to do it. When it come hard, when there weren't a lot of fish around, you had to use you ingenuity, you had to use your wits, you had to use what you had learnt, or been passed on, everything, everything you had to use, you know, it all came into play. You'll never,

I'm hoping, you'll never see a time [again] when it... it really honed it down. Only the best ones survived, believe me. Because no one else could have survived, they had to be practically-minded for their boats, they got to be business-minded, they got to be politically motivated because they've got to stand up for the industry. We've been attacked from all sides. Natural England and all this lot. But most of all they've got to have a good fishing brain on them, because, you know, you have to now.

There are several thematic strands here I would like to highlight:

1. The way that fishing skill-sets have become more complex and diversified;
2. The way this family rationalise the contraction of the fleet and their own success under those circumstances, involving the utilisation of this full range of skills – those abilities passed down, learnt from an early age and new skills acquired;
3. The attitude towards gill-netting associated with a lower class of fishermen and 'annihilating the stocks'.

To pause for the moment on this last theme in particular, it is not uncommon for fishers to say that their method is the best, or the most technically difficult, the most sustainable, etc. However Ota and Just (2008) conducted an anthropological study of inshore fishing in Kent and they also state that trawling is more technically difficult to learn than netting and it's the latter method that attracts people from 'outside' i.e. from non-fishing backgrounds who have decided to change their career and try something a bit different. Also I met a variety of fishermen from different backgrounds – trawling, line fishing, potting – who all expressed concern about the impact of gill-netting. Fishermen's views on this contrast sharply with the frequent bias in environmentalist media reports that gloss netting as 'low impact' and trawling as 'high impact' without an adequate understanding of what either entails. The similarity between the narrative of the father and son and that of Peter Pearman regarding gaining the knowledge to expand his fishing range and spread his fishing effort, is striking. What they have in common is, if not a conservation ethic, then at least a view that connects *legitimate* resource-use to a high level of expertise.

This observation is also relevant to the other two themes identified in the last extract: the diversification/evolution of skill-sets and the rationalisation of success. David Stevens and his son described how through applying the full range of their abilities – inherited and improvised, they were able to build up a pool of quota whilst other vessels 'went to the wall'. In their view quotas have been a necessary course to securing the resource, reducing the fleet and making fishing operations more

efficient. I questioned them further on their views on the quota system and particularly on the likely outcome that the reformed CFP in 2013 will bring in some form of Individual Transferable Quota system (ITQS) in which quotas will be fully privatised rights tradable on an open market.

D(J): It's inevitable. Natural economics will take its course. You can't manipulate it.

D(S): There's a boat in Newlyn now, laid up, not going to sea. What happened is that in the past two year that owner had sold his quota, and us as a family and the P.O brought all that quota in the last two years. Now that boat can't go to sea, she's got to be sold.

D(S): It's not that we've done anything wrong, you know, we knew it would happen, that's just business, you know, and that's what it's turned into.

D(S): See we're in ITQS now, all in but name.

Whilst seeing tradable quotas as a necessary and 'natural' development in order for the fishing industry to 'take hold' of the resource and manage it efficiently, the Stevens have also been vocal in their support for 'community quotas' and David (Junior) is a board member of the Duchy Fish Quota Company. Through charitable donations and support from the fishing industry and beyond, this organisation buys quota from Cornish boats leaving the industry to lease out on favourable terms to young fishermen who otherwise would not be able to afford the cost of a buying quota to start a career in fishing. They almost secured a couple of million pounds from the county council for this cause but were dismayed when a complaint was made to the European Commission which subsequently opposed the move on the grounds of 'unfair competition'.

D(J): I think the problem is, is when you're in fishing you understand it, but you try explaining this to people outside of it, they get this concept, I mean you'll understand it, but the community if they don't buy this quota, it's like an upside down pyramid. You got to own quota, that's at the bottom, everything else will come from it now. You know, you can bring young fishermen in, they'll get boats, if they've got boats, there's people there to buy it, there's people in the community working and it all comes from that, they got to understand if this country does not go down the road of making sure the community have quota then we won't have a fishing industry. It will end up with big companies and the only people that are going to buy out big companies are bigger companies.

The fact that there has been so much change in Cornish fishing in the twentieth century, and the emphasis on survival and adaptation in the narratives of my interviewees, underlines the way that marginality continues to be a consciously defining condition of their skills and their identity, both rooted in patterns of male

association and kinship-supported work (including woman's labour in activities both within and outside the household). Pratis (1980) has argued that such persistent cultural systems, widely regarded as 'traditional' have been depended on by maritime communities in the North Atlantic along with other occupational enclaves such as mining, logging and docking, to support livelihoods whose vulnerability is actually an outcome of exposure to modern markets. Being dependent on such systems, as Newby has said of the farming way of life (1978), is an aspect of social as well as geographical distance and explains why the father and his son felt they had more in common with the blue-collar workers of mid-twentieth century Britain, than with the white-collar workers of today. This is how David Stevens (Senior) described his feeling about it:

If you take this country after the war, we still had a big manufacturing base. Now most of the people that were working then, whether you was building a house, whether you was working in a factory, whether you was fishing, farming, it was a lot of manual labour. Now when that man finished his work in the factory, he was glad to go home, see his family, wash and change and have his tea, sit down with the family. If you look at life now...when do they come home? The children are at nursery, the wife is working, the husband's working, they get back home, they see the kids put to bed possibly, maybe the kids not put to bed, they go away for three holidays a year and they think they're living a family life. And that's how the world has changed. That also makes a difference in how they think about farming, fishing. But when the man was working in the factory and he was working hard to keep his family, he had more in common with us. Nowadays, all these people that are living in the big cities have got nothing in common with us. And they've had it too easy, in my book.

The difference the father and son perceive in ways of knowing that inform and shape decisions in fishing industry management issues is about particular ways of doing, acting, working, and learning, that are rooted in a historical experience of a communal way of life, but no longer dependent on it. It is a way of life that as a result of rural change is now independent of such forms of collectivity but remains tied to family relations including role models, struggle for status and master-apprentice relationships. Furthermore the association of the skills thus described with what are commonly thought of as 'traditional' patterns of kinship and male association and the real and imagined distance from other ways of life, shows marginality to be an essential part of its constitution. The condition of marginality is regarded by this father and son not as a thing to be overcome but rather to be allowed to develop to its full potential, i.e. fisheries that stand on their own, not outside of the influence of public expectations but with fishermen able to develop and implement

them in their own way. Furthermore they demonstrate a perspective in which some of the negative aspects of marginality (such as vulnerability to fluctuations in nature and markets, and lack of political influence) can be ameliorated by allowing local skills and successes to provide a model for *leadership* and *property* that can decentre more hegemonic political and economic processes and therefore be of greater benefit to rural communities.

## Conclusions

There is a lot of mystification surrounding the subject of ‘the art of fishing’, and of farming and other such forms of ‘traditional’ labour – the romantic assumption that expertise in these areas arises from a wholly unconscious, tacit state of ‘being in tune’ with the natural environment. The case studies examined above suggest there is a high level of ecological knowledge at work; however this is arrived at not by mystical intuition but through study, experimentation, observation, keeping records, and through integrating into their methods new technologies and scientific knowledge. That said, even Stefan Glinski acknowledged that after he has attained all the technical knowledge he can to predict when the pilchards would come, in the end, he ‘just knew’ and couldn’t really explain how. Similarly to Peter Pearman, David Stevens (Junior) mentioned using sea diaries to record patterns in catches, tides, lunar cycles etc and to later devise strategies for which fishing grounds to use at different times of year. However he also used the word ‘instinct’ a lot. Perhaps in the end, having that something ‘extra’ does help, but it is not necessarily something that you have to be ‘born’ with. What these examples do draw attention to is the level of practical knowledge as well as commitment that thrives within these contexts of relatively small-scale (or at least independent) enterprise and helps to explain the adaptability, resilience and optimism that Abernethy et al (2010) found in the independent boat-owning section of the fleet in contrast to the company section.

Therefore I am making a case for the importance of practices, attitudes, and dispositions that I collectively term *craft*, and illustrated by the preceding examples suggest that craft in fishing includes the following:

1. Physical action requiring dexterity and a high-level of hand-eye coordination, learnt through many hours of practice and observation rather than formal instruction
2. A make-shift, adapt to purpose, bricolage approach
3. A 'willingness to experiment'
4. Good seamanship and a high degree of ecological knowledge
5. Combinations of tacit and explicit knowledge
6. High ability to work with one's hands – making, mending and thriftiness
7. Pride in quality, materials, tools, abilities

I am also suggesting that there may be a correspondence between craftsmanship (in this broad sense) and economic organisation i.e. that it is variable according to scale and the role of kinship support networks etc. However the examples allow us to refine this notion and to acknowledge that the transmission of practical knowledge and of 'the art of fishing' is not dependent on a bounded village structure (and may even thrive outside of it) but is partially dependent on communal contexts (whether family, communities of practice or sites of habitus). However this issue raises ambivalences and tensions in the narratives: between breaking away, following individual initiative etc, and maintaining collective environments for the reproduction of skills; and between the 'outsider' as innovator, leader or reviver of 'old' practices and the outsider as 'a lower class of fisherman' or the migrant that may return 'home' along with skills learnt.

I have also considered an example in which the *property rights* created by the quota system are incorporated into a practitioner's sense of the inalienable human-agent *properties of skill*. We have heard variable reports on the impact of the combined pressures of the fuel and quota system which suggest that whilst the fleet has contracted it is not yet clear whether it is the only the 'efficient' operators that are surviving and only the less competent ones leaving the industry. Neither is it yet clear whether this process will ultimately favour independent fishermen or large corporate firms. Nonetheless that the basis of local success can be valued in terms of meaningful notions of skill and know-how is important as it provides a model of both property and identity that is related more to self-sufficiency and mobility than to privilege. Commenting on conceptions of 'know-how' and use-rights amongst the Evenki of Arctic Siberia described by Anderson (1998), Gudeman argues:

...Knowing-how creates status and commands respect from others; and knowing-how implies a sort of reflexivity with the surrounding world...the injunction not to be greedy in using resources is as much a reflection on a person's relation to others as it is on his relation to the environment. Knowing the land legitimates using it to sustain one's self and family, and knowing the land expresses identity and self-realisation in the heritage of skills. This double and instrumental act creates real property through the exercise of human properties (2001:43).

A comparison with another seemingly unrelated ethnographic context might help us comprehend the subtle implications of these narratives. In writing about ritual knowledge about land amongst the Pintupi, an aboriginal Australia people, Myers has said that:

The focus on "inheritance and rights" does not capture the whole process... the emphasis in these ceremonies is not just on getting rights, but as much on the social production of persons who can "hold" the country... What fathers pass on, or transmit in this way, is not personal property that they have created or accumulated but an identity already objectified in the land... In the production of social persons, they give to younger men the capacity to establish extensive relations of equivalent exchange with each other and to become holders themselves. Such identification with place is a form of "inalienable wealth" (2000: 90-93).

I believe that the narratives I have examined are to be understood as embodying a concern about how the next generation of fishers are socialised to maintain their livelihoods and the environments that sustain them and furthermore that these stories passed down are part of that socialisation process.

**Figure 65: David Warwick fixing a trawl net onboard the *Valhalla*, 2012.**



**Figure 66: Jack, deckhand and mate, gutting fish on the *Valhalla*, 2012.**



**Figure 67: Stefan Glinski in Newlyn harbour aboard his boat *White Heather*, 2012.**



**Figure 68: Trawlermen and brothers David and Alec Stevens, 2011. Photograph by Laurence Hartwell.**



## 8 FISHING ART AND CRAFT

Marking the western end of the Victorian promenade leading from Penzance to the edge of Newlyn village is a striking public artwork and memorial to fishermen created in 2007 (Fig.69). The promenade has an air of faded charm, with an art-deco 1930s lido at the eastern Penzance end, its *Jubilee Pool* lettering rusting against white walls (Fig.71). True to historic representation (Fig.72), it is frequently a bracing walk, pounded by rain and bitterly gales. At other times it is balmily warm and bright; on such days the sea stretches magnificently to a far blue horizon of such breadth that the land feels like a mere dark sliver at its edge. Penzance in its heyday was a very busy port indeed and it fostered a significant population of gentry and merchants. With the arrival of the railway in 1867 travellers and tourists contributed to the growth of more leisurely appreciations of the assets of the town and its waters, such as their health-giving properties and visual charms. The Fisherman's Memorial on the other hand suggests a different experience of the sea. As described by the artist Tom Leaper:

[It]...is sited by the sea's edge... and depicts a modern fisherman throwing his landing line towards the entrance (gaps) of the Newlyn Harbour. He stands on a compass deck which sits within a rippled stone. The Memorial is sited on large granite stones from the old Newlyn seafront.

The memorial came about when a group of local people decided that after the loss of so many fishermen's lives at sea, a monument should be erected in their memory. It is intended as 'a place where relatives and friends could go to pay their respects and take time to remember their loss'. The experience of the sea it evokes is therefore one of danger and tragedy, and its function is less that of a monument to a past episode or way of life, than of a memorial personally and directly meaningful to those engaged in an ongoing way of life. Yet it has other less localized meanings too. The opening ceremony, attended by Princess Anne in the presence of the local RNLI lifeboat and two fisheries patrol vessels, symbolised the long association between Cornwall, the monarchy, the navy and seafaring communities.

The contrasting features of this seafront, symbolise, in my view, different ways of perceiving the sea and dwelling upon its shores. These 'ideal-types' can be described in the following terms: as a distinction between the coast as a site of work and

production, and as a site of leisure and consumption; as a source of livelihood and as an object of reverie, contemplation and romance; and as something that is *known*, *familiar*, and something that is *seen* or looked upon. These are only ideal-types. With the decline of Cornwall's mining, fishing and other maritime industries and the growth of tourism, there was a shift from the former to the latter kind of seascape as the dominant experience, in which late nineteenth century developments in photography played an important role (Fig.70). However the transition is far from clear-cut, linear or one-directional, and interplay between these different ways of experiencing and constructing littoral space has defined the fishing communities of West Cornwall.

Urry uses the example of the seaside village (2002), to explore the encounter between the gaze of the tourist and that of the working fishing community. He notes that this mutual regard is underlain by an unequal power relationship as it is normally the tourist enterprise that will usurp and displace the fisherman. Walton (2000a) provides examples of such dispossession, citing the clearances of parts of the fishing quarter of St Ives in the 1930s and post-war periods. However, as Walton points out, seaside tourism is also an industry and one that has also undergone decline. Furthermore he finds some common ground between tourism and traditional maritime communities in their occupation of the seaside as a realm of the informal – the beach standing as an archetypal symbol and space for liminality, the carnivalesque, and freedom from the constraints of society conventions.

Dual (and sometimes competing) perspectives on the sea, meeting within a common, informal littoral space provide the dominant theme for this and the penultimate chapter. These deal with 'art and craft' and 'heritage' respectively (although the two subjects are really extensions of one another and overlap a great deal in practice). My view is that heritage, art and craft are all practical *and* expressive activities. Rather than being merely forms of representation, creativity or leisure/hobby activities divorced from livelihood or production, they embody and extend concrete knowledge, experience and labour. Nonetheless I am concerned to explore the interactions and points of difference between the various practices these may incorporate, including different 'perceptions of the environment' (Ingold 2000). I also extend Ingold's attempt to extricate hunter-gatherer totemic and animistic depictions from the assumptions of a universal category of art as 'representation'

(2000: 111-131). One line of difference I pursue is between a landscape *perspective* with roots in a western painterly perspective implying distance and detachment (Hirsch and O'Hanlon 1995) – in this context a view of the picturesque coastal scene – and perceptions rooted in an experience of place, entailing a more embodied, sensuous engagement with the environment and also suggesting a different role for memory (Gray 1999, 2000). This is not a new interpretation of the subject of place and landscape but a foray into areas where it has not been much applied (i.e. a maritime rather than pastoral context). Furthermore I am interested in the links with *experiences* of, *commentaries* on, and *adaptations* to, rural social change. I focus in particular on case studies of two contemporary fishermen-artists which I foreground within the historic context of interactions between fishing and art at Newlyn and St Ives.

In the previous chapter I examined notions of craft and craftsmanship as part of the practice and implicit ideology of commercial fishermen. In this chapter 'craft' is explored as an expressive and economic activity involved in the shifting relationship between fishing, tourism and wider communities. This brings me to the final theme of the present chapter which is the role of fisher engagements with art and craft as forms of economic pluralism. I am dealing specifically with craft as an activity involving making things by hand, rather than generically, to have skill in carrying out one's work. I also draw attention to modern meanings of craft as identified by Greenhalgh (1997), in particular the elements of the *vernacular* and the *politics of work*. Tracing the history of craft meanings and practices Greenhalgh highlights nineteenth century political economy critiques (such as those of Marx, Ruskin and Morris) of loss of control of the work situation and 'creativity' through constraints of the machine and the mechanised division of labour. This stimulated an interest in the 'vernacular' – 'the cultural produce of a community, the thing collectively made, spoken and performed' (p.31). The influence of some of the latter writers on the Newlyn Art School points to how the politics of rural labour has marked the ground upon which trained professional artists and fishermen-artists and craftsmen have interacted.

