



Herring Factfile

Date: Name:

Two processes used to make “red herrings”

1:

2:

Amount of “red herrings” exported to West Indies in 1771

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Amount of “red herrings” exported to West Indies in 1798

.....

Types of jobs created in Scotland by the herring trade

Reason for name “red herring”

Statistics that show the extent of the herring industry around Scotland

Two reasons plantation owners chose “red herrings” to feed enslaved people

1:

2:

Areas of Scotland engaged in the herring trade

Herring producing areas that sent anti-abolition petitions to Parliament



Herring Sources

Source A

Source:



Red herring are heavily salted smoked fish made by dry salting and oak smoking whole herring above wood fires in specially built smoke houses. The herring are first dry-salted. They are then washed threaded onto speets – each with 20-30 fish. The speets are stacked horizontally on racks in the smoke houses and the fish are smoked using oak shavings. The oak gives a distinctive flavour. The process of curing red herring takes at least 10 days.

Source C

Source:



Herring had many desirable traits as a food source: it was abundant in the cold waters around northern Europe; because it lives in vast shoals, once found it can be caught in large quantities; it is relatively small and so easily cured; and it has a high fat content, increasing its caloric value while providing an important source of essential lipids.

Source B

Source:



This was 'red herring', a form of whole, uncut, brined and heavily smoked herring, so called because of the deep mahogany colour that resulted from prolonged curing process. The resulting fish had a correspondingly strong flavour and excellent keeping qualities.

Source D

Source:



Two local products regularly shipped to Jamaica were salted herrings and coarse linen cloths called osnaburgs. Plantation owners stockpiled the herrings to feed their enslaved labourers, especially when hurricanes destroyed regular food crops such as maize and plantain. They distributed the osnaburgs to the enslaved people who worked for them once or twice a year as a basic clothing allowance.



Herring Sources

Source E



The village of Ullapool had been founded in 1786 by the British Fisheries Society and, by 1790, 72 houses had been constructed there for fishery workers. Even before that time, private fishing ventures were springing up along the coast of Wester Ross. Curing stations for the herring were established in the 1770s on Tanera Mòr and on Isle Martin by merchants from Stornoway, Liverpool and London. On Loch Torridon, two local landowners had erected a very substantial curing-house with a wharf and storehouses. Hundreds of boats were fishing for herring with crews from all over Scotland and Ireland, with their economic impact described as important at national level.

Source G



In 1798, a Parliamentary Committee into the state of British herring fisheries found that exports to the West Indies had increased to 84,782 barrels, of which 51,892 barrels (61 per cent) came from Scotland. The herring industry flourished from the late 1780s when the British Fishery Society developed ports, beginning in the west at Tobermory and Ullapool but then moving to Wick when the shoals headed east.

Source F



Scotland's fishing towns and villages boomed from the sale of cheap salted herring to slave plantations, with almost two thirds of exports in the late 18th Century bound for the West Indies. Dr David Alston, of Cromarty, who has long studied links between slavery, wealth and the Highlands, found that 61 per cent of salted herring sent to the West Indies was exported from Scotland, usually from Greenock. Such was the demand for salted herring, which could last in barrels for several months and survive long transatlantic crossings, that moves towards emancipation were met with petitions to parliament from merchants and fish curers in Wick, Cromarty and Tain.

Source H

Source: "The Herring: Its Natural History and National Importance" John Mitchell Mitchell, 2018

The quantity of herrings fished in Loch Fyne and adjacent places of late years has been rather on the decrease; but it is not easy to ascertain this accurately, from the great number that is sold fresh, of which no account is kept. A portion of the herrings fished there have been, for many years back, exported to the West Indies...



Herring Sources

Source I

Source: "The Herring -Its Natural History and National Importance" John Mitchell Mitchell, 2018

In the year from **1st April 1777 to 1st April 1778**

From Greenock

Exported principally to the West Indies	23,058 barrels
Sold for home consumption	4,458 barrels
Sent coastwise	919 barrels
Total quantity from Greenock	28,435 barrels

Each barrel measuring 31.5 gallons, and containing from 700 to 900 herrings

Source K

Source: "Fishery Development in Scotland in the Eighteenth Century", James R. Coull, 2001

On the Moray Firth it is in the Buckie area that there is most evidence of activity. Although boats had originally been provided by the laird, the fishermen were also becoming boat owners; and in a good herring season fishermen might earn as much in six weeks as in the whole of the rest of the year. There was also, before the end of the century, activity in the herring fishery at places on the inner firth like Nairn, Avoch and Cromarty. It was claimed that in a good year there could be 35,000 to 36,000 barrels exported from the Moray Firth.

Source J

Source: "Fishery Development in Scotland in the Eighteenth Century", James R. Coull, 2001

The figures estimated by Knox are probably more fully considered. He stated that at the start of the eighteenth century there has been 900 herring boats on the Clyde; the adverse trading circumstances relented following the Union, and by the 1760s numbered has recovered and increased to 1600. These Clyde craft were manned by four-man crews, and he claimed that the Forth had at the same time 700 nine-man boats and the Moray Firth 600 seven-man boats....For the West Highlands and Hebrides the ball-park figure of Knox for boat numbers is 2000.

Source L

Source: "Fishery Development in Scotland in the Eighteenth Century", James R. Coull, 2001

The situation was rather different on the Clyde. Here, herring fishermen were able to fish for four or five months in the year from the latter part of the summer through autumn into the winter; and it was the women, older men and boys who attended to the harvest. It appears, however, that these fishermen were still essentially part-time and for the remainder of the year lived by casual labour.