

**A LARGO BAY
MARITIME LOG**

&

THE METHIL CONVOYS

**A SUMMARY OF MARITIME EVENTS BEFORE &
AFTER WORLD WAR ONE & WORLD WAR TWO**

By JOHN DOWNIE

A MARITIME LOG

The following pages give a summarized account of Maritime events within the Largo Bay district from early times some of which have not been recorded in previous local maritime publications. With additional information coming to hand and corrections to earlier writings a further attempt is made to expand the whole maritime history of the Largo Bay area.

When reading any maritime history of the Second World War there is every possibility of finding reference to the Convoys at Methil.

The convoys were operating from Methil from the latter half of the First World War and throughout the Second World War.

Now with the 100th Anniversary of WW1 and the 75th Anniversary of WW2 upon us nothing remains in the district to give recognition to this huge undertaking. Not even a Memorial exists to honour the Merchant Seamen who sailed from Methil Roads and lost their lives on the voyages.

EARLY MARITIME LOG

Possibly the earliest Maritime History in Largo Bay begins with Sir Andrew Wood who was born at Largo about 1460. The story of his victory over the English off the Bass Rock in 1489 with his two armed merchant ships **FLOWER** and **YELLOW CARVEL** have been well documented. This marked the beginning of the Scots Navy.

Sir Andrew was given command of the Scottish Flagship **GREAT MICHAEL** which was built at Newhaven and took six years to build. Her building is believed to have denuded all the timber in the woods of Fife as her dimensions were believed to be 240Ft. in Length and 36 Ft. in Beam. She was sold to France after the Battle of Flodden and Sir Andrew remained there for a period as Ambassador to Scotland.



Author's Waterline Model of GREAT MICHAEL

The story of Alexander Selkirk from Largo who was set ashore from his ship **CINQUE PORTS** on the Island of Juan Fernandez in 1704 where he existed alone till 1709 has become a legend under Daniel Defoe's classic novel **ROBINSON CRUSOE**.

Leven Harbour is first recorded in 1556 when a Harbourmaster was appointed. Two vessels of 20 Tons are recorded as being owned in the port in 1655 and a Barque named **ISOBELL** was owned by John Lamont in 1699 possibly for supplying Falkland Palace with meat.

The first lighthouse in Scotland was built on the May Island in 1635. When asked how far the light could be seen a Leven skipper replied "a kenning off, another sixteen miles or thereby in a dark nicht without snaw or mist"

A tidal harbour has existed at West Wemyss since 1550 for exporting coal from the collieries of Lord Wemyss.

In 1584 a vessel docked at West Wemyss from Flanders and it was suspected that the crew brought home the Plague which spread through Fife.

A breakwater was constructed about 1621. The first indication of ships belonging to West Wemyss was a vessel called the **JANET** which sailed from North Berwick to Leith with oats in 1639. The next mentioned was the **JAMES** which was a Guardship for the Scottish Navy in 1648.

A Harbour was built at Methil in 1660 to replace an existing wooden jetty. The first shipping recorded is Andrew Thomson's **LEIUEN (Lioness)** loading coal on the 15th September 1664 and sailing for Leith on the 17th September 1664.

At this time Scottish seamen were regularly enlisted in the Royal Navy through lists drawn up for crew to be provided by relative sizes of ports. In the year 1664, eleven seamen were supplied from the district West Wemyss to Largo.

In 1666 the **MORTON** of Wemyss which had been taken by Privateers was rescued by the **ROTHES** of Dundee.

The Baltic Trade

During the eighteenth century the Baltic Trade was lucrative for vessels from the Ports of Largo Bay. The following is a random yearly log of local vessels trading to the Baltic from 1768 till 1826

June 1768	FRIENDSHIP of Leven (Master. Allan)
September 1776	JOHN & MARY of Wemyss (Master. Welch)
May 1777	EUROPA of Leven (Master. Young)
May 1780	NELLY of Wemyss (Master. Beale)
April 1783	ST. ANDREW of Wemyss (Master. Salmond)
June 1784	FRIENDSHIP of Methil (Master. Thomson)
October 1785	CATO of Largo (Master. Guthrie)
October 1786	MARY ANN of Wemyss (Master. Baxter)
June 1788	BETSEY of Wemyss (Master. Gibb)
September 1789	URANIA of Wemyss (Master. Dobie)

May 1790	ROSE of Wemyss (Master. Rutherford)
August 1791	BRISTOL MERCHANT of Methil (Master. Gibb)
May 1792	GOOD INTENT of Leven (Master. Ness)
May 1793	FANNY of Leven (Master. Landel)
January 1794	ANN of Methil (Master. Morris)
January 1795	FARMER of Methil (Master. Hutton)
July 1796	ARCHIBALD of Methil (Master. Morris)
May 1797	JENNY'S of Methil (Master. Thomson)
April 1798	BRITANNIA of Wemyss (Master. Bisset)
June 1799	RENOWN of East Wemyss (Master. Deas)
August 1800	WEMYSS of East Wemyss (Master. Bisset)
September 1801	CONCORD of Methil (Master. Morris)
August 1805	ELBE of Wemyss (Master. Salmond)
September 1807	MARY of Wemyss (Master. Bell)
April 1808	JUNO of Leven (Master. Gordon)
September 1813	ANN DALRYMPLE of Methil (Master. Johnston)
March 1814	TIGER of Largo (Master. Smith)
June 1817	UNION of Leven (Master. Nicholson)
August 1820	ALERT of Leven (Master. Bell)
September 1822	PERCIVALS of East Wemyss (Master. Scott)
April 1826	VIOLET of Methil (Master. Black)

In 1754 smuggling from the ports in the district was in evidence.

The Trade with America and Canada

The following vessels were noted as trading to America and Canada, mainly for timber cargoes from 1751 till 1822.

September 1751	LEITH PACKET of Methil (Master. Rolland)
March 1803	SEA FLOWER of Wemyss (Master. Bell)
July 1810	MARY of Wemyss (Master. Wilson)
July 1810	POLLY of Leven (Master. Gibb)
July 1810	TIGER of Largo (Master. Smith)
August 1810	JUNO of Leven (Master. Gordon)
August 1810	MINERVA of Wemyss (Master. Bennet)
July 1812	HERO of Wemyss (Master. Scott)
August 1812	HOPE of Methil (Master. Oliphant)
July 1818	ROVER of Wemyss (Master. Douglas)
July 1820	SIMON COCK of Leven (Master. Younger)
August 1822	MARGARET of Leven (Master. Smith)
September 1822	ROSE of Wemyss (Master. Johnston)

From as early as 1525 till 1815 Salt Pans existed at Wemyss, Methil, Leven & Largo and the export of salt from these ports provided an increase in revenue.