## **Fishing and art in Newlyn and St Ives: historic interactions**

Adopting the narrative style of the Pre-Raphaelites and a realist approach of painting direct from nature, many of the Newlyn School works (1880-1930) are focused on a romanticised view of shore-side life and labour, including the drama and pathos of the anxious fisher-wife and the grieving widow, and the melancholy charm of tranquil and ordered domestic scenes (Figs. 73, 74). As Cross describes the period:

The Great Exhibition of 1851 celebrated the triumph of the machine, but absolute faith in the virtues of manufacturing industry was already faltering. As the dehumanising effect of the factories became apparent, more than half the population lived in towns and rural life appeared increasingly attractive. The countryside was valued as never before in art and literature: a dream landscape, removed in time and space, peopled by a folk society, closely bound by tradition and shared hardship. This dream became symbolised in paintings that reflected the ordered life, that industrial progress was seen to be destroying. Here was the true satisfaction sought by Ruskin: “To watch the corn grow, and the blossoms set; to draw hard breath over ploughshare or spade” (2008: 14).

The Newlyn School artists were extremely interested in the vernacular aspects of Cornish labouring culture, and some especially in the crafts of fishing. In Chapter Three I explained how Cornish fishing villages developed within a particular merchant capitalist and colonial Atlantic economy which consolidated and then declined in the late industrial era. Their distinctive peak was a direct result of processes linked to the expansion of the railway which precipitated the arrival of the artists and the subsequent ‘discovery’ of Cornwall, not only by artists and writers, but by tourists too.

Vernon provides an excellent account of how these ‘border crossings’ shaped, and were shaped by, the ‘ambivalent position of Cornwall in the English imagination, and of England in the Cornish imagination – of the Cornish as English, but not English’ (1998: 153). The impossibility of demarcating lines in these encounters is tellingly illustrated by the lasting legacy of the Newlyn School in the fishing communities of West Cornwall. For example, artists of the school were instrumental in setting up the Newlyn Industrial Class (est. 1890) to teach craft skills to out of work fishermen. Some became adept at working with copper and the same workshop in which they practiced remains a workshop for making world renowned ‘Newlyn

Copper' today (Fig.75). In the 1930s, Penzance gentry and town councillors took advantage of a nationwide slum clearance campaign to petition for fisherman's cottages in Newlyn to be demolished. There had long been rivalry and hostility between the two places and elites in Penzance regarded Newlyn as squalid, smelly and unsanitary. Whilst the fishing community in Newlyn was divided on the desirability of moving to modern social housing built on the top of Paul Hill (now the Gwavas Estate) members of the artists' community strongly opposed the clearances. They helped organise and sponsor a number of fishermen to take a fishing boat, the *Rosebud*, to Westminster by way of protest – a now famous story (Fig.78). Other signs of their lasting legacy remain in sail lofts preserved in some form by their change in use to studios, street names in Newlyn like 'Rue de beaux arts', plus generations of artists from fishing backgrounds including Alfred Wallis (1855-1942) and the Mousehole born fisherman's son Jack Pender (1918-1998).

In a recent BBC TV programme 'The Art of Cornwall' (2010) the presenter described the Newlyn School as follows:

They depicted scenes of hardworking men and god fearing women, together enduring with stoic fortitude the trials of Cornish land and sea. They appeared to offer an authentic and definitive image of Cornwall. But this wasn't the real Cornwall; it was a fantasy, a make-believe – mawkish, patronising, a masterful piece of Victorian myth-making.

The Newlyn School works were certainly romanticised depictions of fishing communities producing a 'visual ideology masking social forces and relations of production, exploitation and alienation' (Tilley 1994; see also Cosgrove 1984). However the above interpretation misses several key social aspects of the Newlyn School:

1) The extent to which members of the fishing community of Newlyn actively participated and performed in the construction of their representation, serving as models, landlords, and interested onlookers;

2) The social and political background in which various social classes in Cornwall and across the Cornwall-English border had for some time preceding the arrival of the artists been engaged in producing images and narratives of Cornish identity, place and nationality (Vernon 1998);

3) The extent to which the Newlyn School became socially embedded and its lasting legacy including more 'indigenous' or 'vernacular' traditions of art and craft;

4) The political dimensions to the Newlyn School in which artists (including the socialist Walter Langley) sought to depict traditions of rural craft and labour practices that they felt contrasted with emerging urban ways of life and capitalistic forms of production - although the artistic impulse and consumption by audiences had conservative as well as socialist aspects (Payne 2007).

In sum, by assuming that there was a 'real' and 'authentic' Cornwall that preceded the arrival of the Victorian artists and was somehow threatened by it, the BBC's interpretation merely reproduces a standard and inaccurate narrative about Cornish primitivism.

This is not to say that the relationship between these overlapping communities was (or is now) without its tensions and conflict, both within, and between the artists' and fishers' communities. These are captured poetically in Sven Berlin's *The Dark Monarch* (2009) – a semi-fictionalised account of life in St Ives in the years immediately following the second world.

In Cuckoo Town, everybody knew everybody: no one could live in the town for more than a week without being gutted like a herring and spread out in the sun to dry and for all to see. But if you stayed a month, that would bring upon you the same fate as the great mucus-covered ray from the night fishing, with which the fishermen dealt on the promenade during the hours before lunch. One by one the still living monsters were first gaffed, held aloft in one hand, and with a few expert strokes of the knife disembowelled and castrated in one act, leaving a kind of window through the body. The parts were then thrown to the gulls, who screamed down like birds of hell, diving into the harbour, fighting one another, tearing the sunlight to ribbons (34).

Berlin was a writer and artist who after returning from the war lived in St Ives until 1953. The figure of the 'Dark Monarch' represents an 'overseeing force of darkness, destruction and death' (Stephens 2009: 5). Like other post-war British artists, Berlin identifies this malevolent force with the ravages and psychological after-effects of the war, with a sense of elemental forces in the mythical landscapes of the West, with the social decay and fragmented communities he found in St Ives (or 'Cuckoo Town' as he called it in the book) amidst the clash of forces of tradition and modernity and finally in the potentially destructive force an artist must embrace in order to create<sup>64</sup>. Stefens (ibid) also views it as a sharp reflection of upheaval and erosion of the very fabric of the traditional working community of St Ives.

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<sup>64</sup> These themes were explored in the Tate St Ives Exhibition 'The Dark Monarch: Magic and Modernity in British Art', 10 October 2009 – 10 January 2010.

The Dark Monarch also relates the story – familiar to students of St Ives art, of how in 1949 the abstract artists split the existing St Ives Society of Artists and founded their own Penwith Society of Artists in Cornwall, which itself, almost immediately became riven by dispute. It is a story of petty, small community politics, albeit one with serious consequences. More unusually, Sven offers us a unique insight into an idea of how the artistic community fitted into a traditional community of the town at a moment of monumental change. He describes a world of traditional masculine labour, of fishermen mending their nets in a cluster of tarred wooden huts soon to make way for municipal improvements and better car parking provision. As the book makes clear, the growth of tourism and post-war political pressures for better planning combined to destroy a way of life (ibid:4)

I would agree with Stefens's analysis of the socio-economic context up to a point, but would argue also that this is perhaps an oversimplification. Fishing and maritime trades – St Ives' principle 'traditional' industries (alongside mining, quarrying and agriculture) – did not decline only because of tourism and planning pressures, rather decline had been going on for some time already as a result of changes in the availability of fish (especially pilchards), loss of the Mediterranean markets and broader changes in the British and world economy (as I have described in Chapter Three). In this context the railway and subsequent growth in tourist markets were as much an opportunity as a curse. Nonetheless Berlin's book and Stefens's comments capture the ambivalent position of the artists, most of all the figure of Berlin himself, as being both members of, and outsiders to, the local community. The character John Charon, the former quarry man who grazed an old stallion called Rainbow on 'the Island' in Cuckoo Town and who ferried visitors across from the mainland at high tide, says despairingly to Berlin, 'Let they artizes 'ave the lofts and 'uts where we belong to be... 'Devil cast'iz spore on them'.

"Well, I'm one of them I suppose!" I said, feeling a little worried at John's attack. I knew he hated the 'h'artizes' as he called them. He hated their softness, their effeminacy, their reluctance to help themselves, their lack of sense of responsibility, often their dirtiness and insincerity.

"Aw, now Masser Berlin, my 'ansom, I don't mean 'ee by thart... H'all this 'ere Island is doomed. They'll start with little things first, things like you an' me and Rainbow and the geez. Then they'll 'ave the Barkin Houses<sup>65</sup> an;' the Smoke Houses, then they fishermen's lofts where they belong to mend their nets and make lobster pots, you, until h'all is gone; and the likes a you an' me, my ansom, banished from the faice of the h'earth'!" (pp.78-79)

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<sup>65</sup> 'Barkin Houses': where pitch tar was made and applied to protect sails and ropes etc from water damage.

To return to contemporary Cornwall, it is these same creeping forces of gentrification, tourism and changes in uses of harbour space that some fishermen at Newlyn fear. A friend witnessed a fishermen walk into a viewing at an art gallery next to the harbour and say with some anger, pointing at the works on show, ‘you call that art? Come down the fish-market with me. I’ll show you some real art!’ The undertone of bitterness in this story is understandable within the context of a very real struggle for property and livelihood within many seaside towns and villages. However it is not a simple case of diametrically opposed ideological or economic positions, practices of memory, or representation. This is richly demonstrated by the works of the self-taught St Ives fishermen-artist Alfred Wallis (Figs. 79-81).

Wallis first went to sea as a boy and sailed on the schooner runs to Newfoundland, before settling in St Ives. He worked on fishing boats as a deck-hand and later in life became a ‘rag and bone man’ selling salvaged marine parts from a horse and cart. In his final years he painted prolifically before ending his days in Madron workhouse. He had a significant influence on the St Ives modern art movement through his encounters with Ben Nicholson (1894-1982) and Barbara Hepworth (1903-1975) and others, and they likewise influenced his own art. Over time he became known in the art world as ‘the primitive’ and his paintings described as exemplary of a ‘naive’ style. There were doubts as to the truthful extent of his experience at sea. However Robert Jones (a contemporary painter and former fisherman) has shown how ‘Wallis’s paintings were not the result of a childlike imagination but of a profound knowledge and experience’ (Harrison 2001: 8). Minute and accurate attention is paid to the details of ships rigging, harbours and the marine geography. The perspectives of his paintings are not from the shore looking out like those of the Newlyn School, or from a window like some of Ben or Winifred Nicholson’s<sup>66</sup> works. Rather, ‘his vision was such that in his imagination Wallis was able to rise above the rooftops to show us the buildings of St Ives, and the sea and ships beyond’ (Jones 2001: 12). He painted on old scraps of card and wood, in fact on any surface he could lay his hands on. The rough surfaces of these materials lent the paintings a textured feel evoking the moving and uneven surface of the sea. Albert Rowe, radar pioneer and university vice-chancellor (1898-1976) has

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<sup>66</sup> Winifred Nicholson (1883-1981)

recounted his experience of meeting Alfred Wallis when a young boy. He complimented Wallis on a fine fish that was depicted in one of his paintings swimming beneath a schooner. Wallis replied conspiratorially,

I'll tell 'ee something about them fish... each boat of that fleet - there was over 120 of them when I was a boy and now there's only two or three of them left, and even they got motors aboard - no boat should have a motor! - each boat of that fleet had a soul, a beautiful soul shaped like a fish; so they fish I'm painted there aren't fish at all - you wouldn't be any good without a soul, would 'ee? (cited by Gale and Ingleby 1999: 112).

Memory was vitally important in Wallis's work and in the way he expressed his impulse to paint a world he saw vanishing around him. As he wrote in a letter: 'What I do mosely is what use to Bee out of my own memery what we may never see again as Things are altered all To gether There is nothing what Ever do not look like what it was sence I Can Rember' (cited by Cross 2008: 219). Both magic and memory became important themes in the work of the St Ives Moderns. Barbara Hepworth for example found the natural and archaeological stone features in West Cornwall resonated with both her earlier life in the Yorkshire Pennines, and a sense of a deeper, more elemental time and human nature. Like many writers and artists in Cornwall, she brought together an association of personal memory with a more enduring memory and past interpreted from the land and sea-scapes. One commentator has said of her work: 'She's internalising the landscape, she talks about the landscape, being not just what I *saw* but what I *was*'<sup>67</sup>.

Cross observes that the largest objects in Wallis's painting were those features which were most important to him and with which he was most familiar – 'his house in Back Road West; Norway Square beside which it stood; the encircling harbour of St Ives and the characteristic shapes of Smeaton's Pier and Godrevy Lighthouse'. In *How Modernity Forgets* (2009) Connerton seeks to comprehend a preoccupation with memory in the modern era and how this may relate to a peculiar problem with

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<sup>67</sup> Quoted by BBC Four TV documentary 'Art of the Sea', last on 18 August 2011. The Porthmeor studios in St Ives, once homes for fishing families, have for over a hundred years since been used as art studios, although have retained at least some space for fisherman's use. One contemporary artist using the studios describes being able to get away from twenty-first century 'inanity and babble... You're directly engaging in a world which your ancestors knew. You look at the night sky unencumbered by night pollution, you're seeing the same stars, and it's a more direct link with an earlier age. And I suppose I'm trying to bring some of that back' (ibid).

forgetting. Particularly concerned with place-memory he distinguishes between two types: memorial and locus. Locus memory relates to familiar places, knowledge that is emplaced, the corporeal life of habitual movements. In his view 'locus', in its far more inexplicit reference to memory, is the more effective carrier and it is the erosion of the stability of places, of topography, that leads to structural forgetting. This is in part at least related to the mechanisation of production:

A hand-made world, in which all things were made one by one, was a slow world. Only when we have thought ourselves imaginatively into such a world can we comprehend the slow process in which, before the nineteenth century, the natural landscape and the urban landscape came into being... In a handmade world the term 'building' would apply as much to the memory of the *continuing transitive activity* of construction as much as to that of the eventual *product* (30-31).

Connerton's argument echoes that of Nora (1989) who contrasted habitual vernacular memory and elite institutionalised memory – a distinction we shall revisit in the following chapter on heritage. Suffice to say here that this contrast, conceived less as a dichotomy and more as a relation, frames my concerns with how specific forms of art and craft as livelihood and practice express and shape memory. As the following contemporary examples show these articulate varying degrees of nostalgia and social commentary, more closely tied to a lived experience of place and labour than the more alienated and detached nostalgia of formal traditions of landscape and rural scene representation.

## **Contemporary Cornish fishermen-artists**

### **Nigel Legge**

Nigel Legge is a fishermen based at Cadgwith Cove on the Lizard peninsular where his family have lived for many generations (Figs. 82, 83). He sets his nets and pots close to the cove in the broad bay between Lizard Point and Black Head. One May morning after Nigel had set his nets, we sat in his 'studio' at Cadgwith cove, where he paints and makes lobster pots by hand in the traditional fashion using willows or, as they are locally known, *withies*. It's a cosy, brightly painted shed with a corrugated roof tucked away up a path leading between thatched cottages. He spends his winters in the studio making withy pots as he and his father did many years ago (Figs. 84-89). The studio is made homely with small comforts – including a gas heater, radio and toaster. As we conducted a short interview, several visitors to

the cove popped in to collect and pay for some of his pots. Pleasant exchanges ensued:

Visitor: Good morning!

Nigel: How we doing? Alright? You survived the breakfast, eh?

Visitor: We did indeed... And we're just going up to get some pasties off your brother... That's brilliant [collecting pot] – I've left the money with...

Nigel: That's alright.

Visitor: And I'll just squeeze this in the boot of the car... and we'll see you soon, alright?

Nigel: Yeah and I'll do your picture for you. I'll leave it up there anyway.

Another buyer commented on pots he'd seen for sale outside Lyme Regis Museum – inferior he thought by comparison to Nigel's and 'definitely a tourist thing'. Nigel said that he knew the kind he was referring to and explained that they were probably Chinese imports and that they sell for a fraction of the price of his own.

The withies are sourced from a well-established family business that farms the marsh willow on the Somerset Levels. The pots are used for fishing occasionally, when he is doing boat tours for summer visitors and throws in the odd string of pots to demonstrate the technique. Rather, most are sold as ornaments and for use in television and feature films. This diversification of Nigel's economic activities has been driven at least in part by necessity as he found he was getting too old to haul the hundred and eighty pots he used on average to set. He sees this diversification as part of a tradition which covers have always pursued – combining fishing with working with brass in small foundries, boatbuilding, working on the land, in the quarries; and there was a tradition to go away with the merchant navy in the winter too and send money home to the family. Nigel himself spent six years going around the world with the merchant navy as a young man.

Nigel went on to tell me how he was looking for an apprentice: 'I'm waiting for a youngster here to come forth and learn how to make these pots, because selling these pots is probably half my living for the year. Especially in a small boat, it's very handy'. He sells about two hundred per year at £70 for large ones and £27 for the small ones. So far he'd had a bit of interest but only from people who expected to

come down and learn it in a day, whereas it took him years. His father was a fisherman and it was from him that he learnt the craft, starting as a youth.

