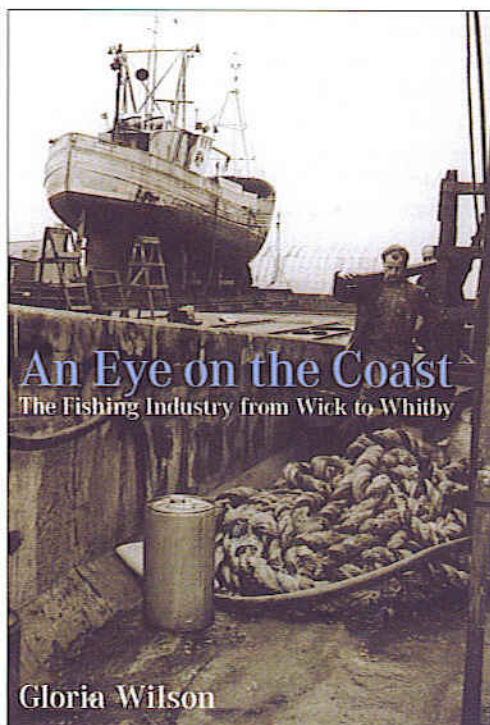


BOOKS

An Eye on the Coast The Fishing Industry from Wick to Whitby by Gloria Wilson



Reviewed by Mike Smylie

There seems to be a dearth of captioned picture books on fishing subjects being published over the last year or two and, although this is another, it is refreshingly different. For, unlike many others, it is a personal recollection from an established author who has more than fifty years' experience of studying regional craft.

In her previous three books on fishing boats, Gloria Wilson has concentrated on the East Coast of Scotland and the Yorkshire and Northumberland coasts – the area that she has lived upon and travelled widely since she first began photographing when, as a student at Durham, she visited North Shields in the early 1960s. This she does again and we have a superb collection of photographs in this latest book that covers the period from then right up to 2003.

In this book the author has tended to concentrate on the inshore sector – those classic wooden-hulled cruiser-sterned seine-netters and dual-purpose craft – as an appreciation of these superb vessels rather than form a complete record of every type of vessel. There are a few exceptions in the shape

of side-winders, transom-sterned boats and steel craft from the Campbeltown Shipyard. Furthermore, no book by Wilson would be complete without several square-sterned cobbles which, she writes, first attracted her enthusiasm for fishing craft.

The photographs are somehow more atmospheric than many I've seen, which must reflect upon the author's photographic skills and her use of the natural light around our harbours. This being a personal reflection, there are, too, pictures of individuals within the industry at work as well as posed for the camera. She has also included several of her own pen drawings of boats.

Perhaps as a reminder of what was once a great industry that has been ravished by government interference in the form of quotas and decommissioning, she has added photos of vessel nameplates affixed to sheds in Fraserburgh (and one artist's fireplace), names such as 'Sincerity', 'Faithful' and 'Antares', which serve to remind us of both the wealth and dedication created by fishing and, at the same time, the perils that still today make it the most dangerous of occupations.

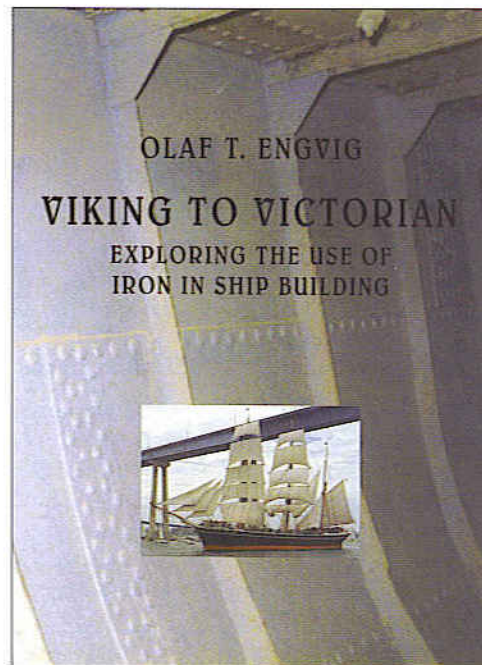
One of the first photographs in the book is of summertime in North Shields in the early 1960s where the nephrops trawler *Radiant Star*, PD159, is leaving port. As she is sailing out, she is passing one of the last steam drifters, *Wydale*, YH105. I've always thought it sad that the era of steam drifters passed us by so quickly that few remain in existence today. Two wars depleted their numbers considerably, but it's always pleasing to see a drifter side by side to what is today recognized as a more traditional type of fishing boat. Two other pictures highlight this on page 21 where the herring drifter *Lizzie West*, LT495, is first shown in Fraserburgh, and underneath, having been broken up on the beach, the bow section facing the massive tear in the stern section. The way things are going in the fishing industry, this one photograph might well be a reflection of the entire industry one day not too distant.