On the 22nd September 1766 the **HOPEWELL** of Leven master William Allan was lost off Eyemouth.

The **HELEN** of Methil was wrecked off Orford Ness on the 13th December 1774 while on passage Middelburg to Methil.

In October 1779 the **DIANA** of Wemyss (master Beale) from Middelburg to Memel was taken by the French Privateers **SERPENT** and **GREYHOUND** then burnt. The master and crew were carried to Dunkirk.

A Shipyard was opened by Alexander Steele at West Wemyss in 1784

The **KEATTIE** of Methil (Master Souter) from Hamburg is on shore near Cromer without any person on board in February 1791. She was later salvaged and repaired.

During September 1791 the **COMMERCE** of Wemyss (Master Bisset) from Dysart to Anholt was lost on Anholt. The crew and materials were saved.

The **JOHN & ELIZABETH** of Methil (Master Steedman) from Gothenburg to Kirkcaldy was driven ashore near the Scaw after being deserted by the crew during June 1792.

URANIA of Wemyss (Master Bisset) from Dysart to Memel is on shore near Libau in December 1795.

A shipyard was opened at Methil by James Farnie in 1795

May 1797, the **PALLAS** of Wemyss is taken by Privateers in the North Sea.

The **ADEONA** of Leven (Master Landel) from Memel to the Firth of Forth is taken in the North Sea by a Privateer in June 1797.



The ships shown on the town crests of the district indicate the maritime importance of the area in trade, fishing and shipbuilding throughout the years.



(Author's)

December 1800, the **OLIVE BRANCH** of Wemyss (Master Spittal) from Leith to St. Petersburg is on shore in the Gulph.

Buckhaven Fishing Boat **LADY EMMA** Lost with all hands at Wick early 1800's

The **OLIVE BRANCH** of Wemyss (Master Williamson) is on shore near Copenhagen and full of water in October 1803.

April 1804, the **URANIA** of Wemyss (Master Dobie) from Dysart to Copenhagen ran ashore on the Scaw and is full of water.

On the 11th February 1804 a Sloop named **PEGGY & SUSAN** foundered off Wemyss with the loss of nine crew. She was on a voyage from Findhorn to Leith.

The **NEPTUNE** of Largo (Master Guthrie) was stranded on 23rd October 1804 entering Pillau. The crew was saved and it is expected the vessel will be refloated.

On the 21st October 1805 Largo Bay was represented at the Battle of Trafalgar by **HMS. DEFIANT** under the command of Captain Philip Charles Durham of Largo.

In November 1807 the wreck of a Brig believed to be the **BRITANNIA** of Wemyss (Master Douglas) with a cargo of Iron and Deals is on shore near Whitby.

May 1808, the **ADVENTURE** of Kirkcaldy (Master Adamson) has put into Wemyss with loss of rudder having struck a rock.

On the 8th January 1811 the **RANGER** of Leven Master Younger was driven ashore behind the South Pier at Dover.

The **MINERVA** of Wemyss (Master Bennet) for St. Petersburg has arrived at Carlsrone with great damage having been on shore in the Malmoc Channel in June 1813.

A **Buckhaven Fishing Boat** was lost with all hands between Eyemouth & Burnmouth through weight of fish on board in 1820

In 1821 a small quay was built at Leven and the River mouth deepened.

10th April 1821, The **THOMAS** of Wemyss (Master Harrow) for Copenhagen with coal is on shore at Swine Bottoms (Coast of Sweden)

On the 1st February 1822 the Leith Paddle Steamer **SURPRISE** was wrecked off Leven.

August 1822, The **ROYAL GEORGE** (Yacht) with His Majesty on board arrived in the Firth of Forth from Greenwich accompanied by a Squadron.

The **ROSE** of Wemyss (Master Johnston) on passage to Mirimachi. Canada, has put into Stromness with loss of anchor and cable in April 1823

7th February 1824 the **PEGGY** of Wemyss with a cargo of coal bound for Leith left West Wemyss Harbour. Shortly afterwards a tremendous gale blew up and she ran back for shelter but being ebb tide grounded off the harbour. A boat attempted to go off several times but those on board consisting of the master and another man along with two passengers were drowned before the boat could reach the vessel. She became a total wreck.

Two sailing vessels belonging to Messrs. Berwick of Methil were lost on the 8th March 1827. The **THOMAS & NANCY** was lost with all hands off Kirkcaldy and the **EUPHEMIA** was wrecked off Buckhaven.

Also on the 8th March the Sloop **INDUSTRY** was wrecked at East Wemyss with the loss of two of her five crew. She was on passage from Montrose to Newcastle.

Paddle Steamer **RAPID** owned by the Dysart, Leith, Edinburgh, Leven & Largo Shipping Co. began services in 1830 from Leven and Largo to Newhaven. She was destroyed by fire at Dysart in 1831 and replaced by Paddle Steamer **VICTORY**.

On the 7th December 1832 a Sloop named **MYRTLE** was driven ashore and wrecked between Leven and Methil.

In 1833 the **LADY EVA WEMYSS & MARGARET** of West Wemyss was lost after leaving Wick. Those lost were James Bonthron, William Johnston, John Fyffe, Thomas Robertson and Robert Cummings.

14th February 1836. The Kirkcaldy Whaler **VIEWFORTH** arrived at Stromness after being caught in the ice during the Arctic Summer at Davis Strait. She was released from the ice during January in the middle of the Arctic Winter. (Global warming must have existed then also.) Two of the survivors on board were John Hutton from Leven and Peter Henderson from Buckhaven.

On the 1st January 1838 the Largo Packet Boat **ELIZABETH DURHAM** was wrecked at Fife Ness.

In 1841 a fleet of sixty Buckhaven boats were pursuing the Summer herring at Wick, Helmsdale and Fraserburgh .

The Buckhaven Fishing Boat **RED ROVER** while fishing off Dunbar had a good haul and hoped for a ready market on her fish at that port. While attempting to enter Dunbar Old Harbour in a gale on 20th August 1845 she was driven among the rocks and totally destroyed. Her master William Thomson managed to get on to a rock and was saved but three of the crew were drowned. The master's brother managed on to another rock. A boat was launched under Lt. Wylde the coastguard plus four local men. However the master's brother was washed off and lost and the boat carrying the five rescuers was dashed to pieces on the rocks with the loss of all five men. Nine men in all lost their lives.

Also lost in 1845 was the **JOAN** of West Wemyss wrecked on the Farne Islands.