I used to hate every minute of it. I thought thank God we've got plastics and steel invented for pots. Then I heaved all this lot in the corner and didn't bother with it for...since 1965, probably. And then probably twenty years ago, somebody asked me to make one for them for a garden. I didn't even know where to get withies then, but I did find out and it's the same family who we dealt with years ago with the old man, and he has a son now; it's not the old man... And I got some withies and made ten pots. The first eight or nine were hopeless but then I got better and better as hadn't done it for a long time so.... And in those days, there were still a few old fishermen around who could point me in the right direction. Of course, there isn't now.

That Nigel didn't really enjoy making the withy pots initially (this came later) and his emphasis on apprenticeship and the traditions of a community corresponds with Sennett's view on craft (2009). Sennett is keen to extricate a broader meaning of craft from the more specific and modern associations with a counter-culture that contrasts ordinary consumerism with DIY or hobbies involving 'arts and crafts' (making and mending etc). He finds in the latter too much emphasis on craft as a source of creative pleasure for the individual. The working classes have always had to do 'DIY' he says because they could never afford to employ professionals. He attempts to distance himself from the term 'creativity' because it carries an awful lot of 'class-baggage'<sup>68</sup>. Craft is not always pleasurable; indeed it can be frustrating and laborious. Rather what distinguishes it is the dedication and compulsion to learn to do something well over time. Sennett is attempting to counter a notion of 'skill' that he believes has become common-place in contemporary Britain and America as the mere execution of a procedure, together with the notion of skill as an individual property, an outcome of competition and intelligence which can be measured through tests of the kind common in schools. To practice a craft is to be part of a community (both ancestral and contemporary) and in *The Craftsman* he is interested in the kinds of community found for example in the workshop, the laboratory and the classical orchestra. More broadly, Sennett argues that 'community' is not about pleasure but responsibility, obligation and ritual (2012).

By continuing a tradition of craft-making and economic pluralism Nigel is maintaining and remoulding a memory of his own ancestral community as well as contributing to the maintenance of a contemporary community through fishing and

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<sup>68</sup> Sennett made this comment on the BBC Radio 4 programme 'Craft and Community' (an edition of *Thinking Allowed* 2 May 2011).

attracting tourism. The willow baskets are ‘craft’ rather than ‘art’ objects in that their design relates to a use-function and speak more of a community of practitioners than individual personality. Commenting on museum displays of vernacular material culture MacDonald (2002) argues that fetishisation of these kinds of artefacts, made sacred by being taken out of current circulation as functional objects, has meaning because of the former uses (skills and ways of life) they reference. Laviolette (2006) makes a similar argument about contemporary maritime art in Cornwall that makes use of recycled and salvaged material. For their audiences and consumers, as no doubt for their makers, they stand for local resourcefulness and self-sufficiency in a time when these aspects of locality are seen to be eroded. The peculiar properties of materials and techniques are significant here but should not be overemphasized. Although Nigel’s beautiful withy pot label tags (Fig. 90) say ‘withy pot making is a dying craft’ and indeed there are only a handful of people in Cornwall left who make them, Nigel does not himself fetishise materials, nor does he hold a static view of community. We will recall from Chapter Four that in Nigel’s view the fishing community at Cadgwith had not changed very much. The fishermen use different gear, and boats are no longer built with wood but steel and fibre-glass. Meanwhile on shore, houses are no longer occupied by fishermen but rather holidaymakers, second-home owners, and a small percentage of in-migrants who live there all year round. Despite all this, what mattered to Nigel was that there was still a working fishing community whose members shared resources and had to rise above inevitable petty squabbles in order to work together to launch and land their boats and help each other out when there was a problem.

Speaking on a radio documentary<sup>69</sup>, Nigel was surprisingly open and positive about the onshore residential changes that had occurred at Cadgwith as across Cornwall and elsewhere. Whilst the documentary highlighted issues specifically connected to the impact of second-home owning, Nigel was in general accepting and optimistic about the cultural and economic benefits of influxes of migrants. One influence of the cultural ‘mix’ he celebrates is presumably that of the artists as he himself is also a painter. Therefore he belongs to an ancestral community of artists in Cornwall as well as an ancestral community of traditional labour and craft. His

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<sup>69</sup> BBC Radio 4, *Picturing Britain*, Episode 4, ‘The Fisherman’s Tale’, 26 January 2012

pictures demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the sea and of ship design and rigging. Some of his works recall those of Alfred Wallis – painted on salvaged materials such as pieces of driftwood and slate. However in content their style is different – more reflecting a tradition of impressionistic marine painting and concerned to capture a mood rather than tell a story. Asked if he was motivated to paint primarily for economic reasons Nigel said the art came first – he enjoys painting and if someone wants to buy his work it is an added benefit. His subject matter is always the sea and boats – he doesn't paint anything else, and they portray a universal theme. All the boats are pictured moving from right to left in his pictures which from Nigel's perspective means they are coming home to port:

You'll get a lot of artists who'll say the sea is romantic and it's fantastic, and it really isn't romantic, it's just wet and cold, and it hurts people and it's very rough. So you know it's a load of old nonsense really. A fisherman – it's a hard job. Some of them are away for a long time and you only hear about the good catches, you don't hear about the bad times. And it's a nice feeling when you're bringing the last dan [buoy] aboard and you're heading for home<sup>70</sup>.

#### **Martin Ellis (aka Nutty Noah)**

My encounter with another Lizard-based, fisherman-artist – Martin Ellis<sup>71</sup>, reinforced my impression that art was both a practical means of economic survival for these particular fishermen and a means through which they extend and express their relationship and engagement with the sea and boats – their love affair, like pastoralists who compose odes to their cows. For Martin whose paintings were more narrative in form than Nigel's, it was also a way of telling his story, which was perhaps especially important to him given that he was no longer fishing.

Martin, or 'Nutty Noah' as he is widely known, was a large man with big hands – slightly wild looking and a mischievous twinkle in his eye (Fig. 100). He picked me up in his car in Ruan Minor village at the top of the hill that leads down to Cadgwith Cove. We drove to a small disused farm in Lizard (Village) where Martin had to pick up some iron that he was taking to the scrap merchants to make a bit of cash. It was then that I was struck by the parallels between Martin Ellis and Alfred Wallis (fisherman, chandler, 'rag-and-bone' man, and painter). Of course Martin did not

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<sup>70</sup> Quoted by BBC (ibid).

<sup>71</sup> Martin Ellis one of the 'Cadgwith Primitive Painters' featured in an exhibition in London with Nigel Legge (see Fig.29)

salvage metal all the time for a living but he described a varied and pluralistic life – fisherman, digger-driver, chainsaw-man, rabbit hunter and now artist. He said it depressed him that he was a grown man without means, having to scrape a living anyway he could. He wanted to be an independent ‘working man’ again – he was getting old he felt and ‘owned nothing’. This honest admission could not hide an indomitable spirit and sense of optimism. A story emerged of adventurous risk-taking and misfortune that had in the end forced him out of fishing. He was now trying to remake himself into an artist and he had been willing to speak to me because he thought I might be useful to him somehow in the future. ‘That’s how it works isn’t it?’ he said, ‘I help you, you help me’.

It transpired that Martin had been influential in the revival of the Cornish pilchard fishery. In tour-guide mode he took me to Church Cove where seining for pilchards was once conducted. He showed me a building where the pilchards had been pressed and salted (Fig.95) instructing me on how to compose a nice photo and telling me about how the building would have been used (a scene he recreates in one his paintings). He explained how large the seine net would have been (as deep as the cliffs were high) and pointed to where the warps would have been tied that were used to haul the net towards the shore once it had been encircled around the shoal. He also told me the story of how in the 1980s he had experimented with fishing with a ring-net. After talking to Joe and Jimmy Madron, two old fishermen from Mousehole who used to work a big ring-net in the 1960s and 70s he started trying for pilchards. Nick Howell had lent him some money to buy Joe and Jimmy Madrons’ boat, the *Renevil*. Nick was a fish merchant and owner of the Cornish Pilchard Works – salting, curing and pressing pilchards for a family of Italian buyers that had been buying pilchards from Cornwall for over a hundred years. He was trying to revive a domestic market by rebranding the Cornish caught pilchards as the ‘Cornish sardine’.

Martin’s first catch weighed in at 360 stone. He mortgaged his house and brought a new boat called the *Penrose*, using the same ring-net. ‘When the net was set it was as deep as a church tower is high and nearly half the size of a football pitch’. The net could enclose up to four or five hundred stone of fish. On his last night aboard the *Penrose*, he was joined by two Newlyn fishermen keen to see a sonar and ring-net

worked together. It did not take them long to find a shoal of sardines and encircle them.

I can remember that I brought a powerful torch and had shone it on the fish, which were in the net in their thousands. They made a hushing noise as they swam everywhere and anywhere to try and find a way out... The crew pushed the brailer net into the thousands of pumping, splooshing, noisy, beautiful little silver darlings... The noise of all those little fish was really quite loud as there were hundreds in the air at a time. The smell was such a pure, oily smell, something quite sweet and pleasant. The surface of the sea for at least 200 yards was like glass from the oil of the pilchards... Although it was dark, our deck lights showed us a little way out and the hundreds of gulls – all looking like they had eaten more than enough, like they did not want to fly... Gannets are very large, white seabirds, with a six feet wingspan and they fall from the sky like an arrow into the sea. During their dive they always tell the ones below they are on their way down: “cadalla, cadalla, cadalla” repeated quickly and a sromping as they enter the fish they’d had their eyes on. If they had not gone down far enough they actually fly under water like penguins. There were always a lot of gannets as well as gulls in the black sky.

He phoned Nick Howell to say that they had about five hundred stone on board and reported that the sea was flat calm but the wind was getting up a little. Their position was about three to four miles off Mousehole and they were on their way in. Half an hour later the coastguard called to check on them (perhaps knowing Martin’s risk-taking nature Nick Howell had already informed them that Martin and crew were at sea). Martin reported that they were okay but the wind was rising and asked them to call again in half an hour. Soon after, as the waves were getting bigger, it was apparent they were taking on water. The scales of the pilchards had blocked the scuppers over which Martin had placed a mesh to stop the pilchards escaping. As they donned life-jackets, he said to his crew ‘I don’t like this, men’.

As there had been a series of larger than normal waves coming over the bow, and a lot of water in the deck, I decided to slow down just a little. That was it – our realization of our situation was easy to read on all of our faces. There was only one word for it: FEAR...

As the horizon rose before them and the boat began to list, they decided it was time to abandon ship. They had been able to free and inflate the life-raft and the three of them managed to slip into it from the water, Martin just managing to slip off a rope that had tangled itself around his leg and which might have dragged him down along with his boat. Receiving no reply to their follow-up call the coastguard marshalled the Penlee lifeboat and a Sea King helicopter from Cauldrose. Martin recalls the moment of their rescue as a happy and funny memory:

A big hand came in towards me on the end of a long arm and then another which I caught hold of – and out I came from that wet, flapping life-raft door like a cow

having a big calf! And then one of the [lifeboat] crew saw Patch [one of the Newlyn fishermen who was also a member of the lifeboat crew] and he said: Bloody typical! We've been on standby, wondering where you were and you're out here already!" Patch is now the Coxswain of that lifeboat.

After Martin had shared this and other stories, and his artworks with me, we shook hands and I took my leave. As we did so, he said 'so there you are, that's my past'. Indeed he was painting his past, from his depiction of the rescue in *Three in the Sea* (Fig. 96), to the different boats and harbours he has worked in *Nutty's Past* (Fig.97), to his fishing skills in *My Qualifications* (Fig.99), and his various occupations and enterprises in *Giving it my best shot*<sup>72</sup>, including looking for treasure. Now that fishing is no longer a financially viable occupation for him, he is now trying to make himself known as an artist. Martin said he resents the economic demands of modern life and just working to pay the bills. He sees himself as a 'Robinson Crusoe' character and this is how he would ideally like to live – self-sufficient and free – perhaps an archetype for many a fisherman. In his own words:<sup>73</sup>

Too many days he had steamed off our shores,  
Not catching enough to pay for the stores.  
No pack of hounds to follow their scent,  
So Nutty Noah's money all gone and spent.  
And now he's an artist, some people might say,  
And the ones who are looking may become his prey.

## Conclusions

In this chapter I have developed two themes. The first relates to the role of economic pluralism and the second to the relationship between practice and representation, experience and imagination, labour and narrative. Whilst fishing as technique and social economic organisation varies considerably with context, it is common for both practitioners and outside commentators to identify fishermen as the 'last of the hunter-gatherers'. This archetypal image may not be without foundation, not only because of its dependency on a wild food source (excepting aquaculture which is more akin to farming) but also because of the parallels between domestic economies within which various scales of fishing are usually embedded and 'band'

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<sup>72</sup> All of Martin Ellis's art works can be viewed at <http://www.nuttynoah.co.uk/fisherman.htm>. Accessed 19/09/12.

<sup>73</sup> (<http://www.nuttynoah.co.uk/fisherman.htm>. Accessed 19/09/12).

organisation in hunter-gatherer societies – to which kin-ordered relations of sharing and reciprocity and combinations of individualism and collectivism are common features. Some culturalist perspectives on hunter-gathering societies have sought to redefine the notion of a hunter-gathering ‘mode of production’ to account for a heterogeneity of ‘subsistence’ practices with which anthropologists have found hunter gatherers engaged – agriculture, herding, trade, and wage-labour including factory production. Drawing on her ethnographic work in India, Bird-David (1992) argued that the ‘work ethic and time orientation of hunter-gatherers continued to shape their social relations long after most of them had become factory workers’ (as summarised by Hann and Hart 2011: 5). In light of this she suggests that the concept of ‘mode of production’ might be seen as an ‘approach to life – i.e. an ethos, involving distinct values, like sharing and egalitarianism’ (Bird-David 1992: 22). Similarly, Barnard (1993) goes so far as to describe foraging as a *mode of thought that* ‘persists after people cease to depend on hunting and gathering as their primary means of subsistence’ (1993: 33).

This perspective can be usefully applied to the context of fishing in western, industrial societies and its aspects of economic pluralism and flexible socio-economic arrangements. ‘Covers’ and inshore fishing communities in particular (such as those common on the coasts of south west England, Wales and the western and far northern islands of Scotland) have long combined fishing (and smuggling), agriculture, navy recruitment, and (more recently) tourism and construction work. Offshore fishing has tended to involve more specialised year-round labour due to being less restricted by seasonal conditions, and because of the capital investment involved (for independent fishermen) and dependency on a wage (for company fishermen). Nevertheless over the life-time of an offshore fisherman, short or protracted spells in other careers such as the merchant navy or energy industry are also common. This diversification is even more evident when we take into account the labour not only of the fisher*men* but also spouses and children who have also had to labour beyond the fishing community (in the restricted sense) work in domestic service, textiles and other often gendered waged labour. Despite these flexible and diverse economic strategies, coastal communities traditionally based around fishing widely succeed in maintaining distinctive attitudes, identities and practices linked both to occupational and place-based affiliations. This suggests a broader, more

encompassing and persistent fishing (or perhaps rural-maritime) 'ethos' then a narrow understanding of the mode of production as simply catching fish. Bird-David's ethnography (ibid) suggests a model of hunter gatherers as:

... A group of people who share the knowledge and skills of hunting and gathering and trust in its viability. They reproduce these among themselves. However, although they hunt and gather regularly at any one time only a core of people – whose composition constantly changes – actually engage in those activities (p.41).

One implication of this model might be that alternative/diversified economic activities potentially reinforce the perceived and actual viability of the core activity.

To return to one particularly outspoken critic of tourism in Cornwall, the playwright and fisherman Nick Darke expressed a concern not only for traditional labour and livelihoods as the production of tangible rural commodities, but also the social relations and ethos these entailed. This theme is explored in his play *The King of Prussia* about the legendary Cornish smugglers, the Carter brothers, who based themselves at Prussia Cove.

The King of Prussia is a play about smugglers. Of course it is. But every play set in the past must also illuminate and simplify the complexities of the present otherwise they're not worth doing, so The King of Prussia is also about second home owners... Suzanne Stackhouse [a character in the play] is Cornwall's proto-second-home owner. In the words of John Carter, "she'd come down ere, play around, bugger off and leave we to pick up the bits". Her attitude towards local people is arrogant and superior. She is an out-and-out villain with not a single redeeming feature. She is two-dimensional, predictable and transparent. She rips through the place like a hurricane leaving a trail of devastation behind her. The only predictable thing about her is that she'll be back next year. Smuggling at that time made a valuable contribution to the economy and John Carter had a strong sense of responsibility to the community which is not shared by the likes of Suzanne (Darke 1999: xi-xii).

So Darke was concerned with how livelihoods and mutual responsibility, obligation and concern were interdependent features of rural ways of life, similar to Sennett's concern with the links between technique, work and community (2009, 2012). Darke has also written about the comparisons between lobster fishing and play-writing<sup>74</sup> and the two activities were brought together in his individual persona and life, mirroring his diverse family influences which in turn reflect the rich variety of social influences (industrial, artistic) in Cornwall. This brings me finally to reflect on the second of theme of this chapter and the links between economic pluralism and

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<sup>74</sup>( [http://nickdarke.net/archives/playwrite\\_as\\_lobster\\_fisherman/](http://nickdarke.net/archives/playwrite_as_lobster_fisherman/). Accessed 19/09/12).

a fluid or elastic conception of the relationship between production and ideology, experience and imagination.

