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FISHING FACES

Revealing the people
supporting south west
Scotland's fishing industry



Solway Firth
Partnership



EUROPEAN MARITIME
& FISHERIES FUND



The Scottish
Government

INVESTING IN SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES



CELEBRATING PEOPLE WHO WORK BEHIND THE SCENES

A network of unacknowledged people all play an important role in our fishing industry, from the fabricators of fishing gear to chefs preparing prized Scottish shellfish for our plate in local restaurants. In this publication we celebrate the men and women whose lives have a connection with the seafood industry in Dumfries and Galloway by revealing their faces and providing a peek behind the scenes.



Portrait photographer, Kim Ayres has travelled along 200 miles of Solway coast to take a series of images that capture the faces of individuals whose lives and livelihoods are closely linked to the sea. They work to source quality seafood or provide essential support to our fishing industry.

HM COASTGUARD VOLUNTEER

Kerry Monteith

Kerry is a volunteer Coastguard Rescue Officer for a local Coastguard Rescue Team. She can be tasked to an emergency anytime night or day. No two call outs are the same. Tasks can include technical rope rescue over a cliff edge, water rescue from a beach or a search in the dark along a dangerous coastline. During the call out the dynamics and risks of the situation can change, so working as a team is vitally important where everyone has different roles to play but all are working to the same objective, to ensure lives are saved.

Kerry is also passionate about our environment, especially our coastline and is a key member of a local beach cleaning group drawing attention to the issues of marine litter and plastic pollution in our seas. Coordinating volunteers, often in remote and difficult to reach bays, means the work can be physically demanding but also very rewarding.

The local HM Coastguard Teams are responsible for the search and rescue of people on our cliffs, coastline and beaches with 7 Coastguard Rescue Teams located strategically along the Dumfries and Galloway coast.





HARBOUR MASTER

Lesley Smith

Lesley has always been drawn to the sea, enjoying the freedom of outside work and meeting new people from all over the world. She started working with a ferry company in Cairnryan in 1992 and the job gave her the opportunity to travel while working on port security with cargo boats, ferries and fishing boats. Whilst in Ireland she also worked with some of the large cruise liners and luxury yachts giving her access to some fantastic boats and seeing how the “other half” live.

Lesley returned to Stranraer and gained the position of harbour master with the local authority where a key role is ensuring that people working or visiting the port can do so safely. She also volunteers with the coastguard which is handy because her office is next door to the station for call outs.

Dumfries and Galloway Council is committed to operating harbours in a safe and environmentally sound manner to benefit vessels and crews as well as the wider community.

CHEF / RESTAURATEUR

John Henry

John's career in the catering industry started while he was still at school working part-time as a waiter at a hotel near Portpatrick. When he left school he joined the kitchen staff and began his apprenticeship which then took him away from south west Scotland before he returned to the area as a head-chef. John is now a chef and restaurateur in Stranraer where he offers locally sourced fish prepared and cooked to order. He is a keen supporter of the Stranraer Oyster Festival and prepares spectacular giant paellas brimming with freshly cooked local seafood including oysters, crab and queenies especially for the event.

The Stranraer Oyster Festival is a celebration of Scotland's wild, native oysters that are gathered from the sea in Loch Ryan. Marking the start of the native oyster harvesting season, the event brings together top chefs, inspiring speakers, amazing entertainers and some of the world's leading oyster experts in a programme bursting with fun, festivities and flavour!



INSHORE RESCUE VOLUNTEER

Robbie Cowan

Robbie feels that lifeboats have always been part of his life and remembers that as a young boy his dad would jump out of bed in the middle of the night to answer a call out. He would wait up to hear what happened in the rescue on his dad's return. The Nith Inshore Rescue was started by Robbie's dad and another local, Keith Houlston, in the early 1980s after some tragic incidents involving fishermen and wildfowlers. Knowing the effort put into setting it up it felt only natural to follow in his father's footsteps and Robbie has been volunteering with the inshore rescue for the last 20 years. He is now honoured to be the chairman of a volunteer search and rescue service that provides valuable support for both the coastguard and police.

Nith Inshore Rescue is an organisation independent from the RLNI which provides a voluntary search and rescue service with personnel who operate high-tech equipment and have undertaken specialist training. Another independent inshore rescue service is based at Port William.



THE FISHERMEN'S MISSION

Marian Dixon

Marian was a keen sailor in her younger days and having two sons who were previously in the Royal Navy means she has some understanding of life at sea. When she retired to Kirkcudbright after working as a full-time minister she got involved with charity work, including working with the church to organise food parcels. The Fishermen's Mission got in touch to see if a parcel could be provided for a family in need and a simple offer of "anything else I can do to help" has led to Marian working and volunteering with them for over 5 years. Engaging directly with fishermen and their families she provides a friendly face at the harbour, attends events and gives talks to publicise the work of the mission. Marian helps organise fundraising events, and collects the "Alberts", the collecting boxes which you can find in many local shops and businesses.

The Fishermen's Mission is a charity that provides emergency and welfare support to fishermen, active or retired, and their families by fighting poverty and despair in our fishing communities regardless of their faith.



RNLI CREW MEMBER VOLUNTEER

Steve Stringer

Steve has fished most of his life for pleasure and, sailing up through stormy weather, he relocated to south west Scotland to set up a charter boat business. Once in the local community, he has got involved with a range of ventures, including volunteering with the Royal National Lifeboat Institute (RNLI) as a helm at the Stranraer Inshore Lifeboat Station and a crew member at the All-weather Lifeboat Station in Portpatrick. He runs a range of fishing and sight-seeing trips and was even hired to help with the filming of the movie "The Vanishing". As with many small businesses, diversity is important and Steve is now starting lobster and crab fishing alongside his charter boat hire. He will soon be supplying local hotels and restaurants with his catch.