Buckhaven Fishing Boat **ELIZABETH**, Skipper William Robertson, was Lost with all hands off Roseheartly in 1847

18th April 1853 Buckhaven Harbour opened with a local ceremony

In August 1854 one hundred and one Buckhaven boats plus six from Largo and Methil pursued the Summer herring fishing in the Forth. The Buckhaven boats landed 8000 Barrels of herring at Dunbar.

1855 **S.S. PRIMER ARGENTINO** was launched by Henry Balfour at Methil for Liverpool owners. Also in the same year he launched **S.S. JANET CROLL** for London owners plus the small **S.S. ARROW** also for Liverpool.

In 1856 Henry Balfour launched two Iron Barques **DALHOUSIE** for Glasgow and **SANTIAGO** for Liverpool

The Buckhaven Fishing Boat **MARINER** was lost at Stornoway in 1856

On the 4th October 1860 the West Wemyss Schooner **PORT DUNDAS** Master James Smith foundered in the North Sea on passage from Thurso to West Wemyss.

2 Buckhaven Fishing Boats Foundered off North Berwick through weight of herrings on board in 1860. The crews were saved.

On the 19th July 1863 the Buckhaven Fishing Boat **CALEDONIA** capsized while trying to enter Whitby in a gale. The Lowestoft Lugger **EXCELSIOR** managed to rescue the crew of five and land them in Whitby. A two Pound gratuity was paid to the crew of the Lowestoft boat by the RNLi for the rescue

After losing sails in a gale off Bognor Regis on the 26th October 1863 the West Wemyss Schooner **BRANCH** Master James Foster was wrecked.

When attempting Lossiemouth on 11th March 1864 the Wemyss Sloop **BARBARA HOPEMAN** developed a leak and was wrecked. The crew of three were rescued by Lossiemouth Lifeboat.

On the 26th January 1865 the Schooner **DEPTFORD PACKET** of Largo Master T. Henderson was wrecked on the Farne Islands.

The West Wemyss Sloop **STEVEN** sank outside the harbour in 1865. She was carrying 57 Tons of Methil Parrot coal

Robert MacRae of West Wemyss who was Master of the local Schooner **ECHO** was lost overboard in 1865 while on passage to Aberdeen.

In 1866 a fleet of one hundred boats left Buckhaven for the herring fishing at North Shields. One of the boats taking part was the **TRUE LOVE (KY.1975)** of Methil.



Model of TRUE LOVE (KY.1975)

(Author's)

Schooner **EGBERTUS** ran ashore at West Wemyss and was lost in 1867

The **TRADER** an 81 Ton Inverness registered schooner was wrecked at West Wemyss Harbour in 1868.

On the 3rd February 1868 the Kirkcaldy Steam Lighter “A” was wrecked off Buckhaven.

Schooner **BROWNS** of West Wemyss was lost with all hands on the Goodwin Sands on the 11th November 1868. Those lost were Master David Herd of Buckhaven, William Herd and David Laing from West Wemyss plus three crew from Buckhaven.

56 Buckhaven boats and 18 from Largo and Methil took part in the 1870 winter herring fishing in the Firth of Forth.

The Leven Sloop **EARL OF SEAFIELD** was lost with all three crew only quarter of a mile off Leven in a gale on 15th December 1870. She was carrying bagged grain.

Buckhaven Fishing Boat **MARGARET DEAS (KY.961)** Skipper John Deas was lost off Shields on 4th October 1872 after a collision while on passage Buckhaven to Yarmouth. One man was lost and the other five rescued.

A German Galliot **IMMANUEL** was lost leaving West Wemyss in 1870.

On the 27th January 1873 the West Wemyss Schooner **GEORGE** was lost with all hands in St. Andrews Bay. The Master James Anderson and Mate George Ferguson were both from West Wemyss.

The wet dock at West Wemyss was opened on the 18th September 1873. The first vessel to enter was Lord Wemyss's yacht **MILLICENT** followed by the German Schooner **HELENA MARIA** then the two West Wemyss Schooners **ECHO** and **EARL OF CLARENDON**. The first steamship to enter was **S.S. ARON** at a later date.

Buckhaven Fishing Boat **PERSEVERANCE (KY.911)**, Skipper Andrew Thomson was lost with all hands off Yarmouth on 23rd December 1874.

The Methil Sloop **NEILSON** (Packet Boat to Leith) master Alexander Thomson was stranded and wrecked at Pettycur in 1874. She had traded from Methil for 50 years.

Buckhaven Fishing Boat **EARLY DAWN (KY.226)** fisherman Thomas Eason was lost overboard off North Shields on 26th July 1875



EARLY DAWN (KY.226)

Buckhaven Fishing Boat **WILLIAM & SUSAN (KY.321)** Skipper Robert Thomson was lost with all hands off North Shields in 1876

In 1879 a new dock was built at Leven by the Leven Dock & Harbour Co.

A 41 Ton Yarmouth Smack **FALCON** was driven ashore and wrecked beneath Wemyss Castle in 1879. The crew were lost.

The Brig **SCIO** of Sunderland was driven ashore at Methil on the 27th November 1881

Buckhaven Fishing Boat **ONWARD (KY.1436)** Skipper David Thomson was lost with all hands off Shields in 1882

On the 4th July 1884 the Leven Schooner **RIVAL** owned by her Master Joseph Anderson was wrecked on the Isle of Stroma in the Pentland Firth. All seven crew rescued.

Also 1884 saw the sale of five local fishing boats in Methil with the crews finding alternative employment at the building of Methil Dock. The boats sold were **BROTHERS (KY.197)**, **ELIZABETH (KY.196)**, **LILY & ELIZA (KY.195)**, **MARGARET (KY.198)** and **MARY'S (KY.199)**. Each boat carried a crew of five.

The Inverness registered schooner **WILLIAM ANDERSON** was driven ashore and lost East of Methil on a voyage from Leith to Leven on the 6th April 1885.

Largo Fishing Boat **BROTHERS (KY.39)** was lost with all hands off May Island on 30th March 1886. Those lost were Samuel (Skipper), John & Alexander Gillies, David, David Jnr, & James Wishart and John Johnston.

On the 30th December 1886 a young Methil seaman Thomas Robertson was drowned from the Dredger **BEAUFORT** at the construction of Methil Dock.