Ingold (2000) has critiqued interpretations of totemistic and animistic depictions of nature (prehistoric such as those found at the caves of Lascaux and contemporary practices among hunter gatherers), as reflecting a universal capacity for 'art' as representation. He contrasts the 'close and intimate knowledge of the landscape and its plant and animal inhabitants, on whose continuity or regeneration their life depends' (p.11) of the hunter gatherer and at the other extreme the 'affluent westerner' who may find an animal a beautiful thing to look at, albeit at a safe, removed distance.

The activities of hunter gatherers that lead to the production of what we in the west call 'art', should be understood as ways not of representing the world on a higher, more 'symbolic plane, but of probing more deeply into it and of discovering the significance that lies therein... To understand the original significance of what they were doing, we must cease to think of painting and carving as modalities of the production of art and view art instead as one rather peculiar, and historically specific objectification of the activities of painting and carving (pp. 112- 113).

The examples of fishermen's art and craft activities I have considered, whilst nurtured and informed by formal western art traditions, are arguably also better understood from Ingold's perspective on activities of painting and carving amongst hunter gatherers. The experience of working at sea and the practice of recalling and evoking that experience are intimately conjoined, exploring and extending fisherman's practical experiences and skills, and enabling them to diversify whilst maintaining their independence and control over the things they make. It is also a way of working with memory that reflects experiences of personal and social change and ultimately reinforces the ethos of fishing even whilst the communities in which it is reproduced are transforming. The distinctions I set out at the outset of this chapter, between the 'observed' and the 'working' seascape, remain conceptually valid as describing two poles of experience, but the case studies suggest that in practice there is a fertile middle ground.

**Figure 69: Fisherman's Memorial, Newlyn, 2009.**



**Figure 70: The *Granite State* wrecked at Porthcurno in 1895. Collection of Gibson's of Scilly. The development of tourist photography coincided with the end of the merchant sailing era.**



**Figure 71: View of the Jubilee Pool from the promenade, Penzance, 2009.**



**Figure 72: *The Rain it Raineth Every Day*, 1889, Norman Garstin 1847-1926. Oil on canvas, 94 x 163 cm. Penlee House Gallery & Museum, Penzance.**



**Figure 73: *The Sunny South*, 1885, Walter Langley 1852 – 1922. Oil on canvas, 122 x 61 cm. Penlee House Gallery & Museum, Penzance. Purchased in 1997 with funding from The Art Fund, the Heritage Lottery Fund and The Friends of Penlee House.**



**Figure 74: *A Chip off the Old Block*, 1905, Walter Langley. Collection of Ferens Art Gallery: Kingston-upon-Hull City Museums, Art Galleries and Archives.**



**Figure 75: Michael Johnson, metal sculptor at The Copper Works, Newlyn, 2012.**



**Figure 76: An artist of the Newlyn School at work with an audience, late C.19<sup>th</sup>.  
Collection of the Cornish Studies Library.**



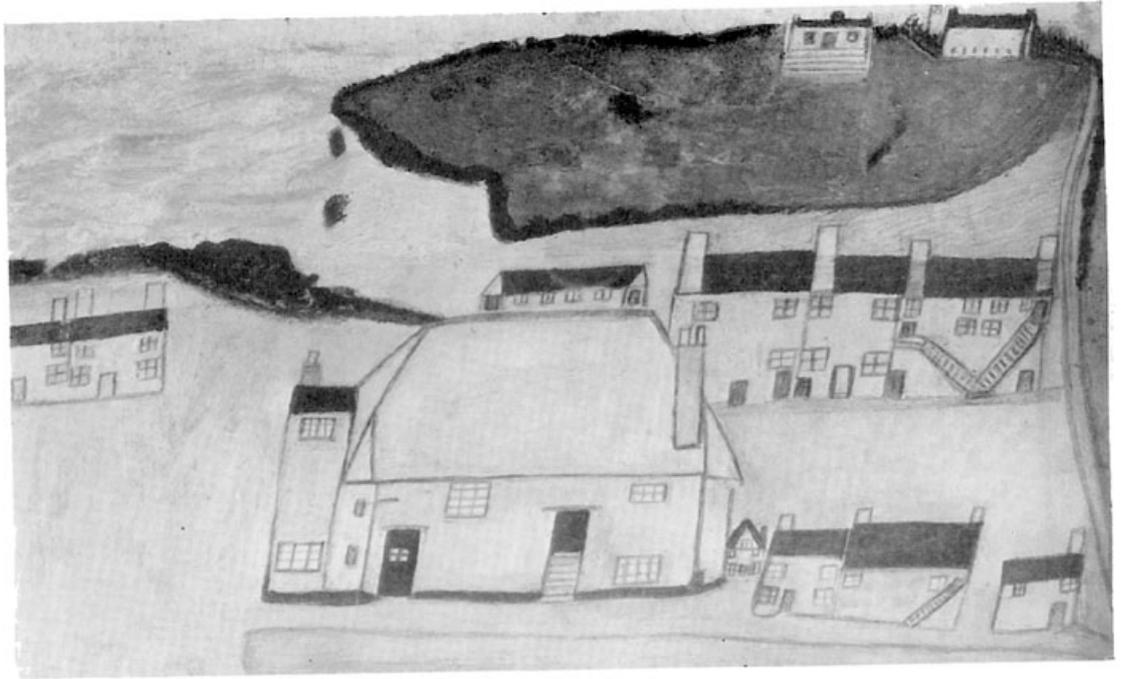
**Figure 77: A salvaged remnant of the *Rosebud*, in Rosebud Court, Newlyn, 2012.**



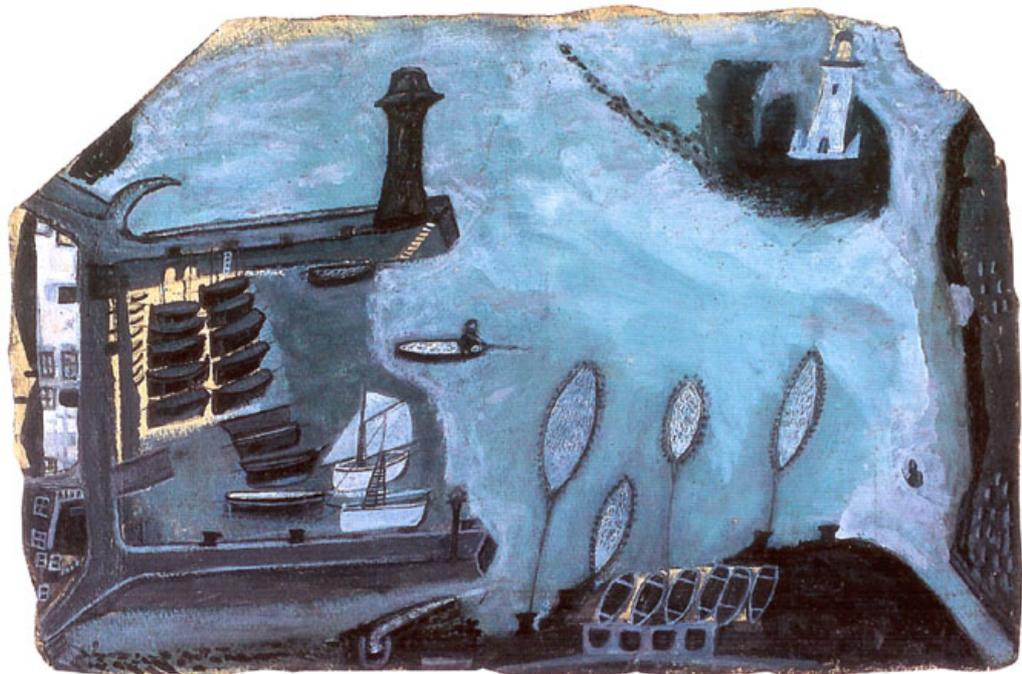
**Figure 78: *The Rosebud*, moored at Westminster. Collection of the Cornish Studies Library.**



**Figure 79: The Island port near beach old house in port near square and a few hold houses in set peters st., Alfred Wallis, n.d. Private Collection.**



**Figure 80: *This Sain Fishery That Use To Be*, Alfred Wallis, n.d. Private Collection.**



**Figure 81: *St Ives Harbour, Hayle Bay and Godrevy and Fishing Boats*, Alfred Wallis, n.d. Private Collection.**



**Figure 82: Nigel Legge setting nets on *Razorbill*, near Cadgwith Cove, 2012.**



**Figure 83: Cadgwith Cove, 2012.**



**Figure 84: Nigel Legge's studio, exterior 1, 2012.**



**Figure 85: Nigel Legge's studio, interior 1, 2012.**



**Figure 86: A withy pot in construction at Nigel Legge's studio, interior 2, 2012.**



**Figure 87: Mr Tom Brown of Port Isaac preparing lobster pots, 1943. Collection of the Cornish Studies Library.**



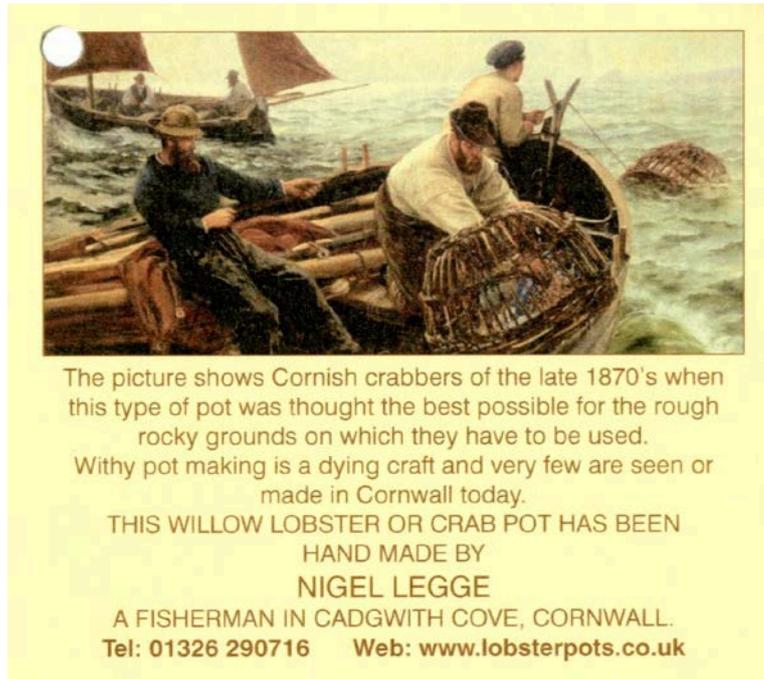
**Figure 88: Nigel Legge in his studio, interior 3, 2012.**



**Figure 89: Nigel Legge's studio, interior 4, 2012.**



**Figure 90: One of Nigel's label tags for his withy pots.**



**Figure 91: Playwright and fisherman Nick Darke. Photograph by Steve Tanner.**



**Figure 92: *Fastnet fleet*, Nigel Legge, on slate, n.d. Private collection.**



**Figure 93: *Driftwood painting*, Nigel Legge, n.d. Private collection.**



**Figure 94: *Newlyn Trawler*, Nigel Legge, n.d. Private collection.**



**Figure 95: Former pilchard processing buildings known as a ‘pilchard palace’, Church Cove, 2012.**



**Figure 96: *Three in the Sea*, Martin Ellis, Acrylic on board, n.d. Private collection.**



Figure 97: *Nutty's Past*, Martin Ellis, Acrylic on board, n.d. Private collection.

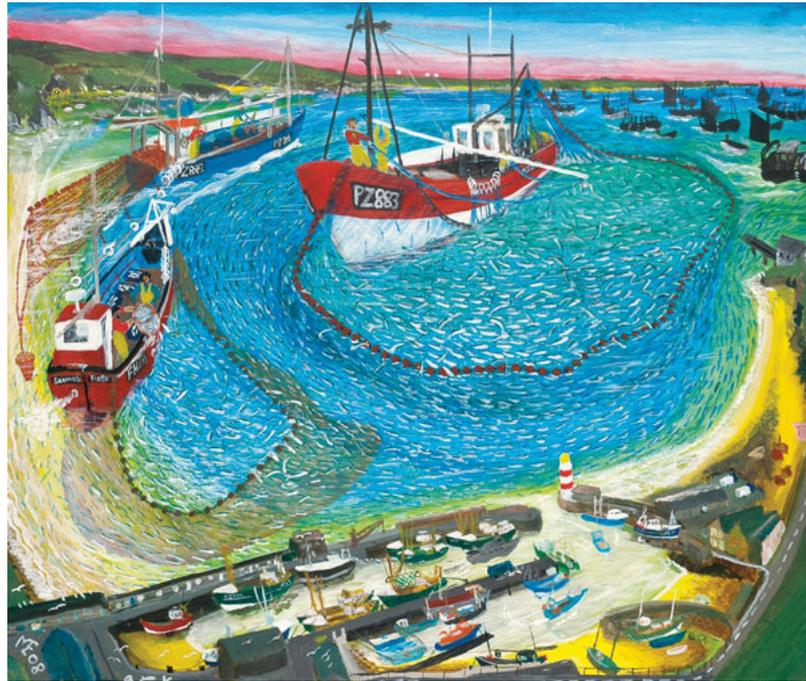
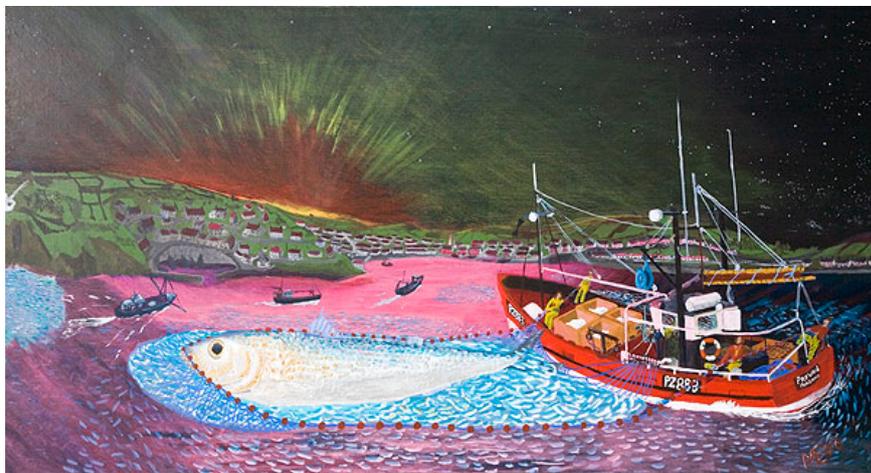


Figure 98: *Nutty's Pilchard*, Martin Ellis, Acrylic on board, n.d. Private collection.



**Figure 99: *My Qualifications*, Martin Ellis, Acrylic on board, n.d. Private collection.**



**Figure 100: Martin Ellis (aka Nutty Noah). Unknown photographer.<sup>75</sup>**



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<sup>75</sup> (<http://www.nuttynoh.co.uk/>. Accessed 12/09/12).

## 9 HERITAGE: RECONSTRUCTION AND REGENERATION

No one knows when the first boat was built, or where, or by whom, or why. Boats began before history; boats are part of our cultural memories. Why else do people gather at the water's edge when tall ships appear?

Dick Wagner, founding director, The Centre for Wooden Boats, Seattle (Hendrickson 2012: 21).

But look! Here come more crowds, pacing straight for the water and seemingly bound for a dive. Strange! Nothing will content them but the extremist limit of the land; loitering under the shady lee of yonder warehouses will not suffice. No they must get just as nigh the water as they possibly can without falling in. And there they stand – miles of them – leagues. Inlanders all, they came from lanes and alleys, streets, and avenues – north, east, south, and west. Yet here they all unite. Tell me, does the magnetic virtue of the needles of the compasses of all those ships attract them thither?

From *Moby-Dick* (Melville 2003: 4).

The playwright Nick Darke expressed fears about the loss of traditional livelihoods in the small farming and fishing community where he lived and was born, and the encroachment of tourism and property speculation. In his view tourism offered 'little remuneration and less dignity to its workforce' (1999: xiii). He even seemed to resent the production of 'heritage': 'culture is debased, and everything including history becomes a commodity' (ibid). In this chapter I explore a range of fishing heritage meanings and practices in Cornwall. My concerns are to acknowledge social complexity and potential conflict around the production of heritage. Similarly to Darke I highlight practice-based/labour-centred views on place and identity (Ingold 2000, Gray 2000 and Howard 2012a) alongside non-essentialist meanings of heritage (Harvey 2001). However by unpacking and contesting conventional constructions of 'heritage' and 'industry' as separate and opposed domains, I argue (contrary to Darke) that heritage does have a role to play in sustaining livelihoods.

I am concerned therefore to consider some of the concrete implications of heritage in terms of contributing to the *sustainability* (economic, social, environmental) of fishing communities. Although there seems to be wide consensus about the necessity of working towards sustainability in fisheries there is also a healthy element of

scepticism amongst scientists, ranging from cautiousness (Pauly et al. 2002) to doubt and criticism of some of the assumptions of the discourse (Longhurst 2006). This usually rests on consideration of the un-sustainability of fisheries in the long, historical view and the complexity of understanding and regulating ecosystems and human impact. 'Restoration ecology' advocates have called for 'reconstructing the past to salvage the future' (Pitcher 2001: 601) referring to building datasets of past, 'pristine' conditions to inform present-day management models. However this should not be misinterpreted as a prescription for anything as simple as 'going back' to pre-industrial technologies or social formations. As Longhurst (ibid) and Thurston, Brockington and Roberts (2010) argue, serious depletion of stocks in the North East Atlantic and North Sea had already occurred before the transition to steam and diesel powered boats. My argument for the relevance of fisheries heritage for sustainability (in the broad, multi-faceted sense of the latter term) rests on three considerations:

- 1) Need for alternative livelihoods and diversification in the wake of fleet reduction, declining incomes, rising costs and restricted access (Symes and Phillipson 2009; Urquhart, Acott, and Zhao In press.).