Without being too mundane, other than the boats, there are some excellent shots of Arbroath smokies smoking, net-mending, boatbuilding and decommissioning, fish markets and processing, as well as harbour blockading and fishermen demonstrating in the 1970s for Britain to declare an exclusive 50-mile territorial zone for fishing. Ironically the visiting European fisheries commissioner was in town and heard to say that a tight and well-controlled quota system was the answer

to conservation. Well, that was thirty years ago and not much has changed. Like many of the lovely boats in this book that have been condemned to the past, is it indeed time for the European fisheries policy to go the same way? For, if this book tells us anything, it is by showing off this past that points to the certain viability of an effective and well-managed inshore sector and the contribution this would make to fisheries conservation.

An Eye on the Coast – The Fishing Industry from Wick to Whitby by Gloria Wilson; published by Tempus Publishing, The Mill, Brimscombe Port, Stroud, Gloucester GL5 2QG, 2006; paperback, 128pp, £12.99; ISBN 0-7524-3853-0.

Viking to Victorian Exploring the use of iron in ship building by Olaf T. Engvig



Reviewed by Arne Espelund

This is a most extraordinary book and a very dedicated author. In a narrow sense Engvig focuses on the superb quality of some types of iron used in shipbuilding: the bloomery iron of the Viking and early Medieval period, and the wrought iron of the mid nineteenth century. In a wider sense he gives a warning to people responsible for the restoration of museum artefacts – make sure it is necessary before replacing an original piece!

Engvig demonstrates that a number of iron ships have lost their value as proofs of the standard of the materials and craftsmanship of the 'Pre-Bessemer' era due to heavy restoration with modern steel.

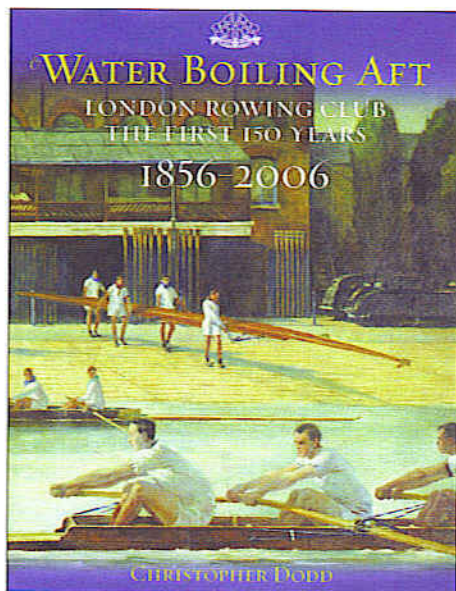
Much modern research in papers and books is written by ambitious scientists who lack practical experience. Engvig not only holds a graduate degree from the University of Oslo but was raised in a maritime environment and learned to sail at an early age. He suggested that the 25–30' open longboat still found in boatsheds around the Trondheimsfjord, was used 1,000 years ago by seamen 'westbound' to England, Scotland, the Hebrides, the Faeroes, Iceland, and even Greenland – and he proved it by crossing the North Sea in such a boat with a small crew. They landed safely in Scotland after a sixty-six-hour voyage – wet, hungry, and tired, having used only the sun for navigation. The boat had been built 140 years earlier and had been neither restored nor equipped with replacement fastenings – the original rivets withstood the North Sea, which was rough at times.

As a metallurgist I know that bloomery iron is corrosion resistant – a fact I attribute to the purity of iron produced in the solid state from bog iron ore; no anodes and cathodes – active partners in corrosion – were created. But the fact that iron produced in about 1850 – from rock ore by the indirect process of coke-fired blast furnaces and refining by the coal-fired puddling process – also resists corrosion is astonishing. Thanks to many surveys of old iron ships, such as the Norwegian *Hansteen* (1866) and American *Star of India* (1863) Engvig clearly proves that an iron ship might last 100 years or more in original condition while a ship built of modern steel would have to retire after thirty years.