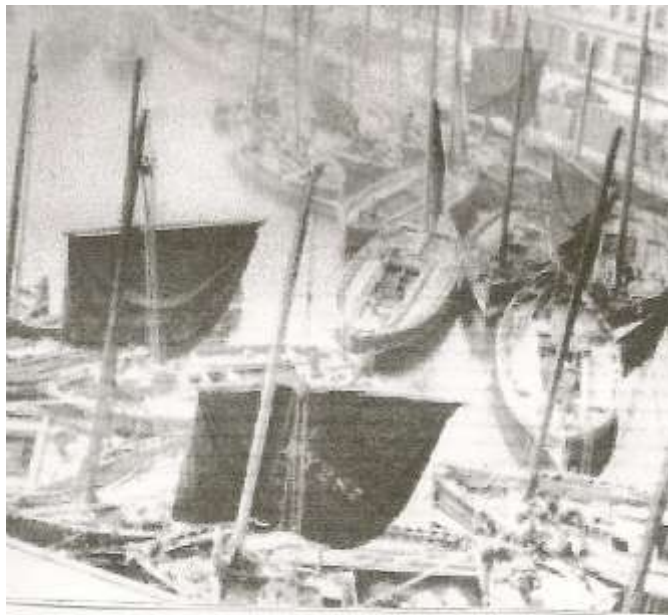
ISABELLA COMBE (LH.5) of Newhaven arrived at Methil on the 9th March 1887 with her Skipper/Owner Robert Paterson who was one of six Newhaven Pilot/Fishermen employed at the opening of Methil Dock. The 6 Ton Yawl of 25 Ft in length was propelled by a Lug sail and oars and is assumed to be the first Pilot Boat at the new

Methil Dock. Later Robert Paterson and his next door neighbor Thomas Carnie owned the yawl **THE BOATMEN (ML.404)**.



The cottages on the left were built to house the Methil Dock Pilots. Thomas Carnie lived in the fourth house from the left and Robert Paterson lived in the fifth house.

Methil Dock was opened with a ceremony on 5th May 1887. The first vessel to enter was **S.S. NEWHAVEN** of Leith followed by the Aberdeen Schooner **DIANA** then the Buckhaven Fishing Boat **LADY LILLIAN (KY.287)**, Skipper John Deas.



LADY LILLIAN (KY.287) drying sail at North Shields. The boat alongside has ML. registration and the photograph probably dates from 1910 circa. Most of the photographs of sailing boats at North Shields Fish Quay are of Buckhaven boats. (Courtesy North Tyneside Libraries)

A Norwegian Schooner **AAGOT** was wrecked in fog off West Wemyss on the 27th January 1887.

The Excursion Steamer **STIRLING CASTLE** began calling at Buckhaven Harbour, Methil (for Leven) and Largo from 1888.

The Hartlepool steamship **ANTELOPE** went ashore and was wrecked West of Methil Lighthouse on the 22nd February 1888.

At West Wemyss Harbour the Norwegian Brig **DE CAPO** was wrecked on the 12th December 1890.

TRAWLING

A meeting was held about the concerns of the damage being done by Steam Trawlers and the fishermen of Buckhaven and Anstruther were very much opposed to the practice. Trawler skippers who were caught fishing within three miles from the shore which was then the limit were fined at Methil Police Court and Cupar Sheriff Court. Between 1890 and 1910 there were at least 26 cases of Granton and Leith registered trawlers fined for illegal fishing within the limits on the Fife coast.

In August 1900 the Granton Trawler **ALBATROSS (GN.13)** was reported for fishing within the limits in Largo Bay by Skipper W. Gillies of the Largo Yacht **SEMIQUAVER**.

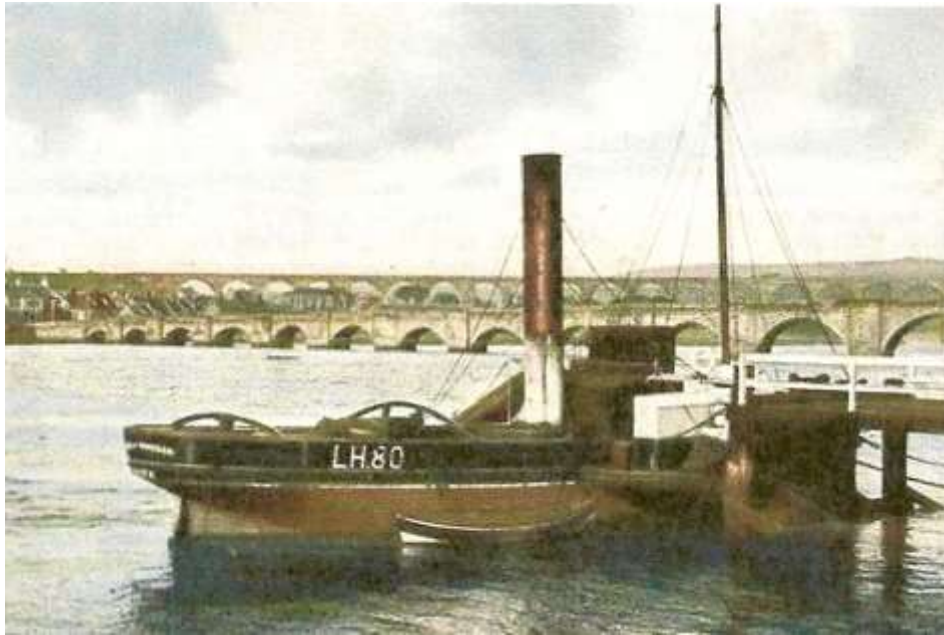


Sailing ships in Leven Dock circa.1889. The Paddle tug in the River has the funnel markings)of Hugh Clark's **EARL OF WINDSOR (LMHC RETROSPECT)**

SHIPS & TUGS

Contrary to initial belief Methil, did own a Steam Tug. Hugh Clark the Ship Chandler in Methil who owned the premises later occupied by J.H. Fyhn purchased the Wooden Paddle Tug **EARL OF WINDSOR** from Rye owners in 1889.

EARL OF WINDSOR (LH.80) A 79 Ton vessel built in 1867 at North Shields with the following Data (85.3 x 17.6 x 9.1 Ft.) 40HP O.N.55208 Registered at Rye/Leith. She was also used as a Paddle Trawler in between towage jobs. The skipper William Foreman, a North Shields man, ended up in Cupar Sheriff Court on two occasions in 1890 for fishing inside the legal limits. The tug was sold to Granton in 1891.



Methil owned Tug EARL OF WINDSOR (LH.80)

A Norwegian Brigantine **FORAARET** was wrecked off West Wemyss on the 13th November 1891

The following year 1892 Methil Steamship Co. took delivery of the new 390 Ton Steamship **S.S. LEVEN** from J. Scott's shipyard at Kinghorn

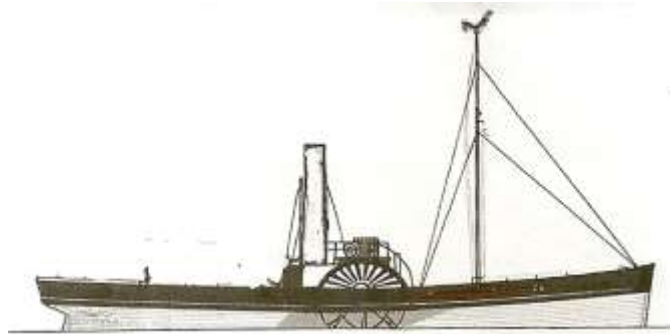
The German Schooner **CATHRINA** was wrecked off West Wemyss on the 20th September 1892

S.S. RALEIGH of Exeter went ashore trying to enter Methil in a South West gale on the 18th January 1892.