- 2) Potential contribution to promoting and strengthening the links between 'the catch and the locality' (Reed et al. In press.).

- 3) Role as a source of 'critical nostalgia' (Clifford 1986) – allegorical as well as practical instruction in local and regional resourcefulness (MacDonald 2002).

One of the connections I make between heritage and livelihood is through thinking about heritage as a vehicle for the transmission of knowledge (both in the sense of historical knowledge and practical skills). Heritage can have a range of tangible effects (and *affects*) with potential for *connection* as well *disconnection*, and for making rupture and/or inequality both visible and invisible. I shall proceed by way of outlining my perspective on meanings of heritage and some of the issues around heritage with particular reference to maritime and fisheries contexts, before presenting an account of a range of fishing heritage(s) in Cornwall, focusing in on the reconstruction of the sailing fishing boat *Ripple*.

## **Cultural loss and salvage: heritage meanings and practices**

On the subject of heritage and sustainability in the coastal zone of South West England, Howard and Pindar (2003) articulate two concerns: 1) to outline a perspective on 'fields of heritage' and to question the validity of any rigid distinction between 'natural' and 'cultural' heritage; and 2) to consider the implications of 'modes of cultural heritage consumption' (p.57). Whilst not spelling out the way they define 'heritage', it is clear from their discussion that heritage involves a concern, intention or practice to *conserve*, whether the object is a building, species, language, or skill. As I elaborated in the introduction, my own approach to heritage as a concept is to maintain a distinction between 'heritage' and a more generic notion of 'culture' because otherwise we lose sight of the fact that heritage entails a selective and explicit attention to particular manifestations of culture that are deemed worthy, or in need, of preservation and maintenance. Following Harvey I advocated a non-essentialist and relational view of heritage as 'a process, or a verb, related to human action and agency, and an instrument of cultural power... a contemporary product shaped from history' (Harvey 2001: 327).

Howard and Pindar (op.cite) identify six fields of heritage: landscapes (including seascapes), monuments, sites, artefacts, activities and ways of life and finally, people. Some landscapes, places or practices associated with heritage might incorporate multiple fields. One of their examples, the South West Coast Path (a National Trail) incorporates a mixture of protected and unprotected, natural and cultural features such as cliffs, coves and fishing villages. These may include sites of remembrance, including tragedies such as the loss of the Penlee lifeboat in 1981 when it went to the aid of a stricken ship *The Union Star* (see Chapter Four). The old Penlee lifeboat house near Newlyn is now a monument for the crew lost in that incident (mostly fishermen from the village of Mousehole) and their families. An active fishing village is also the base for the production of a range of artefacts linked to activities and ways of life.

As Howard and Pindar observe 'the heritage of the coastal zone includes the entire culture of how to use it... Heritage is not only the material lobster pot, but also the

ability to make one' (ibid: 61). They also cite the examples of individuals or societies that preserve authentic old ships in order to sail them, and the recent revival of racing pilot gigs. The Cornishman and master-craftsman Ralph Bird (Fig. 102) who made 29 of the 141 registered gigs in use today, described the pilot-gig as formerly being the 'white van' of maritime Cornwall – an all-purpose work-horse used to ferry pilots out to ships as well as involved in salvage and rescue operations<sup>76</sup>. There are a growing number of racing clubs mainly based in active and former fishing communities, and as Howard and Pindar put it, the sport is 'one example of a determination to conserve the activity as well as the artefact. It is more interested with rowing than carpentry' (loc.cite 61). The popularity and esteem with which Bird was held was evident at his funeral which was attended by almost a thousand mourners, many of them gig-rowers wearing their gig-colours.

His coffin, draped in the Cornish flag of St Piran, was towed to the cathedral aboard the gig William Peters, which he built for Roseland in 1987, and gig rowers formed a guard of honour on the cathedral steps with raised oars as the coffin was carried in<sup>77</sup>.

Laurier (1998) has studied formal and informal projects of ship replication and restoration, highlighting the meanings and skills involved for participants and audiences engaged in projects that involve craft production. Laurier's sense of the term 'craft' recalls a 'pre-Fordist' era of connection between maker and product that lies counter to a wider trend of capitalist alienation (Greenhalgh 1997). However 'craft' is also relevant here in Sennett's sense of the term (2009) as technique or expertise that calls upon both manual dexterity and intellect, the problem-solving abilities of 'hand' and 'head' combined. Laurier notes the significant amount of historical research that both expert and amateur boat-builders undertake – a dynamic process involving embodied knowledge, a makeshift approach to old and new, and trial and error. The informal boat restorers in particular work like genealogists contacting families to trace the biographies of previous owners or sailors and investigating archives. However Laurier concludes that 'the 'vital part of restoration is the reacquisition of skills and this forms a final embodied link to the past' (p.47) underlining the importance in this context of an informal, 'learning by doing' approach. Similarly Easthope (2001) also distinguishes 'kinaesthetic' from

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<sup>76</sup> Obituaries, *The Times* (November 14 2009: p.115)

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

‘intellectual’ engagements with maritime heritage. Ingold’s project of exploring how skilled practice constitutes both human subjects and environments can be extended to looking at heritage *practices*.

Crang argues (1994: 151) that ‘each [heritage] practice has as its effect a different space for the past’. Many of the conflicts and tensions surrounding heritage production relate to how practices (such as replicating or restoring a boat) are incorporated into the redevelopment of space (such as waterfronts). Steinberg observes that an image of the ocean as a nostalgic space finds contemporary salience in the ‘postmodern urban waterfront’ (1999: 41), examples being the festival market places, high income housing and maritime museums of Boston, Baltimore, Bristol, Cape Town, Lisbon and Sydney. ‘Here, the sea is referenced as a crucial source for folk culture and past economic glory, but the role of the ocean in contemporary political economy is reduced to that of a provider of images to be consumed’ (p.407). Steinberg quotes Sckula (1995: 12) ‘The old harbour front, its links to a common culture shattered by unemployment, is now reclaimed for a bourgeois reverie on the mercantilist past’.

Observing the recent movement towards ‘vernacular’ modes of heritage, a fascination with the mundane and growth in ‘interactive’ and local heritage museums, Day and Lunn (2003: 296) consider whether ‘nostalgia is indicative of a more participatory and multilayered sense of the past?’ Or if, ‘what generally passes for nostalgia-driven heritage is in fact a version of a past which is romanticized and distanced from the everyday experiences of most people’ (ibid) – the sights, sounds, smells and dangers? A cautionary tale is told by Atkinson, Cooke and Spooner (2002). In the place-marketing and redevelopment of the city of Hull, a former distant-water fishing port, efforts have been made to ‘exorcise’ fishing (including the stink of fish) from the ‘civic image’. Illustrating the inherent selectivity of heritage, the city’s maritime heritage is referenced in terms of the romanticized, historic age of sail. Meanwhile there has been contestation about the redevelopment of the dock that challenges any simplistic counter-narrative about working class community. The dock includes a site where an annual memorial event is held to the 8000 trawlermen lost at sea, showing how the built environment acts as a repository of collective place-memory. However Atkinson et al point out that not all of Hull’s fishing community would want the trawler-owners’ building to be preserved – a reminder

that 'collective' memories may also be formed and informed by contexts of inequality. In a comparative study of small museums in North Carolina mill towns and the 'Time and Tide' project in Great Yarmouth, Wedgwood (2009) has asked whether working classes can also gain from preservation. She noted that 'Yarmouth people wanted to turn an empty fish-factory into a museum, while retaining the fishy smell, and a fire-damaged wall' (2008), suggesting the importance of personal memory in this context. The tension in these examples seems to be one between heritage that presents a homogenized and sanitized version of the past, and one that acknowledges a heterogeneity of local experiences and interests (including inequality) and which enables a more 'critical presentation of the past' and its 'links with, or contingency on the present' (Walsh 1992, cited by Day and Lunn *ibid*: 297).

Rural and industrial heritage may be a source of belonging and identity long after the labour which it draws on has ceased. The inhabitants of Ferryden in Scotland highly prize their identities as 'fisherfolk' despite the fact that the place no longer has an active fishing industry. Nadel-Klein (2003) situates their role in the invention and perpetuation of idealized aspects of the fishing past as a response to the ongoing marginalization of rural places within a capitalist political economy. In the process there has been a move from 'fishers' material status as primary producers of food to their symbolic status as objects of the "tourist gaze" (8). Resentment and resistance towards the prospect of becoming the latter is however keenly expressed by fishers who remain active in the industry. This brings me back to the second of Howard and Pindar's concerns about the implications of modes of cultural heritage consumption.

Cottages and sail-lofts in Cornish fishing villages have in a sense been 'preserved' by conversion to holiday lets, second homes and artists' studios (*ibid*). In some sites multiple use functions have evolved. At St Ives the 'Smart Regeneration Appeal' (Fig.101) has sought to raise funds towards the renovation costs of Porthmeor Studios and Cellars, a place where artists and fishermen have shared working space for over a hundred years. It intends to preserve both the fabric and usage of the building and provide an exhibition space to celebrate its fishing and arts heritage and convert one of the cellars into a working museum. However the consequence of a market in desirable locations is that many locals are priced out of property ownership. The author of one travel article who visited Salcombe in Devon seemed either unaware or uninterested in the area's maritime heritage, other than the most

superficial aspects, and more impressed by the ‘breathtaking prime real estate... which has turned this formerly sleepy fishing village into the Knightsbridge of Devon’<sup>78</sup>. There seems to be a real spectrum of tourist consumption from this example to more informed and sensitive perceptions of visitors keenly interested in signs of a working fishing industry as found by Urquhart and Acott (In press).

The most distinctive and important characteristic of the coast may be, as Walton has argued (2010), that it is an ‘informal space’ – one that is deeply evocative for personal as well as collective memory, whether as a source for recollection of childhood seaside holidays or one connected to making a livelihood from the sea. Commenting on Casey’s argument that to ‘know a region is also to be able to remember it’ (2002: 76) – Matsuda says this mnemonic sense of place ‘defies mere “representation” because it is not about symbolism, but about finding presence in shifting temporal registers of a lived past’ (2004: 262). As visitors and diverse local inhabitants and workers attempt to ‘find presence’ in relation to past and contemporary rural life-ways, there is potential for both connection and disconnection (to nature, work, things made, other people). In any case tourism need not be the only target of coastal heritage and Howard and Pindar seriously question the economic viability and environmental sustainability of basing coastal economies around tourism. Rather, ‘if tourism can never be sustainable, then conserving heritage to serve the local population in very different ways might be’ (ibid: 67). The implications of different modes of heritage production may then be as important as modes of consumption. With this thought in mind, I turn now to consider a heritage initiative at Newlyn, the reconstruction of the lugger *Ripple* – an example which illustrates and enriches our understanding of these issues and which also prompts consideration of a range of other ‘fields’ of fishing heritage in Cornwall.

## **Reconstruction**

To remind the reader of the context in which *Ripple* came about and in which the fieldwork in general was conducted, the Superintendent of the Fishermen’s Mission at Newlyn, Keith Dickson, expressed concern about the loss of experienced fishermen and lack of recruitment owing to rising costs, restricted access and

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<sup>78</sup> ‘Devon Sent’ (*Evening Standard Magazine*, Standard.co.uk/Lifestyle)

declining incomes. He pointed to the problems this created in an area of long-term economic deprivation including housing issues, where property prices were out of reach of local incomes and he highlighted the situation at Mousehole where he believed as many as eighty percent of properties were holiday lets. Unlike most other fishing villages in Cornwall Newlyn only has a marginal tourist industry drawing in a small number of visitors from the much larger number that visit more ‘picturesque’ Mousehole which now harbours only a tiny active fishing fleet for part of the year. It was not uncommon for people I spoke to in Newlyn to draw a contrast with Mousehole with a mixture of pride and also anxiety about the prospect of Newlyn sharing the same future.

Against this background of concern about loss of skills and loss of jobs, I encountered *Ripple* – a heritage initiative that was attempting to revive old skills and create new jobs. The sight of *Ripple* moored in the harbour drew my curiosity, incongruous alongside the other boats but also somehow fitting in the wider land/sea-scape. It begged the question whether this heritage project could have something to say and to contribute to the problems in the fishing industry or whether they were operating in two different social and economic domains – separate and even antagonistic.

Following Cornwall’s designation as an Objective One area for the 2000-2007 EU funding programme a Fisheries Task Force was set up consisting of fisheries regulators, port managers, fish merchants and processors, agents and fishermen’s representatives to plan and implement how the money potentially available for fisheries was to be spent. A sub-group, the Newlyn Fishing Industry Forum (NFIF), was given the task of studying the potential for regeneration in the port through a) developing fisheries infrastructure and b) identifying and capitalizing on ‘opportunities that can be gained by combining aspects of tourism, leisure and fishing industries and to encourage all sectors of the fishing industry to be more accessible to the public’ (One n.d.). Proposals were not only informed by top-down policy directives. In public discourse surrounding regeneration in Newlyn, in online blogs and in my interviews, there was talk of the need for change and modernization and of addressing patterns of stagnation and narrow development. One of the members of the NFIF was the Methodist minister for Newlyn. Although recognizing the complex and longstanding ties between Newlyn and the firm that own the

majority of the beam-trawl fleet, he questioned the public benefit of the harbour having 'all its resources tied up in boats that were unable to go to sea' (referring to the impact of the fuel cost and recruitment issues). A harbour is about more than those who go to sea he added. 'You cannot separate a harbour from the people that live around it'. Like Keith he pointed to the example of Mousehole and asking rhetorically, 'How do you stop a community from dying?'

John Lambourn (Figs. 109, 100) was also a member of the NFIF and envisaged the boat contributing to its heritage and regeneration goals, but essentially the idea, the finance for the project, and a lot of the restoration work was all his own. In fact it took five years of hard work before she was seaworthy. John grew-up close to Newlyn, the son of the artist George Lambourn (1900-1977). As a young man he left to join the merchant navy, and became a ship's captain ferrying cargo and passengers all over the world. This led to a position as assistant harbour-master and civil servant in the Marine Department of the port of Hong Kong. On retirement he returned to live in Newlyn where his brother is a fisherman. Acknowledging the unique character of Newlyn, John has said that a 'too tidy approach' to promoting the area's heritage would not sit well. He intended for Ripple to be a working boat and to have a 'rural' rather than an 'academic' or 'sacred' function. His vision was to set up a sailing school that would give young people as well as paying tourists a practical educational experience. He envisaged that the learning of seamanship skills through luggers would not only be a means for personal development and life-skills amongst young people but would also stimulate a growing interest in traditional boat-building in Cornwall. Furthermore, re-registering it under its original fishing vessel number he hoped to use it to demonstrate fishing techniques and land fish to the market.

Ripple constitutes a particular form of heritage but it also signifies and embodies a range of other relatively longstanding heritages – the influence of the Newlyn School of artists that drew John's father to the area and which alongside photographs provide visual referents (in the absence of living memory) of the days when luggers were in common use; its biography tells a story drawing on a tradition of folk tales centred around boats and their journeys; and finally it embodies a range of craft skills, which some have even considered to be 'arts' of their own. A former fisherman and artist remarked:

A lot is said about art in Cornwall, but hammer and chisel art, the art of bending and avoiding splitting, the art of each fastening being driven in and making up the overall strength of the Ripple seem to be John Lambourn's art. What a beauty the Ripple is after so much work. I get the feeling John could see her finished before he started.

As described in Chapter Four, luggers are heavy-framed, *carvel*-planked<sup>79</sup>, beamy<sup>80</sup> craft built for fishing that are easily identifiable by two perpendicular sails located *fore* and *aft*<sup>81</sup> (Fig. 105). Many small details were crafted by John himself such as the wooden blocks in the rigging. There were disputes with some of the suppliers involved such as the sail-maker in Falmouth who thought light modern sail cloth should be used. However John had a particular vision in mind which included the traditional heavy canvas sails which would have at one time been pitched with bark tar. He did make some concessions for new technologies, such as two engines and a range of navigational and communications technologies. It was therefore a 'combination of the ancient and the modern', he said.

There is no one alive now who made a living from sailing these boats, and few people who have the knowledge to build them. However there is a rich variety of historical sources that John could go to. To begin with there were the technical drawings and writings of maritime historians like Philip Oak and Edgar March, commissioned between the 1930s and 1950s by the National Maritime Museum to travel the length and breadth of the British Isles recording both the design of traditional craft and the memories of the boat-builders and mariners, as these craft were being replaced by engine powered boats and steel hulls. There were also 'hand me down stories' (in John's words) and family archives. Once the restoration had begun, descendents of her former owners began rummaging around in attics and producing photographs and records that revealed Ripple's biography. There are a great many photographs as well as paintings depicting luggers in the late nineteenth century especially. This was the moment shortly after the arrival of the railway, when the lugger fishing industry was at its peak and artists' communities as well as early tourism were beginning to flourish, especially at Newlyn and St Ives. John had never built a boat before, let alone a lugger and yet the small details such as the

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<sup>79</sup> *Carvel* – a technique in which the planks of a boat hull are pegged overlapping one another rather than pegged abutting flush up against one another as in the *clinker* technique.

