

Growing Up in Fishing Family – Mr F. S. of Scarborough

Mr F. S. was born in Filey and was a member of a local Scarborough fishing family. In 1942 his family moved to live in Scarborough and they lived in a house with the colourful name of Flower in Hand which is in Burbank near Castle Banks. His father was a fisherman and, as a young boy, his father would sometimes take him out on fishing trips.

He remembers the time in the 1950s when Scarborough Harbour was so full of large fishing boats that you could walk from one side of the harbour to the other using these boats as stepping stones. In the 1960s Scarborough had 16 trawlers. He remembers some of their names, Silver Line, Emu and the Maggie M, the latter being a large herring trawler which came much later. He also remembers the Keelboats, including the Kingsway.

In those days the sea around Scarborough was also being fished a lot by Dutch fishermen. There was no animosity between the Yorkshire and Dutch fishermen; they were often found drinking in the same bars in the Scarborough harbour area. In fact, Mr F. S. remembers one of the Dutch fishermen who brought back from Holland a pair of decorative wooden clogs for his mother.

The busiest and most productive time for fishing was when the herring shoals arrived. The shoals migrated down from the north. As they journeyed, they would only be in the Scarborough fishing areas for around two weeks before journey southwards to the Humber and beyond.

Mr F. S.'s family did not want him to become a fisherman because of the dangers and lack of career security. Instead, they wanted him to have a regular trade, and he became a painter and decorator.

In his early 40s he started to lose his sight and would not have been able to carry on as a fisherman had he chosen to become a fisherman. In the event, he also witnessed the rapid decline in the fishing industry in Scarborough. In its heyday, crabs and lobster fishing was an essential part of the industry in the town but from the 1960s the fishing fleet started to deplete so that gradually it reached a point where it became the only part of the Scarborough fishing trade. For him, this confirmed that his decision to not join the fishing business was the right one.

He recalled that when he started his decorating career he was earning 18 shillings (£0.90p) for a 44 hour week and by the time he was a married man, with two children, that had risen to £7.50p per week. Later in his career he joined Scarborough Council as a painter and decorator from which time he would work on public building e.g. the Library, the Town Hall etc.