On the 20th February 1892 the Leith registered **S.S. CREMONA** went ashore at the East end of Buckhaven. She was refloated five days later

Off Largo the Norwegian Brig **FRATERNITE** was wrecked on the 22nd August 1893

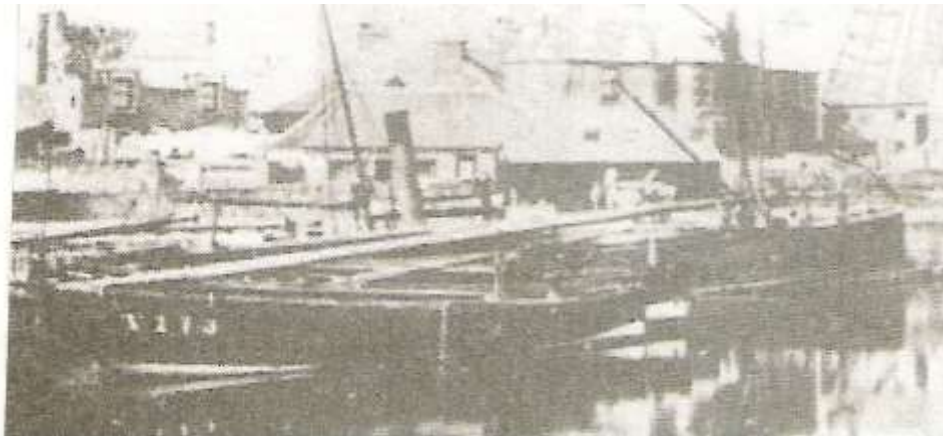
The Methil Steam Paddle Tug **SEA KING** sank off Methil on the 22nd August 1892 when the engine shaft broke and penetrated the ship's hull.



SEA KING

The Cock on the mast was the distinguishing feature of D & J. Wilsons Tugs

About 1894 J. Bell of Leven purchased the former Kirkcaldy Steamship **ADAM SMITH** A 293 Ton Steamship built in 1876 by H. Murray at Dumbarton with the following Data (150.3 x 22.1 x 12 Ft.) 60HP O.N.62963 Registered at Kirkcaldy Her master was Captain Kinnear



S.S. ADAM SMITH berthed at Leven

In INGLIS's TIDE TABLES & NAUTICAL ALMANAC for 1894 it lists **S.S. LEVEN**, **S.S. ADAM SMITH** and Brigantine **ARICA** as being owned in Levenmouth district.

During a gale in the Pacific on the 15th August 1895 Thomas Doig from Leven was washed overboard from the Full Rigged Ship **INDIAN EMPIRE**. He had served as steward in the ship for 15 years mainly when it was under the command of Captain David Watson of Largo.

Anchor nets were being used by the Buckhaven and Largo yawls and inshore vessels at the winter herring in 1896.

On the 30th June 1897 Number 2 Dock was opened at Methil. The **S.S. SIR WALTER** of Leith was the first vessel to enter the dock.

December 1897 **S.S. LEVEN** was sold to Italy after the Methil Steamship Co. went into liquidation.

During the storms from September till November 1898 the following vessels were wrecked at Methil Swedish Barque **GRIPEN**, Two Methil Pilot Boats, St. Monans Fishing Boat **MYRTLE (KY.218)**, Methil Lugger **ONWARD**, Norwegian Brig **THETIS**, and Dutch Schooner **JANTIE**

At West Wemyss Norwegian Barque **A.W. SINGLETON**, Norwegian Schooner **SAFIR**, Norwegian Smack **AMATEURS**, Danish Schooner **THYRA**, three German Schooners **HISKELINA**, **MAREN** and **MARIE** were also wrecked.

16th December 1898 after the storms a meeting was held at Methil Docks for stationing a lifeboat locally but no site could be found at the Docks so the station was built at Buckhaven Harbour.

The Norwegian Barque **THORGNY** was blown ashore at Buckhaven on the 9th November 1899.

9th August 1900, Buckhaven lifeboat arrived on station.

29th September 1900 Buckhaven Lifeboat christened **ISABELLA** by Sir John Gilmour at a ceremony held in the Harbour.

1900 Concerns were shown by the public and local importers over the state of Leven Dock as sand has gradually silted up the Dock and approaches. The Dock has had quite a number of sailing vessels and small steamers over the last three years but with Methil Dock in full operation the Railway Company appear to have lost interest in maintaining Leven Dock.

List of Import Vessels Using Leven Dock in 1900

27th March 1900	NANCY	(Super Phosphate)
30 th April 1900	S.S. TOPAZ	(Rock Salt)
May 1900	MARY LIVINGSTONE	(Chemical Manure)
5 th May 1900	RICHARD & EMILY	(Super Phosphate)
6 th July 1900	S.S. PORPOISE of Glasgow	(Whiting)
14 th July 1900	S.S. SAPPHIRE of Kirkcaldy	(Maize)
19 th July 1900	VILLAGE BELLE	(Agricultural Salt)
11 th August 1900	S.S. AMETHYST of Kirkcaldy	(Linseed)
11 th August 1900	S.S. WILLIAM YULE of Kirkcaldy	(Guano)
5 th September 1900	MARIA	(Kainit)
12 th October 1900	S.S. JOHN STRACHAN of Kirkcaldy	(Linseed)
30 th October 1900	S.S. RAITH of Kirkcaldy	(Bones)

From 1896 till 1900 the number of vessels using Leven Dock was 102 (excluding Fishing Boats)



S.S. RAITH of Kirkcaldy was a regular trader to Leven Dock. She is shown here at St. Abbs Harbour. (Courtesy Captain John Landels)

WAR

The first local involvement with war came during the Boer War when R.G.E. Wemyss of Wemyss Castle donated the Steam Yacht he purchased in 1899 for use as a Hospital Ship. **VANADIS** A 200 Ton Steam Yacht built in 1880 by Ramage & Ferguson at Leith Data (153.5 x 21.8 x 11.1 Ft.) 52HP Registered at London. She was originally used as a honeymoon ship for Lord Wemyss's wedding and was sold in 1903.