<sup>80</sup> *Beamy*: a terms used to describe a vessel that is broad (i.e. the proportion of its 'beam' or breadth relative to length).

<sup>81</sup> *Fore* and *aft*: referring to the front and rear sections of a vessel, or towards the 'bow' and the 'stern' respectively.

rigging match these visual representations perfectly (Fig.110). Finally there is a huge amount of what John has called ‘the social history of Cornwall’ – the historic documents in public archives that record who built the boats, who owned and had shares in the boats, who skippered them and how much they caught.

The construction of *Ripple* and the material networks it embodies is mirrored in the social and economic relationships evident in the archives. These were explored in Chapter Four. Census data for St Ives in the late nineteenth century shows that the boat-builders, sail-makers, blacksmiths, rope-makers, coopers etc all lived alongside the fishers and mariners. The legal ownership of each boat consisted of 64 shares and the Merchant Shipping Records show that these trades-people as well as widows frequently held shares in the boats. The profits of each catch were divided between a boat-share (which was divided again between the owners), a body-share which able fishermen received (boys received a half-share) and a finally a net-share for those crew members that owned a net or a piece of a net<sup>82</sup>. The women of fishing families often made and mended the nets, especially as fishing industrialized and the boats were away for up to three months at a time chasing the shoals of herring in an annual circumnavigation of Britain.

The way that *Ripple* is a conduit for the transmission of historical knowledge lies not only in archival repositories of social history and memory, but also in the skills and insight acquired through learning to sail her. I experienced this first-hand as a member of the crew sailing her for the first time since the 1930s. The crew composition was quite fluid and changed over time. Initial outings included members of John’s family and acquaintances of John who had taken an interest in her reconstruction, including a fisherman. During the period I was associated with *Ripple*, the core of the crew consisted of myself, John’s son-in-law and two school friends I recruited – one a builder and ex-fisherman and the other working at a fish factory whilst saving money to complete a masters degree in mining.

The ability to sail a lugger, as to build one, was a skill that had to be recovered and re-learnt – and the only way to do this was through practice (Fig.111). It was a tough, very physical challenge that gave us a more direct connection to a by-gone way of life. There were moments of exhilaration when body and limb, wind and

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<sup>82</sup> Thanks to Tony Pawlyn, maritime historian (personal communication) for information regarding the social history of the Cornish fishing industry in the lugger era.

sailing rig finally worked in tandem, and boat and crew achieved momentary gracefulness. After a race at a lugger regatta, we rowed in to the harbour, two men to each massive oar. A crowd was gathered on the piers and cheered as we passed through the gaps. However for the most part the experience was punishingly hard and sometimes frightening. With a *dipping lug rig*, every time it was necessary for the boat to tack, the foresail (about 700 sq feet of canvas and a heavy wooden spar) had to be quickly lowered, passed around the mast and re-hoisted, without losing the wind or getting things tangled up. It was a difficult procedure for a bunch of novices. Due to John's commitment to authenticity, the sails were held in place by large iron hooks which passed through a round iron ring or *cleat* in the corner of the sail and were connected to the *sheets* which passed inside the *gunwale* and up to the *halyards* (ropes on which you pulled or 'let go' to raise or lower the sail). Sometimes when sailing the wind slackened for a moment and the iron cleats would come free. The sail would start to whip and crack like lightning, the iron ring flying dangerously around our heads, until some brave soul caught it and wrestled it back into place. On a failed attempt to make it to the Isles of Scilly in heavy seas, a crew member took a nasty hit to the head, and a life-boat was called to tow the boat back to safety.

Through these experiences we were given an insight into how tough the men must have been that sailed these boats for a living and we learnt that fishing and sailing, in the era before fishing boats were mechanized, were inter-dependent and advanced whole-body skills, to which a practical education from a young age would have been a great advantage. We also had to struggle with the nautical terminology and phrases that John insisted on using, as if to show that *Ripple* was part of a much broader maritime tradition.

After one difficult trip, safely back in harbour, I had stayed to help John put the covers on the furled sails. First we sat below in the galley to pep ourselves up with sugary tea and biscuits. John was clearly disappointed with how difficult training a crew to sail the boat was turning out to be. I told John 'this is where it starts to get interesting'. He responded,

In your anthropological terms it is interesting because people have a certain romantic notion about these boats but for the fishermen who worked them, they were just about making a living and a hard one at that. When the motor engine came on the scene they did not hesitate to make that change. Handling that sail in bad conditions would have been hell and each time there was a chance the boat would sink.

He went on to talk about the wider issue of sustainability: 'People think it's just a matter of going back to the methods and technologies of old, but then find out how hard that life is. Sustainability is really much more complex than that'.

About thirty original Cornish luggers and three replicas are still sailing today. There is an element of performance and spectacle about these which is romantic particularly for bystanders and onlookers (as crew-members we were only too aware of the dangers). However when the festivals and regattas are in full sway they are a thrilling experience for crews and spectators because they animate seascapes in a way otherwise rarely seen today which perhaps resonates with a deep, subconscious memory of past eras (Fig.113). As fishing and other coastal industries, such as shipping and ship-building, have industrialized, specialized and in many areas declined (Smith 1999, Starkey 1998), these tangible links with working seascapes have also been lost.

Just as John's project is given meaning by local repositories of history and memory, this last aspect brings into view a body of academic work in archaeology and historical geography discussed in chapter one. Influenced by Braudel's approach to Mediterranean history Bowen (1972) and Cunliffe (2001) explore shared maritime cultures of Atlantic peoples whether fostered by interaction and exchange or merely through an experience of the same sea and finding similar solutions to common problems. Whilst the Ripple restoration is somewhat particular given the local context, it is also one of a growing network of maritime heritage projects spanning Atlantic North West Europe explicitly celebrating a common heritage (which in particular regions some see as part of a revived 'Celtic' identity). Whilst there are a number of associations in Cornwall linked to the reconstruction/replication and sailing of former fishing vessels, such as the St. Ives Jumbo Association, Mounts Bay Lugger Association and the Cornish Maritime Trust (Fig.103), John Lambourn's project is perhaps unique in that it is situated within the context of a working fishing port.

To recall my first encounter with John and the Ripple I had asked him how he had the skills to build such a boat and he replied, 'Oh, when you grow up are in an environment where things are made, you just pick it up, like you do when you work on your own house... That's what they should be teaching young people. It gives you'... (He searched for the right words). 'Freedom!' his friend, a fisherman, put in.

‘Freedom, yes’, John continued ‘and also a sort of “can do” attitude – if you have a dream and you can do the work yourself, well then that can make the difference between achieving something and never even beginning’. He also said that he wanted to ‘give young people thoughts and hope about what to do with their lives’. I liked the idea of a boat being a vessel of thoughts and a vehicle for the imagination, as indeed they have been throughout history, but there is here also the ideal of the craftsman (Sennett 2009), the maker who belongs to an ancestral community but also has freedom and independence through control over the process of work.

Macdonald (2002) has said that displays of vernacular material culture represent a critical commentary on resourcefulness that is expressive both of a locality and a way of life that is broader than the locality. *Ripple* represents a technological tradition that is unique to west Cornwall and simultaneously it can also be interpreted as representative of ways of life collectively associated with the broad historical-geography of maritime regions and more specifically, with fishing. The emphasis John placed on reviving a sense of local resourcefulness and independence is pertinent in the context of the fishing industry in an era where entry costs are increasingly prohibitive for young people.

The concern about nostalgia in critical discussions of heritage is symptomatic of a wider interpretation of ‘heritage’ as a peculiar phenomenon of late modernity and the so-called ‘heritage industry’. Whilst not wishing to recount the whole course of this debate, I shall draw attention to some pertinent points Harvey has made in this regard. He notes the ‘strong, yet often simplistic relation of the heritage concept to conditions of postmodernity and to the post-modern economy’ (p.323). However, Harvey contends that heritage is not only about economic commodification, nor solely about leisure. ‘*Only* looking at heritage in this light, leads to a narrow argument that heritage can only produce dislocation and rootlessness, cutting off an *authentic* version of the past and replacing it with a *simulacra* of the past’ (p.326). In this view ‘the heritage industry is portrayed as a sort of parasite, exploiting the more genuine and ‘ageless’ memorial (and largely oral) relationships with the past that people had before the 19<sup>th</sup> century’ (ibid). Harvey recalls the work of Pierre Nora that makes a ‘distinction between an elite institutionalised memory preserved in the archives, and the memory of ordinary people, unrecorded, and ingrained in the unspoken traditions and habits of everyday life’ (ibid). Yet importantly, ‘...rather

than seeing this “traditional” memory as something that has ended, and been defeated by “false heritage”, Nora sees it as having been transformed (partly through technological and archival development) and democratised’ (ibid).

Whilst Harvey has found evidence of a much longer history of heritage making, through case-studies like medieval hagiographies of saints in West Cornwall, in maritime history there are also some early examples of such processes. For example O’Sullivan (2004) looked at the construction and use of wooden and stone fish weirs throughout the Middle Ages. He found evidence of continuity in the labour and practices of medieval fishing communities, even across hundreds of years and long periods where these structures would not have been used within living memory. Exploring how ‘medieval fish weirs could be interpreted as the expression through material culture of the identities of local fishing communities’ (p.451) he suggests that,

These people through their daily work and practice within estuarine environments, their knowledge and understanding of place and their perception of the past could have used these structures to construct, negotiate and even resist changing social identities with the world within which they lived (pp.451-452).

Interestingly for the present discussion, he notes that ‘in interpreting the evidence for medieval fishing practices on estuaries, archaeologists are hampered by the fact that they have no personal experience of how to build, repair and use fish weirs in chilly estuarine waters’ (p.451).

## Regeneration

Whilst *Ripple* can be seen as an example of ‘critical nostalgia’ (Clifford 1986) it is arguably also a pragmatic and forward-looking enterprise. John had said one of his aims was ‘to open people’s eyes to the lessons of a hundred years ago, when there was no oil and only wind’. Recently one of the last of the Westcountry *ketches*<sup>83</sup>, Irene, sailed for Brazil, via the Mediterranean. It is transporting and trading in ethical and organic food produce between ports on route, and is an imaginative attempt to explore a market for low carbon cargo. Reincorporating wind power and sail technology into commercial ship design is also being explored by companies such as B9 Shipping Company. Given the pressures in the fishing fleet owing to rising fuel

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<sup>83</sup> *Ketch*: A two-masted, fore and aft sailing ship traditionally used for transporting small cargoes.

costs<sup>84</sup>, *Ripple* provides an allegory about the need to explore alternative technologies and the role for the past as a resource and stimulus for future innovation. Several vessels at Newlyn have already experimented with incorporating sail power to make them less reliant on diesel. With multiple major redevelopment plans, public and private, having been discussed for Newlyn and the surrounding vicinity, John could also see an opportunity for revived boat-building and servicing yards. These could not only provide alternative jobs but also potentially be a stimulus for technological innovation in the fisheries sector.

Attitudes towards John's project from members of the local fishing industry however have been mixed. A colourful and provocative character, he is widely regarded, as a romantic, an eccentric and even a troublemaker. Until recently, he was a newly appointed member of the Newlyn Pier and Harbour Commissioners, following a government Harbour Review Order in 2010. John, along with two others, was later voted out by secret ballot. Little information was given to the public as to the reasons for this ousting but it is no secret that there were disagreements regarding harbour redevelopment and regeneration plans, in particular a proposal for a new fish market.

One of the problems identified with the existing market has been is that it is an extremely functional and not aesthetically pleasing building that dominates the seafront and blocks views from the centre of the village to the sea. Most tourists either bypass Newlyn or pass straight through on the way to Mousehole. Ambitious plans were advocated by some people, including John, for redevelopment of the harbour that would include 'visitor friendly' features and a more effective marketing of the heritage of the village<sup>85</sup>. Others, including some fishermen and fish merchants, felt that the fishing industry could not afford such plans and were wary of whom it would benefit. Whilst yet another group of port users, including fishermen I spoke to who operated from Newlyn but did not land their fish there, or reside in the locale, felt that any new market would ideally be located not in the village at all but favoured a new central inland market and distribution centre directly linked to one of the main roads, where lorries can get into and out of easily. This could then serve

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<sup>84</sup> The overheads created by fuel expenses are huge – for some Newlyn based trawlers £10,000 of diesel per trip on average – arguably a significant pressure towards overfishing as well as affecting fisher incomes.

<sup>85</sup> Plans were informed by the Cornwall Archeological Unit report: *Cornwall and Scilly Urban Survey. Historical characterization for regeneration: Newlyn* (Russell 2003).

both large fishing ports in the region and other smaller ports that presently overland their fish to existing markets.

Clearly there are widely divergent views represented here about the particular ties between fishing markets, towns/villages, harbours and fleets and how these are to evolve and adapt to changing European and global economic and political conditions. For Elizabeth Stevenson, shareholder in the largest fish merchant and fishing boat-owning firm in Newlyn (W.S. Stevenson and Sons) the bottom line must be the priorities of the catching sector. Elizabeth Stevenson manages the day-to-day operations of the firm that has been in her family for generations and also happens to be related to John by marriage, although they are no longer on speaking terms following John's outspoken criticisms of the firm. She had some sharp points about the limitations of John's project (as she saw them), saying 'it doesn't do a lot to the port in terms of economic strength or economic financial benefits, you know, it doesn't employ anybody as such and it doesn't bring in an awful lot of bread and butter, does it?' I asked Elizabeth if she could see a role for the kinds of diversification John's project might help promote such as traditional boat building and boat servicing yards. She replied that she couldn't see anything necessarily wrong with it but doubted whether it was 'a viable thing bringing in an economy to the harbour in terms of fish landed'.

He hasn't landed a fish yet with the Ripple and I don't think he ever will land a fish. If he wants to have the Ripple and go sailing, that's fine and have people building luggers and things, I haven't got a problem with that. There is certainly a need for carpenters, but whether it is viable without grants and things like that, that's quite a different issue.

Perhaps naively I then asked Elizabeth whether she felt that projects like John's might have a role in informing wider communities about fishing in Cornwall and potentially attract new recruitment. Once again her response was to the point:

I haven't seen any single person come in yet that's gone commercial fishing, having gone on the Ripple. And I mean, may be it will, but I very much doubt it. There's quite a different set of skills needed to go commercial fishing on some of the steel vessels than the sailing vessel.

Elizabeth Stevenson's comments convey a sense of boundaries, social distance and different economic priorities that seem, in her view, to mark a sharp divide between fishing 'industry' and 'heritage'. Apprenticeship into fishing is typically by an informal process of experience, observation and practice (as discussed in Chapter

Seven). Whilst Ripple is a form of heritage that also calls on informal, practical and experiential learning of skills, this process and the skills learnt are comparable to modern fishing but not alike. It can by no means be a replacement for occupational skill-sets in fishing. What is being learnt during an apprenticeship on a boat is not only mechanical skills but also how to fit in to a social system which is both embodied in the *habitus* of the crew but also transcends the crew as a wider way of life (van Ginkel 2001; Simpson 2006). To ‘learn the ropes’ as a new recruit into fishing van Ginkel says, is a process,

...not limited to the mere performing of tasks; it includes internalizing the norms, values, attitudes, interests, knowledge and skills necessary to become an accepted member of the occupational group, to do the job properly, and to legitimize the work world. Compatibility with the crew’s ideology is an important factor (2001: 179).

Fishers’ attachment to their way of life is often explained in terms of features of ‘occupational community’ (Davis 1986; Lummis 1977) such as a strong sense of pride and satisfaction in one’s work and identity, specialized knowledge and skills, ‘an “egalitarian ideology” combined with rhetoric’s and concepts of independence, self-reliance, freedom and so forth’ (van Ginkel 2001: 178). One aspect of this pride and satisfaction in work and identity, which is surprisingly sometimes overlooked in these analyses, is status as ‘primary producers of food’ (Nadel-Klein 2003: 8). In an era where more than half of the world’s population lives in cities and the majority of people (at least in the industrialized West) are not directly engaged in producing food, the close associations between fisher and fish as a vital (and often messy, bloody, smelly) life source and the idea of ‘putting food on plates’ is significant, not least to many fishers themselves. As one fisherman expressed it, commenting on his sons following him into fishing:

They went fishing of their own choice. They didn’t come because I made them come. They wanted to go fishing. But if I didn’t think fishing had a future, I would have tried to put them off. But I’ve always believed that fishing’s got a good future. Because the way I always look at it, in simple terms is, you got to eat [pointing], and everybody else got to eat on this planet, and there’s only so many people producing food.

