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FACTSHEET I EAST NEUK WEDDINGS

The time between the end of the Yarmouth fishing and the appearance of the winter shoals was a favourite time for weddings and the brides were expected to come home well provided after a season's work in the curing yards.

A wedding was always signalled by the raising of a red, white and blue flag on the groom's boat. The bride would have sewn the wedding flag and it was flown from the mast until the day of the wedding. The state of the flag when it was lowered was considered an omen for the marriage. This custom is still practiced in some areas.

A day or so before the wedding, when the excitement was beginning to mount, there was a hoose-fillin when the women folk went to get the house ready. The kists o' providin' were fetched out from below the beds containing the lovely china and glass the bride had been buying piece-by-piece ever since she had left school and whilst at the gutting, or had been given as presents. These were put out on the shelves. It was the bridesmaid who was in charge, as it was forbidden for the bride to see the house ready until she was married. Honeymoons were almost unknown but, on the first Sunday after the wedding, the newly-weds would go to the church for their kirkin'. There was no special ceremony, but the whole congregation expected them to be there - the groom probably went back to sea on the first Monday-morning tide.

An East Neuk bride did not even in past times buy her own wedding dress, this duty being left to the groom's family who had been laying money aside to pay for it (this was called putting past money). Records state that the dress was rarely white - it had to be serviceable, to be worn on Sundays in the coming years. Changing methods in fishing brought about a greater independence among women and, as a result, the brides-to-be were free to choose their own dresses.

There were very few church weddings and certainly none in a Registry Office. Scots Law permitted them to be married in the Manse, the Town Hall or even at home with the Minister officiating. The ceremony took place on a Friday evening, as men had little time to spare - even for their own wedding! Once the ceremony was over, the invited guests who had been bidden by word o' mooth sat down to a delicious supper, normally purveyed by the local baker. From the

supper, several plates of piping hot food were sent out to neighbours and friends who could not be present - the first of the plates was known as the bride's plate, it being quite an honour to receive this. It usually went to someone who it was deemed had no immediate right to be there at the wedding but who had a special place in the family's affections.

After supper more guests arrived, indeed it sometimes being announced by the couple that they would let a' body in. Dancing then followed the feast and this continued into the wee sma' hoors.