Steam Yacht VANADIS

On the home front everything continued peacefully with coal exports and fishing remaining buoyant in the area.

Thirty four Buckhaven Boats took part in the Herring Drave at North Shields in July 1900 and the top boat was **REMEMBRANCE (KY.194)** Skipper Robert Walker.

Buckhaven Lifeboat's first call out was to stand by the Russian Schooner **GHIDO** in difficulties off Inchkeith on 21st December 1900.

By the 16th May 1901, only nine Boats had arrived at North Shields and the top boat was **HOPE (KY.302)** Skipper John Walker.

On the 20th June 1901 John Fotheringham a salmon fisher was drowned and three of the crew rescued when their coble capsized at Leven Salmon Bothy where the caravan site is today. The three saved were William Crowe, David Blackwalls and James Duncan.

Buckhaven Lifeboat **ISABELLA** stood by four local fishing boats entering harbour on 23rd December 1901.

3rd September 1902 Norwegian Barque **NORNEN** went ashore at Largo. Buckhaven Lifeboat Coxswain, 2nd Coxswain and others were away at Shields for the fishing. Bowman Robert Thomson assembled a scratch crew including miners. Forced to return to harbour for more experienced crew. Sailed without a complete crew and rescued 7 men but the master remained on board. Set off a third time and damaged the life boat on rocks. Set off a fourth time and lay alongside **NORNEN** all night.

4th September 1902 Towards morning the Methil Tug brought the 7 crewmen back on board **NORNEN**. Conditions deteriorated and **ISABELLA** rescued the crew of seven plus the master. Robert Thomson and the crew were decorated for the rescue.

Xmas Day 1902, Buckhaven lifeboat was called out to the Peterhead Ketch **EMILY FLORENCE** whose anchor had fouled the telegraph cable in a gale off Burntisland. When the lifeboat arrived the gale had abated slightly and the master declined assistance.

Fishing Boat **WELSH PRINCE (KY.645)** Lost off Buckhaven with a crew of four on the 21st November 1903 in squally conditions. Buckhaven Lifeboat searched for survivors. Those lost were John Logie,(Skipper) David Deas, William Thomson & William Robertson.

The small steamship **S.S. AGENORIA** was launched in October 1903 by Montrose Shipbuilding Co. and registered at Kirkcaldy. Her owners were Matthew Taylor and A.L. Renstrom. In 1904 registration was changed to Methil and she became the first ship registered at the Port.



Believed to be S.S. AGENORIA

On the 16th June 1904 the Buckhaven Fishing Boat **PILGRIM (KY.503)** skipper Peter Foster was assisted into Seahouses harbour after her sails had been blown out in a gale.

In January 1905 the **HENERIN** sailed from Largo with 177 Tons of herring for England.

The Swedish Schooner **HILMA** went ashore at Pettycur during a gale on the 15th March 1905. Buckhaven Lifeboat was launched with difficulty and when under sail approximately one mile off shore she was hit by a heavy sea breaking the rudder pins and forcing a return to harbour. North Berwick Lifeboat was called out but the coastguard had succeeded in landing the crew.

Buckhaven regatta took place in 1905 under Provost Gillespie as Commodore and the 16 to 20 Ft. class results were:

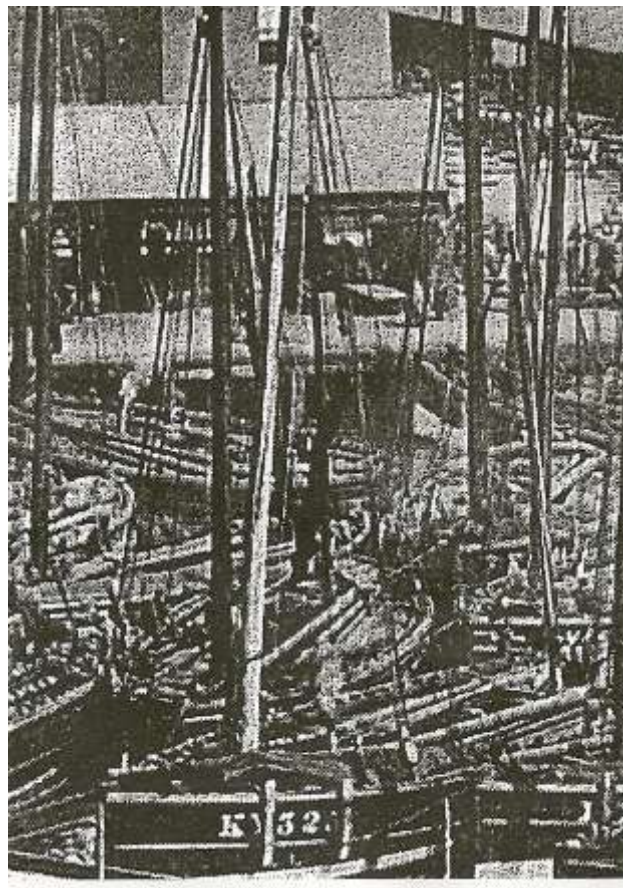
First - **GLOVER** of Dysart; Second – **PEARL**; Third – **ISA**.

The Rev. William Dunlop Medal results were

First - **MAGGIE** Jas. Gordon; Second - **OSPREY** Thos. Robertson; Third - **PEARL** John Logie (LAUREL).

In February 1906 **S.S. AGENORIA** was sold to London owners and Matthew Taylor purchased the larger ship **S.S. WANS FELL** in April.

On the Buckhaven fishing boat **HOPEWELL (KY.325)** one of the crew James Gordon was lost overboard off the May Island on 4th September 1908



HOPEWELL (KY.325) at North Shields
(Courtesy North Tyneside Libraries)

The Hopper/Dredger **No. 4** was lost at the construction of Methil No.3 Dock on the 7th December 1908.

Fishing Boat **PARAGON (ML.249)** Lost off Buckhaven Harbour with a crew of three on 24th June 1910. Those lost were John Deas, Thomas Thomson, and Samuel Eadie.

Leven Dock was closed and filled in during 1910. The riverside quay remains. A jetty was built at the seaward end of the riverside quay in 1913 for the Excursion Steamers but was demolished in the 1950's as being unsafe.



The Riverside Quay as it stands today. Where the bend starts was the original Dock Gates. Up till 1970 many boats were found berthed in the river but like everywhere else vandalism has brought it to an end. Trips round the bay by motor boats were popular from the steps on the quay till about 1955. (Author's)



Nearing the end for the Excursion Steamers. The REDGAUNTLET discharges passengers at Methil with the Tug REBECCA on the right (Note the masthead cock)

Buckhaven Lifeboat was launched on the evening of 23rd November 1910 when the Danish Schooner **STAR** mistook the lights of the Michael Colliery for West Wemyss Harbour and was in danger of going ashore. The lifeboat stood by until 2AM when the danger was past and a tug towed the schooner into West Wemyss during the morning.