Whilst Ripple has not (yet) to my knowledge been dirtied with the blood and fish guts of a commercial catch, and whilst the reconstruction was self-funded by John, it nonetheless does have something to contribute directly to the catching sector and to the local economy. By evoking a sense of the past in a tangible way, by recalling and bringing to life scenes depicted in photographs and artworks, Ripple makes a link

between different ‘fields’ of heritage – the production and consumption of local history, visual cultures (including art galleries and museums) and fishing in a contemporary working harbour – domains that might otherwise remain separate, disconnected and fragmented spheres to the detriment of all. This has already contributed to generating a ‘sense of place’ that is fostering stronger links between the ‘catch and the locality’ (Reed et al. In press.) as in the example of the recent revival of the fishery for pilchards in Cornwall, now rebranded, as the ‘Cornish sardine’. One firm is now selling Cornish sardines in tins illustrated with Newlyn School paintings featuring luggers in Newlyn harbour (Fig. 114). Now that real luggers can be once again be seen alongside the medieval ‘old quay’ in Newlyn (Fig. 115) this marketing has been used to good effect. The pilchard fishery is not regulated by quotas and is being promoted by catchers and merchants as both indigenous and sustainable. This marketable ‘sense of place’ as food provenance isn’t to be mistaken for the diverse and grittier everyday experience and place-attachments of fishers and other workers and residents in places like Newlyn. Nonetheless it is an important one when the sustainability (social, economic, environmental) of forms of fish production reliant on bulk overseas export is questionable.

Laurier’s (1998) and Easthope’s (2001) research on heritage boat reconstruction and sailing show that processes of relearning and recovering these skills link a spirit of curious intellectual historical enquiry with a more kinaesthetic appreciation of the past that is formative for the participants as persons. In other words, these kinds of heritage speak to both ‘intensional’ and ‘extensional’ definitions of heritage as defined by Porter and Salazar:

As an intensional definition, heritage presents itself as ‘sense of the self in the past’ where the subject component of ‘self’ is ascribed at increasingly broad scales of the individual, community, nation and globe, and the temporal links between the subject and the past are based on genealogical, biological or community connections. On the other hand, an extensional definition requires actually locating concrete manifestations of ‘heritage’ in the world. Language and other practices are vehicles through which human understandings of the past are expressed. Objects, too, come to embody these ideas and represent and communicate past times in the present (2005: 362).

The link between skills and heritage is more clearly understood when we consider how both enfold particular temporalities and realms of affect. The learning of fishing skills and heritage sailing skills involve their participants in different maritime

geographies and senses of the past. However both are embedded in concrete technologies, artefacts and infrastructures that have the potential to impact (positively or negatively) on one another. An interesting image that captures the complex and shifting nature of fishing heritage in Cornwall is a photograph taken by Newlyn-based photographer Vince Bevan. It was taken at the Newlyn Fish Festival, an annual summer festival organised by the fishing community at Newlyn. In the foreground two young boys demonstrate a basic trawling method. These boys, barely yet teenagers, are the sons of two highly regarded and skilled fishermen and can often be seen in the harbour doing their own bit of fishing. They represent a future generation of fishermen. In the background are a few of the big beam trawlers, proud and somehow melancholic in their muddy berths at low tide; a reminder of the selectivity of heritage, there is the danger that the more recent history of the way of life represented by these vessels is slowly slipping from view.

Until recently William (Billy) Stevenson, elderly patriarch and retired boss of W.S. Stevenson and Sons maintained a small private museum in an old school house on Paul Hill (Figs. 117-121). He said he had been unable to secure public funding and was only able to afford to have it open to the public a few times a year. It was packed with photographs and models of all the various boats the family firm had owned and the crews who had worked them, plus real engines salvaged from the boats, some of which Billy would start up when visitors came. The museum illustrated the role of personal and collective memory that Wedgwood (2009) drew attention to in 'working class' museum contexts, although in this case from the trawler-owners perspective rather than the workers. A dedication by Billy Stevenson read: 'I dedicate this museum to the memory of my grandfather and father who created a lot of what you see here'. The museum recently closed, the building purchased for use as an art school, and the (new) Newlyn School of Art opened its doors in September 2011, a private not-for-profit enterprise providing adult education arts workshops. One aspect of heritage disappears from view; another comes further into the light. However given the social embeddedness of art practices in the Newlyn area and the need for young artists to be able to supplement their income with teaching and for members of a diverse community to have the chance to learn new skills, who is to say that this new use of an old school building has any less validity than the last?

## Conclusions

The core example of fisheries heritage considered in this chapter challenges notions of ‘industry’ and ‘heritage’ as being separate and opposed domains. Whilst heritage production is inevitably a selective process, I have demonstrated an important role for heritage that exists outside of museum contexts and which incorporates informal learning, and production and use of material artefacts including craft skills. This can be a source of alternative and diversified fishery-linked livelihoods, a factor in strengthening and promoting links between catch and locality, and a powerful source of critical nostalgia to stimulate imagination and innovation. Alternative forms of heritage production have implications for alternative forms of consumption (including tourism) and even alternative forms of fishing. Dependency of communities on harbours and on the sea in places with a history of fishing is broader and more complex than merely landing of fish. The current period of economic recession and rising unemployment has consequences for young people in rural maritime regions, across class, occupational and family backgrounds. In a context of frequent anxiety about the loss of ‘real’ and ‘tangible’ jobs (Crow et al. 2009) and growing disparities between ‘financially rich’ centres and ‘heritage rich’ peripheries (Howard and Pindar 2003: 65), heritage initiatives that can strengthen regions, livelihoods and diversity of skill-base are to be supported.

Nonetheless, maintaining existing fishing harbours and beaches as bases for catching fish, remains the highest priority for the sustainability of coastal economies and the integrity of coastal places. Needless to say this should be complemented and stimulated by heritage initiatives, rather than replaced. This entails a historically informed conception of ‘fishing communities’ (both in the traditional and occupational sense) as mixed economies, which are always changing and evolving. To recall Walton (see Chapter Two) ‘community’ in this view involves ‘commitment to an industry, not necessarily entailing actually going to sea, but being part of a network of shared interests and concerns that surrounded the fishing’ (2000b: 128). A similar case is made by Ross (In press.) in the context of contemporary Scotland. Academics can inform policymakers, local authorities and non-state actors about how to support these kinds of communities by observing the connections and

disconnections between the various practices, politics and priorities of their different sectors. Ultimately neither state, nor industry, nor community models of development, will be sufficient alone to articulate and manage their complex ties.

Figure 101: Charity appeal leaflet for the renovation of Porthmeor Studios and Fisherman's Cellars, St Ives. The Borlase Smart John Wells Trust Limited.

borlase  
**SMART**  
john wells  
trust **REGENERATION**

**PORTHMEOR STUDIOS**  
and  
**FISHERMEN'S CELLARS**



*For over a Century  
Fishermen and Artists  
have worked together  
at Porthmeor Studios  
– we hope to keep it  
that way!*

Figure 102: Master craftsman Ralph Bird at work. *The Times* November 14 2009.



Figure 103: Leaflet for 'The Cornish Maritime Trust'.

**The Cornish Maritime Trust**

In the 1880s there were many hundreds of dipping lug rigged sein and drift net fishing boats registered in Cornish fishing ports. Besides these big boats, there were several times that number of smaller undecked day boats fishing with pots, longlines, and small nets. Today only a handful of the luggers, and less of the smaller boats survive.

The Cornish Maritime Trust was formed in 1994, from Cornish Friends of the Maritime Trust with the object of preserving examples of historic working boats, and their gear, showing them and how they were worked to as wide a public as possible.

The trust works closely with the National Maritime Museum of Cornwall and operates summer sailing cruises (weather permitting) on a weekly basis from its Falmouth pontoon. For details telephone 01326 214550.

**The Trust is always ready to welcome new members. Annual Membership: Adult £20, Junior £10, Family £30. Weekly, Life and Corporate membership available. For more details visit the website: [www.cornishmaritimetrust.org.uk](http://www.cornishmaritimetrust.org.uk) Enquiries - Telephone 01736 731612**

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[www.cornishmaritimetrust.org.uk](http://www.cornishmaritimetrust.org.uk)

**PRESERVING CORNWALL'S MARITIME HERITAGE**

**Figure 104: A shipwright at work during the reconstruction of *Ripple* (photographer unknown).**



**Figure 105: The hull of *Ripple* during reconstruction work in 2005, with carvel planking and in the foreground one of the shipwrights that worked on the project. Photograph by Vince Bevan.**



**Figure 106: *Ripple*, pre-restoration.**



**Figure 107: A depiction of the public launch of *Ripple*, by Bernard Evans, n.d.**



**Figure 108: John Lambourn aboard *Ripple* in Mount's Bay, 2009.**



**Figure 109: John Lambourn at the helm of *Ripple*, 2009.**



**Figure 110:** *Off to the fishing grounds, 1886, Stanhope Forbes. Oil on canvas. Collection of National Museums Liverpool.*



**Figure 111:** *The crew of Ripple working together to furl and cover a sail, Mount's Bay, 2009.*



**Figure 112:** *Ripple* under full sail, Looe, 2009.



**Figure 113:** *Ripple* chasing the pack, Looe Lugger Festival, 2009.



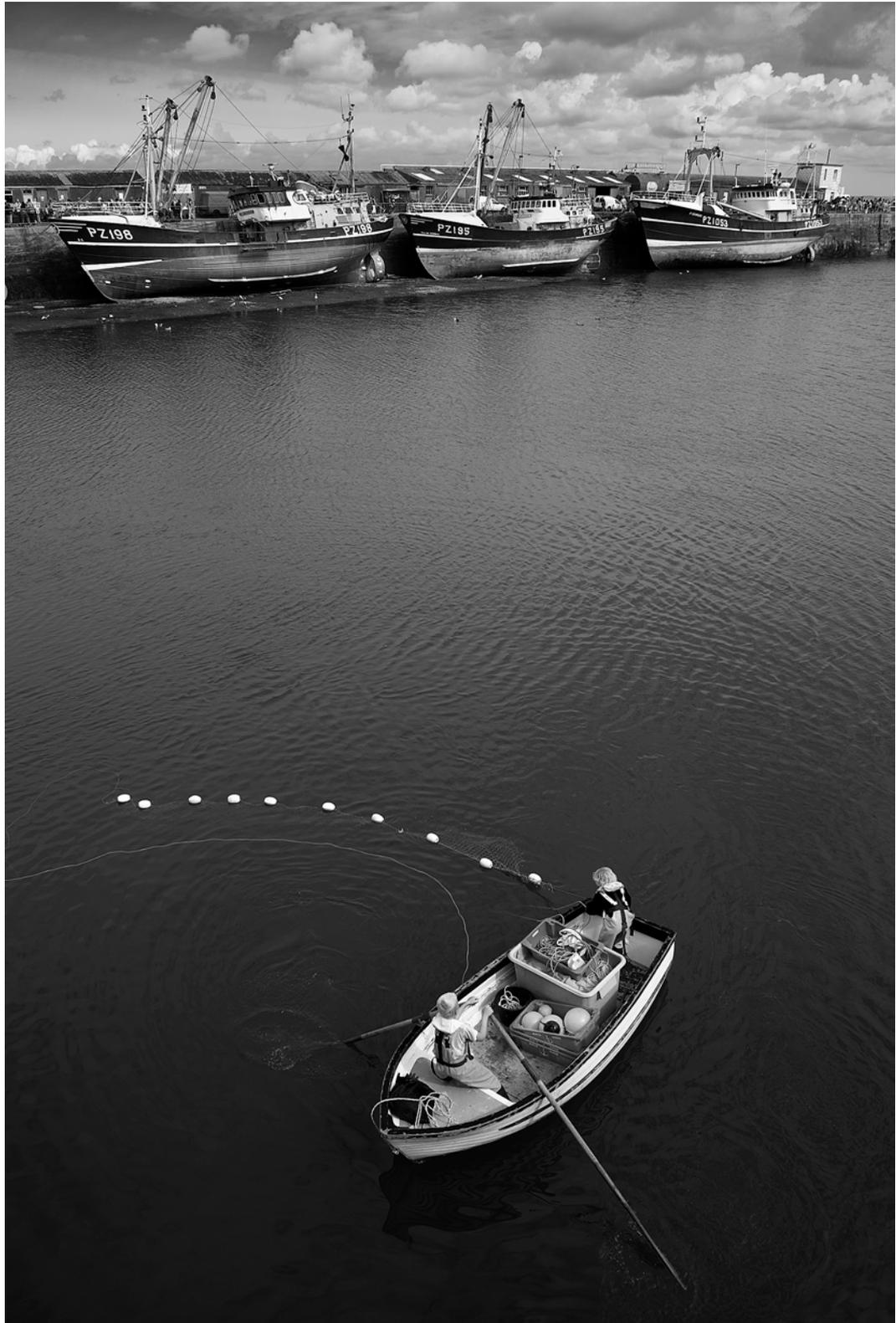
**Figure 114: A tin of ‘Cornish sardines’ featuring *The Greeting* by Newlyn School artist Walter Langley.**



**Figure 115: Artist Bernard Evans painting *Ripple* and other luggers alongside the medieval pier in Newlyn harbour during the ‘Painting Party on the Quay’ event, British Tourism Week, March 2011. Photograph by Steven Walker.**



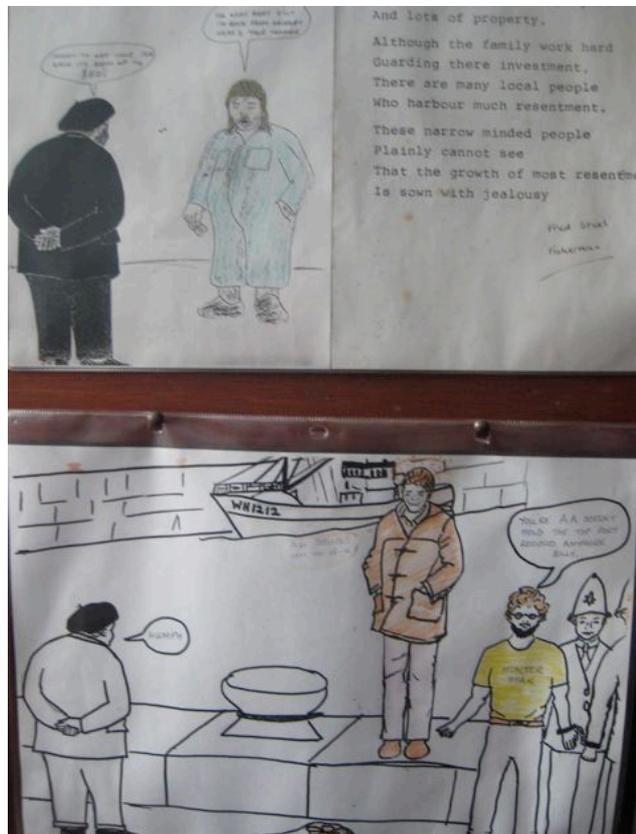
**Figure 116: Two young boys demonstrate a simple trawling method at the Newlyn Fish Festival, 2006. Photograph by Vince Bevan.**



**Figure 117: Engines from fishing boats owned by W.S. Stevenson and Sons on display in William Stevenson's private museum, Newlyn, 2009.**



**Figure 118: On the wall of William Stevenson's museum, drawings by local school children depicting him and fishermen.**



**Figure 119: Photographs, ships models, a model lighthouse and other paraphernalia associated with the history of fishing at Newlyn, William Stevenson's museum, 2009.**



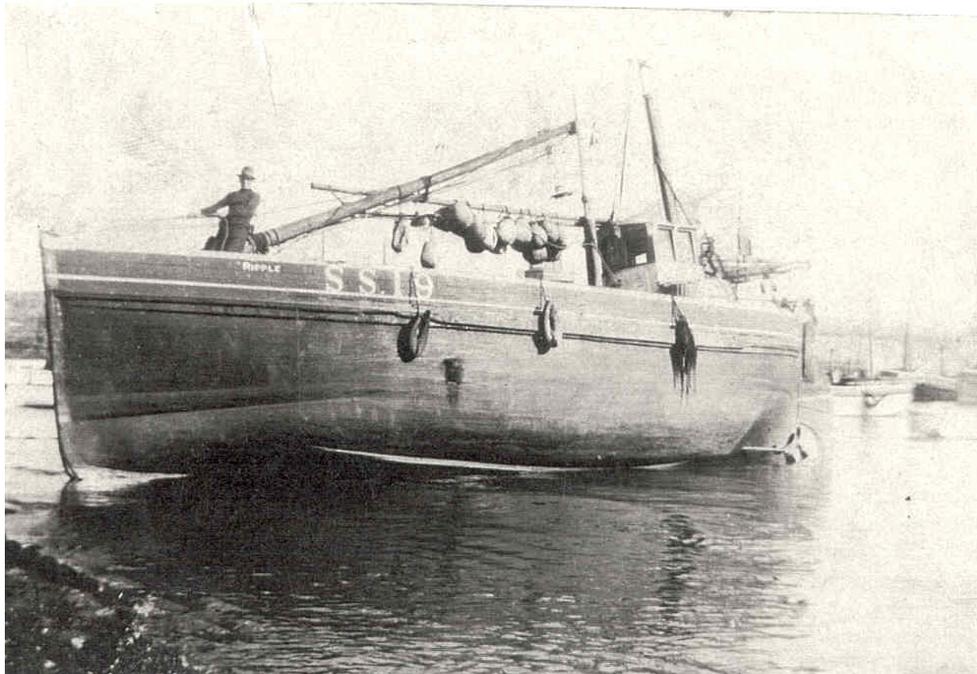
**Figure 120: A near life-size cut out of Stevenson's skipper Roger Nowell with paraffin stove set, William Stevenson's museum, 2009.**



**Figure 121: William ('Billy') Stevenson outside his private museum in an old school building, Newlyn, 2009.**



**Figure 122: *Ripple*, early 1900s. Unknown collection.**



## CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has shown how ideologies around the work of fishing in Cornwall – belief in its viability and in the adaptability and resourcefulness of its practitioners – is reproduced, despite contemporary constraints. This is maintained and re-invented by both core fishing activities and heterogeneous knowledges and forms of knowledge transmission that link fishing producers and communities into wider socio-economic networks. The research enriches and expands our understanding of the various activities fishing livelihoods can entail and the forms of knowledge that underlie their reproduction. In doing so it contributes especially to anthropologies of work and labour, rural development and social change, maritime anthropology, and heritage and material culture studies.

