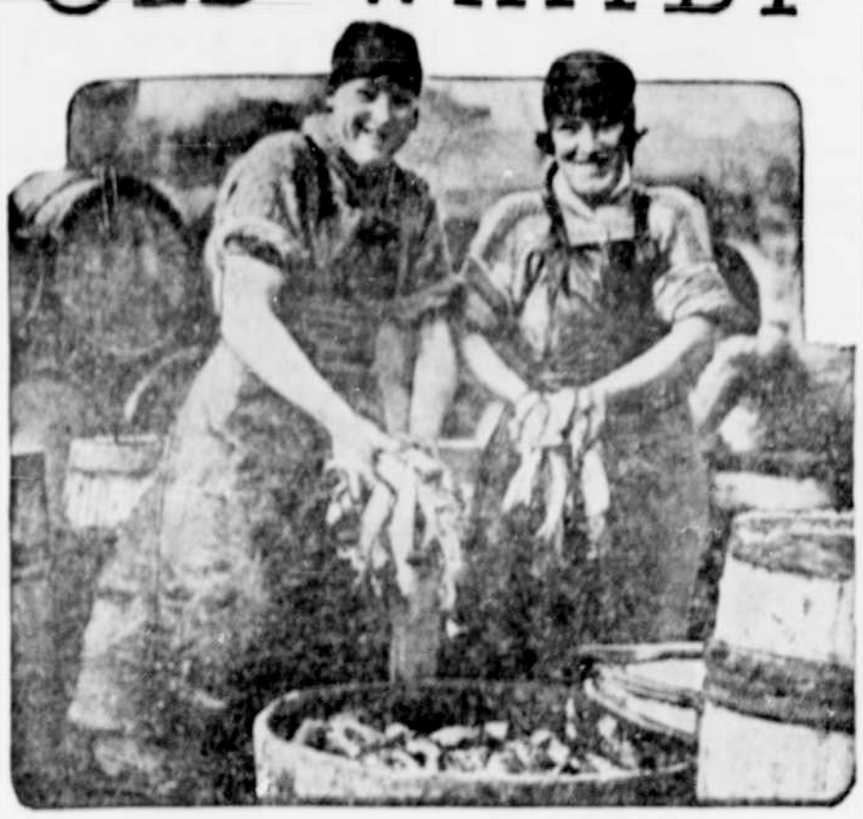
OLD WHITBY



Scotch Lassies Work at Whitby During Fishing Season

Prepared by National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.—WNU Service.

MELLOWED by time, Whitby, climbing the cliffs of the North sea coast to which it has clung for centuries, draws many visitors who are lured by the atmosphere of old England.

Most of the old part of the town remains as it was hundreds of years ago, dominated by the parish church, St. Mary's—built in 1100—and the famous ruins of Whitby abbey.

Today Whitby is a fishing port only, and its real splendors belong to the past: to the days of the old Saxon monastery of St. Hilda and Caedmon; to the days of the Great Synod in 664, when Saxon kings and the leading ecclesiastic lights of the land met with pomp and circumstance to settle the vexed question of the date of Easter; to the days of wooden ships and wooden ship-building, when Whitby was fifth port in England and her sturdy, oak-built ships were famed across the seven seas; to the days when Whitby was one of the chief bases of the Greenland whaling industry, and Cook and Scoresby sailed from the port on their exciting enterprises; to the days when 1,500 men were regularly employed mining and carving jet (a black semi-precious mineral) and twice this number were engaged in the alum industry along the coast.

There is no shipping now. At the dawn of the great Iron age some of the "yards" turned to iron, and many fine screw steamers were built on the stocks which then lined the upper harbor. But the shallowness of that harbor and the distance from foundries and rolling mills were fatal handicaps, and Whitby found annihilating rivals in the ports of the Tees and the Tyne.

The alum industry died with the discovery of a cheaper method of production.

