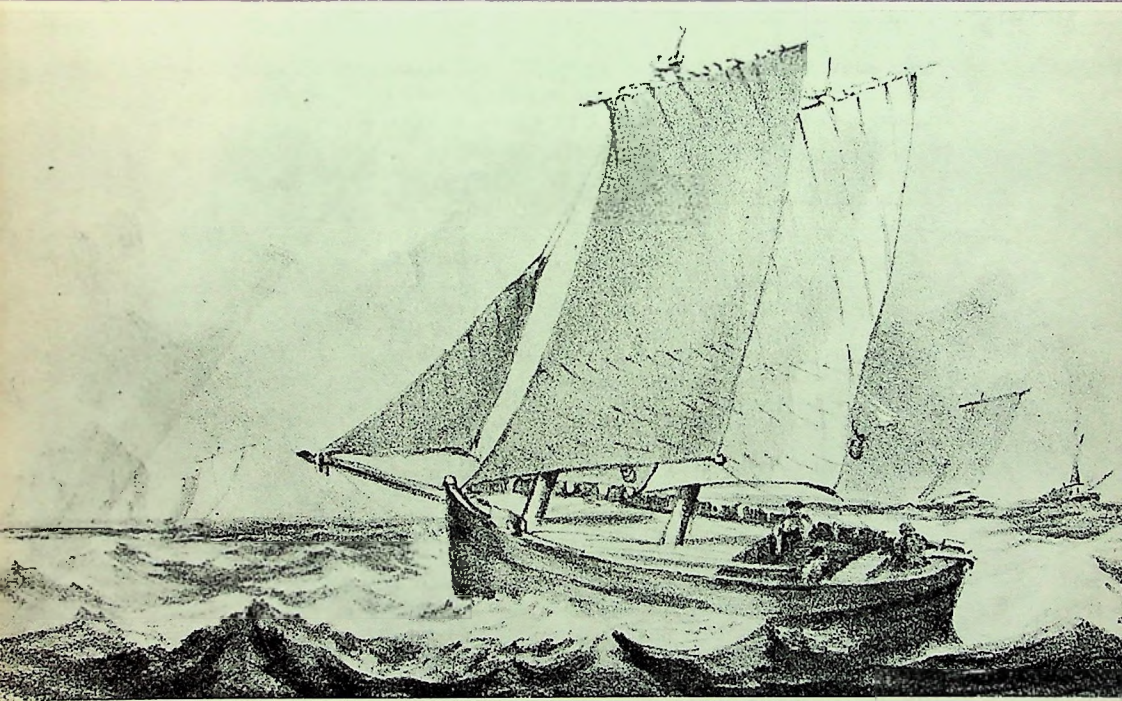


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Newhaven Deeked Fishing Boat off the Bass, about 1864

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PART ONE

1969

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Scottish Studies

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Cover illustration: 'Newhaven Decked Fishing Boat off the Bass', after a drawing by J. R. Prentice in John M. Mitchell, *The Herring*, Edinburgh 1864. (This illustration appeared in J. Y. Mather's second article on 'Aspects of the Linguistic Geography of Scotland', *Scottish Studies* 10 (2).)

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Plate I (iii)) but the 'North Folk' always did this ashore in the process of 'redding' the line. This difference, it is to be noted, may mean no more than that the 'South Folk' went further into the sea, in bigger boats and therefore had more *time*, on the return passage, to 'stick the hooks'. Some informants—Eyemouth, for example—have told me that it was done if possible. Gourdon and Arbroath ('South Folk') informants insisted that it was always possible. On the other hand my informants at Gamrie and Skateraw said that even if occasionally possible it was never actually done. It was considered to be a task which was properly done ashore.

I would emphasise at this point that the information I am here considering, both on the vowel systems of the dialects and the conventions of the small-line fishing, is information I have gathered in the field from informants who have accepted as natural and proper a particular selection of vowel sounds and a particular technique in the use of a small-line. The information is thus not an inference from dialect literature or from the reports of Fishery Districts, or from the evidence of the *Statistical Accounts*, or from an early description of the Scottish fisheries like Sir Robert Sibbald's manuscript (Sibbald 1701). From this kind of direct evidence from field-work, therefore, a pattern is displayed, a particular, structured, 'set' (so to speak) given to the communities along a defined stretch of coast-line. What remains now is to see, working from this initial patterning, what amplification, commentary, interpretation or criticism can be adduced from other sources—for the dialects from written sources and from the researches and postulations of philologists on the history of the various dialect forms, and, for the fishing conventions, from important documentary material like the *Statistical Accounts* or Sibbald's manuscript.

There is, first of all, nothing directly in the results of the fieldwork which will indicate how long the reported divisions have existed, or when they became differentiated. However much we may suppose a dimension in time to be inherent in the material, the field techniques can only *display* it territorially. It is possible, however, to build up a picture from the written sources—say, from the seventeenth century for the fishing conventions and from the early sixteenth century for the dialects. A critical comparison between these two known points of time may, of course, be important and even vital for a final assessment. In the same way a critical comparison between the diachronic evidence of the written sources and the synchronic evidence of the field-work may also be vital for the purpose of checking and counter-checking.

Historical Evidence

I take it that the key concept in the historical study of the east coast fishing communities from the seventeenth century to the present day is their development from what James Thomson called the 'cottar system' of fishing—*i.e.* a part-time system, the rest of the time being given to work on the land—to a full-time, independent fully professional system (Thomson 1849). The point has also been made by modern writers like O'Dell