5th November 1911, the Norwegian Schooner **RAP** lost her anchors off Dysart and the crew being ashore with only the master and a boy on board, drifted with the gale down the coast. Crowds on the shore witnessed her almost striking the pier at Methil Docks. She glanced against the sandbank at Leven but the ebbing tide and gale pushed her further down till she grounded at Lundin Links. Buckhaven Lifeboat was launched, with difficulty clearing the harbour mouth in the gale, but before she reached the vessel the master and boy were brought ashore by Leven Coastguard with their lifesaving apparatus.



Leven Coastguard Station

Author's

The Glasgow registered **S.S. ASHGROVE** dragged her anchors in a gale off Methil on the 16th January 1912 and was washed against the Pier and totally wrecked. Two of the crew and one local man lost their lives.

On the 25th December 1912, Buckhaven Lifeboat was launched to go to the aid of the Newcastle owned steamship **GLENMOOR** owned by Walter Runciman & Co. in difficulties off Methil.

Methil No. 3 Dock was opened on the 22nd January 1913 and the first vessel to enter was the Leith excursion Paddle Steamer **REDGAUNTLET**. However sinking of the dockgate sill made the dock unsuitable for ships during WW1.

During the 3rd December 1913, the Kirkcaldy Steam Lighter **WILLIAM YULE** showed distress signals in a gale at Largo Bay. Buckhaven Lifeboat was launched and stood by the vessel for six hours while she was blown closer inshore. The Methil Tug **REBECCA** Skipper Jimmy Bryce came to the rescue and towed the vessel to Methil Docks.

FIRST WORLD WAR

On the 2nd August 1914, ten men left Methil, all Royal Naval Reserve personnel.

At midnight 2nd August 1914 the Admiralty declared the Forth Estuary a controlled area with Excursion sailings prohibited.

Britain and the Commonwealth formally entered the First World War on the 4th August 1914.

BOOM DEFENCE

Boom Defence was laid from Fidra Island at North Berwick across to Elie.

Another Boom was laid from Granton over to Pettycur .

A final boom with Torpedo nets was laid between Cramond Island and Aberdour using the Islands of Inch Mickery and Inchcolm affording protection to the Forth Bridge.

Gates were positioned in the Booms to allow ships to pass through and Boom Defence Vessels were stationed there to open and close the gates.

One of the first acts was to seize all German Merchant Ships berthed in British ports.

Vessels seized in Fife ports were:

LINA	74 Ton German Ketch seized at Burntisland
HEINRICH LINNEMANN	140 Ton German Schooner seized at Kirkcaldy
HERMANN	65 Ton German Ketch seized at Dysart
KATHARINA	126 Ton German Ketch seized at Dysart

Story of the SOLWAY LASS

This steel built Schooner was built in Holland in 1902 as **STINA** and sold to Germany in 1905 where she was renamed **ADOLF** for trading in the Baltic and North Sea.

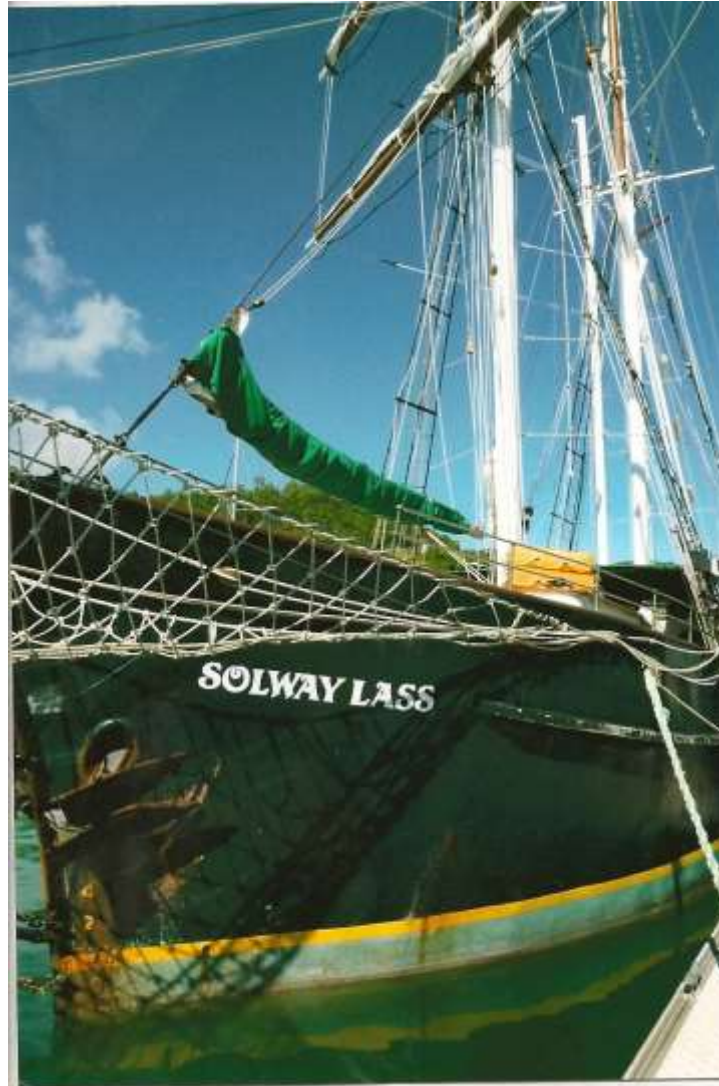
On the 4th August 1914 she was seized by the Royal Navy in the vicinity of Methil and put under the management of J. Livingstone, Grangemouth.

In 1922 she was sold to Solway Firth owners and renamed **SOLWAY LASS** carrying coal and stone cargoes between Liverpool and the Solway Firth.

She was seized by the Germans during WW2 and hit a mine. However the damage was contained and she was repaired.

After the war she was sold to South Pacific owners and ended up in Sydney where she took part in the 1988 Australian First fleet re-enactment ceremonies along with other tall ships.

In 1999 she was sold to Airlie beach in Queensland where she does three night cruises around the Whitsunday Islands being 112 years old and still giving magnificent service.



Whitsunday Cruising Schooner SOLWAY LASS (Author's)

THE CONVOY SYSTEM

The Convoy system was introduced centuries ago and as far back as the days when Largo Bay sailing ships traded to the Baltic has the convoy system been experienced locally. For example, in 1807 the **CONCORD** of Methil, the **JUNO** and **RANGER** of Leven, and the **MINERVA** and **MARY** of Wemyss voyaged from Riga and St. Petersburg to Fife ports under Baltic convoy protection.