A trade which depends on the fickleness of feminine fashion is built on sand, and from a peak of prosperity reached in that glum period of court mourning that followed the death of Queen Victoria's consort, Prince Albert, the jet trade declined, until today it supports scarcely more than a dozen craftsmen.

Ancient, Crooked Streets.

The old town's streets are tortuous and narrow. The names of the chief ones, Baxtergate and Flowergate, suggest that they were built when there were no traffic problems. There is documentary evidence of their existence in the Fourteenth century. Flowergate climbs down the slope of the West Cliff. Baxtergate runs parallel to the docks. A steel bridge, originally a wooden drawbridge, conducts its bewildered traffic to the east side of the harbor, and here is the equally ancient and ever narrower Church street again running parallel to the harbor and leading to the foot of the famous 199 steps which the faithful must climb to attend worship in the parish church, St. Mary's.

Chiefly in Church street are the shops of the jet and fossil dealers. Jet is fossilized wood converted into carbon. It is found in beds known as jet rock, which crop out in several places along the coast. It does not occur in seams, like coal, but in isolated pockets, which make its mining a speculative business. A man might dig for months and not find a handful. A good pocket, however, when the trade was in its heyday, might have been worth anything up to $250.

There is no mining now. What craftsmen are left depend for their supplies on the longshoremen, who collect the bits washed out of the cliffs, or from submarine exposures.

Its Jet Is Distinctive.

While there is diverse opinion regarding the merits of jet as a medium for the true artist, it has inspired some very fine and original carving. It is easy to work and takes on a lovely polish, as different from the glaze of glass and imitation jet as the polish of cheap furniture is from the patina of a genuine piece of Queen Anne. Moreover, while jet is found elsewhere, notably in Spain, Whitby jet is distinctive.

Most of the famous craftsmen are dead, and there has been a tendency for their successors to keep the standardized designs. But here and there one of them will show a flash of originality, and hope endures that the pendulum of fashion may swing back.

The fossils which form the second bow of the Whitby jet dealers have a more strictly scientific interest. The commonest is the ammonite. It is found in immense profusion along the entire coast, but from the geologist's point of view its most interesting aspect is its extraordinary variety. The ammonite, of course, was a marine animal belonging to the family of squids and octopuses. Its nearest existing relative is the nautilus. Its variations are distinguished by size, by number and shape of the corrugations of its shell, by the presence or absence of spines or tubercles.

Cottages of the Fishermen.

From the main streets of Whitby—Baxtergate, Flowergate, Church street—and from Skinner street, Sandgate, Haggersgate and St. Ann's Staith, narrow lanes twist among the old cottages or lead to watery dead ends.

The cottages are built in amazing confusion. One has the impression that they must have pushed themselves up, mushroom fashion, from the ground wherever there was space. They have no gardens. They have, with few exceptions, no view save into their neighbor's parlor or down his chimney stack. They are, however, all built on one general plan, which gives a kitchen, parlor, a best room, two bedrooms, and an attic. Their architects and builders were all men of the sea. Today it is chiefly the fishermen who live in them.

Even the fishing trade of Whitby has suffered more than an ordinary share of economic vicissitude. Old residents of the town can remember the time when, in summer, during the height of the North sea herring season, the harbor was a forest of masts. And they have since seen the time when the unloading of a solitary herring drifter created a sensation. The herring trade has vanished. But that spirit without which no industry can thrive has remained alive in the breasts of the sturdy Whitby men, and the port has of late years experienced a revival in the crab and lobster trade.

Coble a Fine Surf Boat.

That view to the east across the harbor, so beloved of painters and photographers, would not be complete without the fishing craft, moored hard up to the very threshold of the cottages; without the lobster pots stacked upon the quays, the salmon nets spread out on poles to dry in the sun; without the groups of blue-jerseyed, salt-tanned men, busy with their gear or gossiping.

The type of craft characteristic of the coast is the coble. No photograph can show its superb sailing qualities. Its design is the evolutionary outcome of conditions. It is pre-eminently a surf boat.