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) is a charity that saves lives at sea around our coasts with lifeboat stations located in Stranraer, Portpatrick, Kirkcudbright and Kippford.



LOBSTER FISHERMAN

Paul Maguire

The Maguires can trace their family history as fishermen back more than 150 years at the Isle of Whithorn and black fishing huts on the shore at Monreith. Over that time there have been many changes to traditional methods where once fishing marks were handed from father to son through oral tradition using landmarks as aids to navigation. Now Paul has technological advances that make fishing safer and more sustainable. His boat is fitted with electronic instruments using satellite technologies and 3D seabed detection systems that allow the most productive fishing grounds to be targeted and sensitive habitats avoided. Recently Paul has set up an onshore tank system which allows the lobsters which he catches to be kept in an optimum condition prior to sale.

The Galloway Static Gear Association consists of members who fish for lobsters, crab and whelks. The Association played an important role in establishing a voluntary code of conduct with local scallop fishermen who fish the same waters in the winter months.





SHELLFISH EXPORTER

Paul Kenny

The common periwinkle or wrinkle is a type of small edible sea snail. It was once a popular seaside snack, boiled and eaten with vinegar and white pepper. A certain knack was required to lever out the tasty morsel with a pin. Today top prices come from abroad and so most of the winkles hand-gathered on our shores are shipped to foreign markets where customers demand a high quality. These gatherers sell their winkles to Paul who grades them into medium, large and jumbo sizes. The sacks of shellfish are refrigerated and exported alive for maximum freshness.

Edible periwinkles are found in their millions on the rocky shore where their thick shells protect them from the pounding waves. They are herbivorous and leave a nibbled trail behind them as they graze on algae growing on rocks. Usually black or brown they may be bleached grey by the sun and sometimes are found with stripes or coloured red.



FISH RETAILER

Linda McCulloch

When Linda and Wyllie returned to Carsluith from their travels in Australia, they decided to try their luck at selling seafood door to door. 35 years later they are still traveling the hills and glens of Galloway selling their finest quality fresh fish. Linda values the special relationships that have been forged with her customers so that she sometimes feels more like a social worker than a fishmonger. Working hard to ensure fresh products reach their loyal customers, she starts early to prepare fish from the Glasgow Fish Market and locally sourced crab and lobsters. With a detailed knowledge of her products Linda is always happy to advise on what is in season and give tips for tasty recipes. She takes as much pride in offering inexpensive fish to a pensioner, as she does in supplying a chef in a top class restaurant.

Local retailers have built up an unrivalled reputation for the quality of their seafood, the reliability of their deliveries and the efficiency of their service - mobile fishmongers always happy to go that extra mile!

FISHING GEAR FABRICATOR

Alan Tuchewicz

Alan works in metal fabrication following in the footsteps of his father who started making equipment for fishing vessels and fish processing factories in Kirkcudbright over 40 years ago. They have now been running their own business for 13 years and have combined their professional engineering skills and an understanding of the requirements of the fishing industry to create innovative products. Specialising in the supply and repair of commercial scallop gear they are renowned for their high quality workmanship. Through continuous improvement they have developed the skills required to meet the needs of modern fisheries. They provide a maintenance and repair service for fishing vessels as well as pleasure yachts in local harbours and marinas.

Scallop gear needs to be robust enough to withstand the harshest conditions at sea and so demands the best design solutions and strongest materials. The expertise within the business means it has been able to expand to also undertake stainless and mild steel fabrication commissions for the agricultural and building sectors.



SHELLFISH PROCESSOR

Stuart King

Stuart is the third generation of a family of scallop fishermen based in Kirkcudbright who process and distribute scallops caught both by their own boats and other local fishermen. They continue to innovate and improve the factory and their fleet of fishing boats.

Commercial fishing of king scallops and the smaller queen scallops (known as queenies) has become an important industry in Dumfries and Galloway. Scallops are fished in the Irish sea during the winter months and many are landed in Kirkcudbright. The quayside really comes alive on high tides when the boats are being prepared to leave or the catch is being unloaded to be taken to the processing factory. In the summer months the harbour is often empty when boats are out fishing far off seas.



The Fishing Faces Project was managed by Solway Firth Partnership (SFP) and aims to bring a new perspective to the Solway fishery by revealing the people behind the scenes in the fishing industry.

SFP is an independent charity that works to support a vibrant and sustainable local economy while respecting, protecting and celebrating the distinctive character, heritage and natural features of our marine and coastal area. SFP works with many partners including members of the fishing community.

The waters of the Solway supports a diverse mixed fishery, resulting in local fishermen targeting a range of fish and particularly shellfish species. Fish processing is a major source of employment including large businesses at Annan and Kirkcudbright, as well as smaller smokehouses on the Galloway coast. The fisheries sector is an important part of the rural economy for the communities of Dumfries and Galloway.

SFP has produced several publications relating to fishing - 'Sea Life Sea Food', a booklet focussing on the Solway Coast Heritage Trail; 'Fishy Tales', highlighting the history of fishing in the Solway; and 'Fishy Dishes', a set of recipes cards for local fish. All publications are available on the SFP website: www.solwayfirthpartnerships.co.uk

Solway Firth Partnership