My application of a historical ethnographic methodology to fishing in Cornwall shows how social change and knowledge transmission do not always proceed in linear, predictable and uniform ways. Fishing families and communities of practice are important environments for the intergenerational transmission of fishing knowledge and skills and for historicities and ideologies with which they are intertwined. However other kinds of media for knowledge transmission are also significant – including art, craft and heritage practices. These material cultures shape the diverse ways fishing is linked into wider communities and economies, with capacity for both connection and disconnection, conflict and renewal. In this context, the ocean and littoral margins around which memories, meanings and material practices are focused, have both physical and metaphorical agency as a sites for loss, rupture and decay, but also for salvage and regeneration.

Local knowledge takes many forms, commonly situated within social encounter and movement (Cruikshank 2005). In Cornwall this includes fishers, scientists, artists and visitors to the seaside. The character of these encounters is key – whether they contribute to reproducing Cornwall as a peripheral zone of extraction in which Cornish fishing producers and villages are economically and politically marginalised, or whether they contribute to strengthening Cornwall as a region, its livelihoods and diversity of skill-base.

Attitudes to the work of fishing, and to Cornish maritime pasts, also derive from wider patterns of work in society. Work situations in which people take great pride and satisfaction from work pursued on their own or with minimal supervision are rare (Ronco and Peattie 1988):

The fishermen taking pride in their macho individualism do so against an implicit background of the regimented work of the factory or the white shirt and the bureaucratic order of the office. Those who are free to structure their work in their own way are engaged in a complex process on both the societal and the individual level. They do not have the job as a shell into which they fit. They do not just go to work; they *make* their work (ibid: 721).

However fishing can also contrast with increasingly precarious forms of labour in a neoliberal economy, where individuals may be required to adopt flexible and diversified economic strategies, but without the core of common practices, social relations, technologies and ideologies that fishing tends to involve. These can be conceived as constitutive of forms of community, but communities which can also be fragmented and in which many of my research subjects chose to move in and out of as it suited them. Community can be a source of solidarity, but can also be stifling, conforming, and/or riven by conflict.

In terms of models of fishing and seafaring community, my work builds on that of: Walton (2000: 128) – community as ‘mixed economy’, ‘commitment to an industry’ and ‘network of shared interests’; Fricke (1973: 3) – ‘community as changing over time, of becoming differentiated with the advent of new skills, but also integrating itself through a common tradition and social life’; and Smith (1999: 284) – ‘communities of experience and ideas’. It also supports Wolf’s (1982) critique of the social sciences as being too caught up with a narrative of modernity as loss of community, and of social order and consensus becoming disorder and dissensus over values. My findings regarding fishing in the south west of England suggests a view of modern social change that is more complex – in which forms of disorder, heterogeneity, migration and bricolage, may serve to consolidate the viability, ideologies and aesthetics of core activities and values. This provides a point of comparison with similar findings in other ethnographic contexts – amongst groups of hunters and gatherers (Barnard 1993; Bird-David 1992) and also peasants in parts of Eastern Europe (Pine 2007) for example.

The research also speaks to recent calls (Symes and Phillipson 2009; Urquhart et al 2011) for further social science research that examines the various ways fisheries are socially, politically and economically embedded and to counter the tendency in previous accounts to approach fishery problems in terms of models derived from biology and resource-economics. Such models have informed management policies which are increasingly neoliberal in character – as with the commoditisation of fishing property rights linked to processes of EU rural ‘restructuring’ (Mansfield 2004; Reed et al. In Press). Even amongst some ethnographic analyses there has been a tendency to study fish producers and fishing communities in isolation and in terms of naturalistic models (cf. Palsson 1991). Policy statements regarding the current reform of the CFP which will come into force in 2013<sup>86</sup> emphasise a shift towards more regional forms of participatory management, sharing of knowledge, as well as promotion of alternative livelihoods and re-skilling. In order to understand and inform this process, this research helps to build a picture of what fishing knowledges and skills entail, the ways they are reproduced and the various implications for management and livelihood diversification.

I have shown that Cornwall and its fisheries have a long history as part of a distinctive Atlantic maritime region formed by trade, plural economies, and common technological traditions. The historical geography of this region is one defined by both ‘cosmopolitanism’ and ‘parochialism’, ‘journeys’ as well as ‘dwellings’ (Basu 2008) and it is one in which maritime exchange and routes have generated social division as well as commonality, as Simpson has argued in an Indian Ocean context (2006). The marginalisation of Cornwall’s maritime economy as a result of the transition to a market economy accompanied the ‘discovery’ and idealisation of Cornish fishing villages through art and tourism. Traditional patterns of organisation formerly characteristic of Newlyn and other fishing villages (diffuse capital arrangements, mixed maritime economies, feudal obligations) gave way to distinctive occupational communities and patterns of work (in which patron-client relations have continued but mutual aid has been eroded). Other forms of co-dependency have continued in the form of a persistent (if modified) share system and

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<sup>86</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/reform/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/reform/index_en.htm) (accessed October 2012).

charity-funded welfare and rescue services, however inequality and social distance has grown.

Throughout this thesis I have explored ideas and practices of co-operation and competition and found that awareness of their interplay can inform the reading of fishing land/seascapes. Both are intrinsic to the fishing way of life and are adaptations with which human communities respond to the challenges of making a living from the sea. They are not a dichotomy and are often found in combination. The research suggests potential for new combinations. Civic initiatives such as community-led regeneration and planning may have its limitations in tackling some industrial issues, but they do have a role to play in supporting local institutions (not only charities but also producer co-operatives) and in promoting alternative forms of production and consumption (of heritage, as well as fish). Meanwhile competition can promote economic diversity, challenge monopolies and foster an ethos linking notions of expertise, heritage and property of skills, and legitimate resource use. Given the right institutional framework, this could be a powerful basis for political enfranchisement of fishers in regional level stewardship of marine resources. However it would also need to be underpinned by mechanisms to maintain opportunities and access for young people in fisheries regions and prevent fishing rights concentrating into the hands of the largest and most 'efficient' producers, defined by economies of scale.

Fisher's ecological knowledge and value-systems relating to the environment are shaped by their work at sea, by specific social contexts for learning such as kinship, and by markets and economic priorities. Their outlooks point to the chaotic complexity, unpredictability and precariousness of fishing – both the ecological environments and markets on which it depends (Acheson and Wilson 1996). This points to the deficiencies of current technologies of regulation, the disenfranchisement of fishers and the potential for alternative management models that account for, rather than exacerbate such precariousness. Such models would need to take greater account of variable regional conditions and the fragile balance fishermen must negotiate between the uncertainties of the environment and the uncertainties of markets and factors such as fuel-price and fish prices. Parametric measures such as spatial regulations (*ibid*), rather than sole reliance on numerical regulations (such as quota) may help to negotiate these chaotic elements in a more

equitable way that does not merely increase risks for fishermen. Aspects of the current reform of the CFP and work in Britain towards establishing Marine Protected Areas are promising in these regards.

I have demonstrated some of the ways independent boat-owning fishermen account for survival and success in fishing as competition has intensified. Their narratives situate complex and diversified skill-sets including business-management, political-engagement, technological innovation, and ecological know-how, as replications of older, ‘traditional’ dispositions towards craftsmanship, self-sufficiency, independence, work ethic and having an ‘instinct’ for fishing. Success and transmission of skills between generations is understood less in terms of stability, rather in terms of movement and dynamism and the notion that ‘it is traditional to change’ (Bodenhorn 2001). Whilst such accounts emphasise individual skill and can obscure capital and labour relations (such as relationships between boat-owners and crews, between catchers and merchants, or political economies of fishing rights), they are also powerful sources of meaning, motivation and work-satisfaction that play a role in how these actors reproduce themselves as independent fishermen, and reflect a concern that such skills and dispositions are passed on to future generations.

A fishing or rural-maritime *ethos* is an integral aspect of place and region in Cornwall – an ethos which cannot be captured within a too narrow focus on a fishing ‘mode of production’ as measured and defined by amount of fish caught or numbers of people employed in catching, processing, distributing or retailing fish. The major actors in this research all demonstrate, in their different ways, this ethos, and its central concern with independent living – especially using one’s hands and craft-skills, to create and sustain oneself as a person, and to carve out a livelihood, including forms of art and craft production. These do not necessarily provide individuals a route towards prosperity and away from poverty (as historic and contemporary examples demonstrated). They are adaptations of strategies from one form of precarious economy (fishing) to another (tourism), with some of the same dependencies on cyclical and fluctuating conditions such as seasonality. Whilst the medium has changed, what seems to be important about these strategies for the actors concerned is replication of self-sufficiency. This constitutes part of the ‘authenticity’ of these patterns of work and material production which has meaning

not only for the makers but (perhaps, and this aspect invites further research) also for seaside visitors and other consumers of fishing art and craft. These activities underlie the *performance* of a 'primal', rural identity that is lived close to nature (Darling n.d).

Heritage practices (which may include or overlap with forms of art and craft) can be both a pragmatic and expressive activity, reflecting and shaping memory and sense of place. As Rowlands and de Jong argue (2007) 'modern heritage and memory share a common origin in conflict and loss' (p.13). This research supports their analysis that technologies of heritage and broader memory practices are not always found in opposition and provides an example of how 'memory attaches itself to heritage' (ibid: 13). It also suggests the relevance of concepts of 'palimpsest' and 'memoryscape' (Basu 2007) to Cornish land/sea-scapes – in which different registers, regimes and materialities of memory and heritage co-exist and co-evolve, although in ways which might include disruption and disjuncture. Basu points to a "synchronic heterogeneity" of diachronic processes in a given context' (p.254) and how a 'memoryscape is continuously overwritten resulting in an accretion of forms' (ibid):

But unlike an ideal type of stratified archaeological contexts, where by successive strata overlay one another neatly, this accretion occurs in an uneven manner, and to pursue the archaeological metaphor, is constantly being excavated and reburied, mixing up the layers, exposing unexpected juxtapositions, and generating interactions. Such is the medium of the palimpsest memoryscape (ibid).

This perspective assists in understanding the articulation and synchronicity between the different perspectives of the coast that I set out with. 'Working', 'scientific/ecological' and 'romantic/nostalgic' views of the coast can be seen as different components or layers in 'memoryscapes'.

This research has also shown another, perhaps neglected, side of heritage – its potential *constructiveness*, especially forms of heritage practice which may be found outside of museums and in non-institutional contexts, that may involve informal methods of learning, practical skills and the production of tangible things. These can be a source of critical nostalgia, an imaginative approach to the past as a resource, and a pragmatic approach to promoting economic diversification and alternative forms of fishing production and consumption. As with some examples of art and craft production, heritage may not only reflect a concern regarding the erosion of

local resourcefulness (Macdonald 2002; Laviolette 2006) but also be a means to shape new forms of resourcefulness through reviving or maintaining elements of older forms. Whilst heritage can be exclusionary, and other hidden, invisible and undesirable heritages may be obscured, this is not a significant aspect of the example of the heritage boatbuilding and sailing project I have considered. It's important to distinguish practices and technologies of heritage production from other kinds of economic and cultural practice, but this example challenges any rigid distinction and opposition between notions of heritage and industry. Whilst fishers involved in my research rarely used the term 'heritage' themselves, they nonetheless provided evidence of comparable notions of inter-generational tradition (such as skills, technologies and work patterns) that they believe to be integral to a sense of place and to economic viability.

### **Directions for future research**

A number of exciting research directions emerge from this research. My thesis has approached work patterns, attitudes, knowledges and material cultures of fishing, primarily through the media of narratives, historical literature and records, and participant observation both on shore and to a certain extent at sea. Future research could further explore not only views of the sea from the land in the context of fishing culture, but also the 'ocean itself as a meaningful space of interaction' (Basu 2008: 4); and examine in greater depth how various kinds of fishing organisation and shifting political economies of fishing are reflected in work patterns at sea, as well as how these interact with life on shore. I have focused on ideologies and practices surrounding owner-skippers, but further research is needed in terms of fishing crews and company fishing contexts (although Howard 2012a, 2012b has set a good example). Studies of fishing practice could be enriched through the use of visual and other sensorial methods such as sound, to more effectively explore the 'craft' of fishing as Lyon and Back (2012) have demonstrated in work with fishmongers at Deptford market, London.

Further research is also needed in terms of relations within fishing families in the UK and further afield – including those where one or more members fish for a living, combine other kinds of work with fishing, or decide to take paths away from fishing – and the factors that influence education, work opportunities and incomes,

intergenerational transmission and career choices. It would be particularly interesting to explore how young people in maritime industry settings feel about the past, present and future, what kinds of opportunities they are seeking and what are the constraints or barriers they experience. The methodologies Ray Pahl used in his study of the Isle of Sheppey (1984) might be instructive in this regards, as would the current restudy sociologists are carrying out at the University of Kent (Crow et al 2009). This thesis particularly highlights a promising area for research in terms of fisheries and other maritime heritage, particularly comparative research between two maritime regions for example in Britain and across the North Sea in Norway. Such a study might look at attitudes and practices (especially amongst young people) towards maritime heritage and the 'recovery' of skills and crafts such as boatbuilding and sailing as a means of transmission, life-skills development, and economic regeneration and diversification. The revival and/or maintenance of traditional and vernacular forms of boatbuilding would be a fascinating point of departure for an interdisciplinary ethnographic, historical and archaeological study of maritime seascapes, 'memory-scapes', and material culture.

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## Appendix. List of interviewees

Occupation, method of fishing (if fisherman) and place of residence/work at the time of interviewing.

Name	Occupation	Method of fishing (if fisherman)	Place of residence and/or work
Glyn Richards	Archivist, local historian, former fisheries patrol officer	N/A	Penzance
Martin Ellis	Artist, former fisherman	N/A	Ruan Minor
Andy Wheeler	Assistant to Chief Executive (Cornish Fish Producers Organisation Limited)	N/A	Newlyn
Kevin Bennetts	Businessman (oil supplier), fisherman and boat-owner	Line fishing (tuna)	Scorrier
Nick Howell	Fish merchant, exporter	N/A	Newlyn
Jonathan Fletcher	Fisherman (boat-owner)	Potting	Lived Ruan Minor, worked Cadgwith Cove
David Hooper	Fisherman (boat-owner)	Handlining	Newlyn
Mick Mahon	Fisherman (boat-owner)	Trawling	Newlyn
David Stevens (Senior)	Fisherman (boat-owner)	Trawling	Lived Rosudgeon, worked Newlyn
David Stevens (Junior)	Fisherman (boat-owner)	Trawling	Lived Rosudgeon, worked Newlyn
Mike Collier	Fisherman (boat-owner)	Trawling	Newlyn
Paul Collier	Fisherman (boat-owner)	Trawling	Newlyn
David Warwick	Fisherman (boat-owner)	Trawling	Mevagissey
Chris Morley	Fisherman (boat-owner)	Handliner	Newlyn
Stephan Glinski	Fisherman (boat-owner)	Ring-netting	Newlyn
Peter Pearman	Fisherman (boat-owner)	Netting	Lived St Buryan, worked Hayle
Nigel Legge	Fisherman (boat-owner), traditional willow lobster pot maker, artist	Netting and potting	Lived Ruan Minor, worked Cadgwith Cove
Mike Collier	Fishing Vessel Surveyor (Maritime and Coastguard Agency)	N/A	Newlyn
Tony Pawlyn	Historian, Head of Library (National Maritime Museum Cornwall), former fisherman	N/A	Falmouth (work)

Julyan Drew	Methodist minister	N/A	Newlyn
Richard (Dick) Ede	Part-time fisherman, chainsaw man, traditional willow lobster pot maker	N/A	Newlyn
William (Billy) Stevenson	Retired fish merchant and company fleet owner	N/A	Newlyn
Donald Turtle	Retired fisherman	Netting	Newlyn
John Lambourn	Retired merchant navy captain and civil servant. Owner and restorer of heritage fishing boat	N/A	Newlyn
Robert George	Seafood Cornwall Quality Advisor, former fisherman	N/A	Lived Penberth, worked Newlyn
Keith Dickson	Superintendent, Royal Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen	N/A	Newlyn
Robin Turner	Wholesale fish merchant, boat-owner and agent, exporter and retailer	N/A	Newlyn
Elizabeth Stevenson	Wholesale fish merchant, boat-owner and agent, exporter and retailer	N/A	Newlyn