The coble's greatest draft is forward, and on an open shore it is landed stern first, its slender bows offering no resistance to the surf. It sails fast and very close to the wind, because its long rudder acts as a keel. But the rudder is also a source of danger, for it may foul a mass of seaweed or become entangled in anchored fishing gear when the boat is in a heavy breeze. The coble, like a spirited horse, demands expert handling.

AN AFFAIR OF HONOR

By THAYER WALDO

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WITH Margaret on his arm, Ward strode proudly into the Purple Hat. It was thickly peopled, for he had purposely chosen the busiest luncheon hour.

Half the men in Hollywood had been trying for a date with the little aristocrat from Kentucky ever since her arrival, and his success was worth a flourish.

Ward paused just inside, ostensibly seeking a table.

The golden-haired beauty beside him clung close with gratifying familiarity. Suddenly he saw a man emerge from a nearby booth and come toward them. It was Al Alberts of the scenario staff at Zenith.

Ward started a cordial greeting but checked it at sight of the other's unsmiling face.

Alberts confronted him and said evenly:

"See here, Ward; you're trespassing. Miss Blair promised me a luncheon appointment today."

Ward laughed shortly.

"Don't be absurd, old fellow," he rejoined; "you're just trying to attract attention."

"No; I'm entirely serious. I must ask you to withdraw."

From the corner of his eye Ward could see a number of persons watching interestedly. Among them he recognized the film editor of a leading afternoon paper. A wild impulse was born. He glanced swiftly at the girl; her cheeks were coloring and a haughty little scowl crinkled her forehead.

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That decided him.

Snatching a napkin from the nearest table, he wheeled and slapped it smartly across the Alberts face.

"Take that, you insolent whelp!" he shouted with unnecessary volume. "This affront to mademoiselle can only be treated as an affair of honor."

Eyes blazing, the scenarist cried: "Very well, sir; I am at your service."

Silently Ward applauded the speech, it fit the scene he had attempted to create with nicety. He made a brief stiff bow and said:

"Excellent. I invite you to come with me at once and make the arrangements. This must be kept private to avoid interference."

"Good; I accept."

Ward faced Margaret Blair.

She was large-eyed now, and he thought he could detect excited approval in her expression.

"Will you," he asked, "have the goodness to forgive me if I leave you with a friend here and go? My hot blood can't tolerate such insulting conduct."

"Oh, suahly!" Her tone implied full understanding. "Yo'd have to do that now, of co'se."

Approaching the newspaperman, Ward said:

"Melvin, I'd be deeply obliged if you'd see that Miss Blair has lunch and gets back to the studio."

The editor rose, beaming. "Okay—be very happy."

Ward about-faced and with Alberts matching step, stalked from the place, happily conscious that all eyes followed.

Fifty paces the two men marched in silence; then:

"Have you ever handled a sword?" Ward demanded bluntly. The other shook his head.

"Never even held one."

"Neither have I. We'll have to figure some way around it. That was too good an act back there not to carry on."

"I'll say so! How did you happen to think of striking me with the napkin? That was real genius."

"Oh, because Maggie Blair was there, I guess. Old southern gesture, and all that. But the best thing was the way you approached me. What suggested that?"

"Well, she really did promise to have lunch with me; and then, I saw Melvin and thought how he'd like a nice spicy story."

"I got it. Same reason I challenged you. Now I've been considering, and here's what I think might work out best. . . ."

Al Alberts gave scrupulous attention. When the other concluded, he stated with emphasis:

"Great! That's the one plan that can save our faces and still be straight. Let's get 'em right now, and then we can go to my apartment for the art work."

"Right." Ward glanced back, made certain they weren't followed, and hailed a cab. Both men got in. Ward told the driver:

"Great Western Costume company."

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Five minutes' ride through the scant midday traffic reached the place. Entering, they went at once to a long desk just inside; over it was painted a sign: PROPERTIES RENTAL DEPT.