Viking to Victorian is well illustrated and has a long list of references. It is split into two parts – the Viking part deals with preliminary tests on the iron in traditional open longboats as Engvig suggests that boats built of iron and wood enabled the Norsemen to sail as far as America. The second focuses on iron ships and the importance of keeping the old iron: stamp marks left on the hull by manufacturers can prove vital identifiers.

Viking to Victorian – Exploring the use of iron in ship building, by Olaf T. Engvig; published by Themo Publishing, Engvig, 1451 Lomita Blvd #4, Harbor City, CA 90710, <monaengvig@earthlink.net>, 2006; hardback, 176pp, \$49.99; ISBN 0 9655454-6-4.

Water Boiling Aft London Rowing Club, the First 150 years 1856-2006 by Christopher Dodd



Reviewed by Göran R Buckhorn

Rowing is a long-standing sport and the cradle of modern rowing rocked on the Thames River. Besides the rowing at the Oxbridge universities, three old clubs by the Thames have been triumphant when it comes to matching oar power with other clubs in England and from abroad: Leander Club, Thames Rowing Club, and The London Rowing Club, the latter founded at Putney in 1856.

Many rowing clubs have reached a respectable age and celebrated 100 years or more, and in so doing, have published jubilee publications to reflect upon and commemorate their history and past and present heroes. Sadly these publications can sometimes be an incredibly dull read for anyone outside the club house. (Some brilliant exceptions are Geoffrey Page's *Hear the Boat Sing – The History of Thames Rowing Club and Tideway Rowing* [1991] and Richard Burnell's and Geoffrey Page's *The Brilliants – A History of the Leander Club* [1997].)

When The London Rowing Club this year celebrates its first venerated 150 years, it is today's leading rowing journalist and historian, Christopher Dodd, who is holding the pen. Dodd has been writing about rowing for three decades and has published highly praised books on the Boat Race, the Henley Royal Regatta, and World Rowing. His *Water Boiling Aft* is well-written, has

wonderful illustrations, and is a truly stupendous piece of work.

To read Dodd's story is to scull along a gallery of important rowing characters. To mention a few: A.A. Casamajor was the first star of the LRC, and died in 1861 from a breaking blood vessel at the age of twenty-eight; Steve Fairbairn, the most influential rowing coach during the twentieth century, left Thames RC in 1926 after a quarrel with Julius Beresford (father of the great Jack Beresford) to coach LRC's oarsmen; 'Jumbo' Edwards of the RAF and Oxford, who did not do well coaching the LRC's crews because of his strictness and sobriety. Among the 'movers and shakers' in the club was the incomparable Peter Coni, who held high offices at LRC, Henley, the Amateur Rowing Association, ARA, and the governing body for international rowing, FISA. The stories of Coni are numerous and it is easy to understand Dodd's admiration and fondness for him.

Not only is *Water Boiling Aft* a 'Festschrift' for The London Rowing Club and its oarsmen through the years (and, since 2002, also oarswomen), but also it is a luminous book of rowing in Britain. Here are the boatbuilders from the Tyneside – Swaddle & Winship, who in 1875 built two twelve-oar boats with the new innovative sliding seat, for the club. During the 1930s another experiment was tried out by a London eight: the 'syncopated rowing' or 'jazz rowing', which meant that two blades were always in the water pulling the boat; the coxswain sat in the centre! And, of course, there are stories about the Henley Royal Regatta, this very British event that was, and still is, the most important regatta in the calendar for the home crews. But first and foremost, Dodd's book is a grand tribute to The London Rowing Club.

Water Boiling Aft: London Rowing Club, the First 150 years 1856-2006 by Christopher Dodd; published by The London Rowing Club, 2006; hardback, 320pp, illus, £35; ISBN 0-9552938-0-4. Copies can be ordered from The Hon. Sec., The London Rowing Club, Embankment, Putney, London SW 15 1LB.

Library Notices

The Artist who Loved Boats: Percy 'Powder' Thurburn – Mariner, Artist, Adventurer by Tom Cross, David Hale and Pin Armitage; published by Halsgrove Publishing, Halsgrove House Lower Moor Way, Tiverton Business Park, Tiverton EX16 6SS, 2006; 144pp, £24.99. ISBN 1841145432 (HB)