"We want," Ward said to the man in charge, "two dueling swords. One day's rental; you can pick 'em up tomorrow at Zenith."

With professional disinterest the clerk made out a slip, got Ward's signature, and disappeared into a rear room.

Shortly he returned, bringing a paper-wrapped parcel from which protruded two gleaming hilts. Alberts tucked it under his arm and they left.

An hour later, seated before a window that overlooked the wooded flanks of Laurel canyon, Ward was giving himself careful scrutiny in a hand mirror.

The countenance it showed had undergone a gaudy transformation.

Splotches of mercurochrome were spaced by court plaster patches; the effect was something between a major surgical and a severe case of scarlet fever.

"Thanks; practically perfect, seems to me," he told the other at last, putting the glass down. "And you—well, that mug's enough to strike awe in the hearts of strong men, if I do say it myself."

Alberts chuckled, stood up, and clicked his heels together.

"Honored opponent," he said, bending forward at the waist; "may I tender my respects at the close of this epic struggle which has ended in a draw? Let us hope our sons copy our virtues bold."

"Seconded. What this world needs is more virility and less shoddy humbug. . . . Say, what about the swords; think they ought to be unwrapped and done up in different paper?"

Alberts gestured carelessly. "No; that guy'll never notice details. Come on—let's have dinner sent up. I'm starved and we don't dare go out. But tomorrow we'll reap the rewards of valor. And remember—it's to be fair competition for Margaret Blair, and may the best liar win!"

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". . . and so, after ten minutes of terrific fighting with no advantages on either side, I finally began to force him back step by step." Ward paused; through the knot of auditors clustered about he glimpsed, across the lot, a similar group surrounding Alberts.

"I only hope," he stated stiffly, "that that gentleman over there is rendering me my just due, as I am his to him. . . . Let's see; where was I?"

The spectators were drawing back to make way for some one.

In an instant the eagerly concerned face of Margaret Blair appeared.

"Oh, my deah! she cried at sight of Ward. "Yoah so heroic lookin'! What happened?"

He smiled upon her with expansive delight.

"Well, I was just explaining. We had a titanic battle, but at last I made one lightning lunge and—"

Again slight commotion as another newcomer shoved through the press from behind and tapped Ward's shoulder.

He turned sharply, frowning, and recognized the fellow from the costumers.

"Those swords," the fellow said; "where are they? I gotta have 'em right away."

Ward waved him impatiently aside. "Yes, yes; not just now. Can't you see I'm busy? . . . Well, he tried to parry the thrust, but—"

"Hey, I tell you I can't wait. It's important."

Drawing himself up, Ward swung full upon the man with a fearsome glower.

"I said later! Certainly you don't need them badly enough to warrant—"

"Yeah—I do, though." The property man's tone was doggedly persistent. "I just got a call from Paramount for two rubber swords, and those are the only ones we have."

Storm Prevents Battle

At one time during the World war Britain's grand fleet and the German high sea fleet were only 42 miles from each other, each arrayed for battle—a battle between two mighty fleets which never occurred because the German commander in chief, relying upon vital wireless information from a certain airship, scurried back to shelter, the airship in question having been compelled to turn aside from her course to avoid a thunderstorm and unable to secure the information wanted.

Ancient Stocks in England

Visitors to England passing through the village of Albury, Hertfordshire, a few miles from London, may see the old village stocks where vagrants, trespassers, poachers and ne'er-do-wells had their ankles pinioned in a pair of notched planks. Several could be dealt this cruel type of justice at one time.

Conditional

"And what is the rent of this room, including the use of the piano?" inquired the long-haired one.

"Well," suggested the landlady, "perhaps you'd be so good as to play me something first."

Tender Memories

In Cork, Ireland, recently, curiosity was aroused, so the story runs, by a man who was walking ahead stretching out his arm whenever he took a crossing or turned down a street. An onlooker ventured to inquire why he did this. The man made no secret of it. "It's all I have left of my motor car," he replied.