In WW1 Rear Admiral Rosslyn Wemyss, the brother of R.G.E. Wemyss, was tasked with the command of the First Canadian Convoy on the 3rd October 1914. The Convoy consisted of 31 Troopships plus Wemyss's 12th Cruiser Squadron ships **CHARYBDIS**, **TALBOT**, **ECLIPSE** and **DIANA**. Rear Admiral Wemyss was totally against the Convoy system and told Churchill of the risks involved but the convoy system had been successful and was destined to remain.

After 9 ships were lost during an attack by two German Cruisers on a 12 Ship Scandinavian Convoy making for Lerwick it was decided to shorten the sea route and use larger convoys.

Methil was decided upon as it was a better equipped port than Lerwick, however Admiral Beatty was against this choice as it took the convoys closer to German bases. The outcome was that the convoys would sail North to the Latitudes of Aberdeen before turning East for Norway.

It was not until the latter end of World War One and the whole of World War Two that Methil evolved as the largest convoy port on the East coast of Britain.

Ninety per cent of all wartime Merchant Navy related books give mention to the convoys to or from Methil and an attempt is given to try and summarise the major events.

The Convoys did not start until the 16th January 1918 with the following prefixes:

COASTAL CONVOYS

TM = Tyne to Methil (Also in WW2)

MT = Methil to Tyne (Also in WW2)

A further convoy UM from The Humber to Methil is believed to have existed but no information is at hand.

NORWAY EASTBOUND CONVOYS

OZ = Methil to Marsten (Norway)

OZ = Methil to Holmengras (Norway) from May 1918

NORWAY WESTBOUND CONVOYS

HZ = Marsten (Norway) to Methil

HZ = Holmengras (Norway) to Methil from May 1918

North British Railway Company.

METHIL DOCKS

SITUATED ON THE
NORTH SIDE OF THE FIRTH OF FORTH.

**Owned and Worked by
The North British Railway Company.**

THE PORT OF METHIL.

The most important **Coaling Port** on the East of Scotland.

The nearest Port to the rich **Coalfields in Fife**.

Equipped with the most improved Hoists for the rapid and economical Shipment of Coal.

Unrivalled facilities for dealing with General Cargoes.

The Docks have Direct Rail Connection with the North British Railway, and are in communication with all parts of Scotland and England.

For full particulars apply to MR. WM. ANDREW, Chief Goods Manager, N.B. Rly., Glasgow, or to MR. J. STRACHAN, District Traffic Superintendent, N.B. Rly., Burntisland.

W. F. JACKSON,
Edinburgh. General Manager.

Advertisement for Methil Docks in WW1 from 1917 edition of Shipping Yearbook.

W.W.1 CASUALTIES

WW1 saw the introduction of submarine warfare and huge losses were incurred by attacks from German U. Boats both by surface engagement or underwater torpedoes. The submarines were also responsible for laying many mines around the British Coast and in the North Sea. The following list is of vessels sunk by U. Boats and other causes.

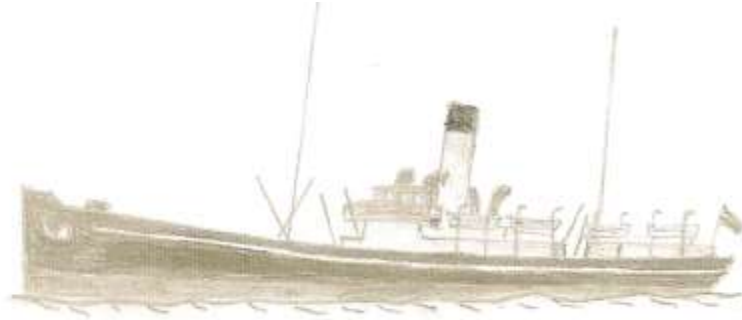
Aberdeen Steamship **FIRTH** sunk from Treport to Methil **25/7/1915**
Norwegian Aux. Schooner **BIEN** sunk from Arundel to Methil **12/9/1915**
Dutch Steamship **ZEELAND** sunk from Methil to Rouen with coal **1/8/1916**
Cardiff Steamer **CANGANIAN** mined from Methil to Scapa Flow with coal **17/11/1916**
Danish Steamship **DAGMAR** mined from Trouville to Methil **18/1/1917**
Danish Steamship **ESTER** stopped & sunk from Methil to Aarhus **1/4/1917**
Sunderland Steamship **HERRINGTON** from Methil sunk off Arbroath **4/5/1917**
Danish Schooner **SOPHIE** stopped & sunk from Queenstown to West Wemyss **7/5/1917**
Dutch Steamship **WESTLAND** mined from Methil to Rouen with coal **25/5/1917**
Danish Schooner **DEBORA** stopped & sunk from W Wemyss to Skagen with coal **27/5/1917**
Norwegian Steamship **TOSTO** mined from Methil to Haugesund with coal **17/6/1917**
Dutch Steamship **LEDA** sunk from Methil to Amsterdam with coal **6/12/1917**
Danish Steamer **HARRILDSBORG** sunk from Methil to Copenhagen with coal **19/7/1917**
Danish Barque **AMOR** stopped & sunk from Methil to Odense with coal **30/7/1917**



Danish Barque AMOR

London Steamship **HORNCHURCH** mined from London to Methil **3/8/1917**
Danish Steamship **ANNA** sunk from Methil to Aarhus with coal **27/8/1917**
Liverpool Steamship **BANGARTH** sunk from Methil to Dunkirk with coal **13/12/1917**

Swedish Steamship **ERIKSHOLM** sunk from Methil to Goteborg with coal **1/1/1918**
Dutch Steamship **CALEDONIA** mined from Methil to Rotterdam with coal **12/1/1918**
Swedish Steamer **ADOLPH MEYERS** sunk from Methil to Goteborg with coal **12/1/1918**
Dutch Steamship **WEST POLDER** sunk from Rotterdam to Methil **15/1/1918**
Kirkwall Ketch **THOMAS HENRY** wrecked from Methil to Dieppe with coal **18/2/1918**
Danish Steamship **EOS** missing from Methil to Copenhagen with coal **27/2/1918**
Danish Steamship **RANDELSBORG** sunk from Copenhagen to Methil **9/3/1918**
Swedish Steamer **OSWIN** sunk from Methil to Goteborg with coal in OZ16 **12/3/1918**
London Steamship **CRAYFORD** sunk from Methil to Christiana in OZ16 **13/3/1918**
Methil Ketch **SCOONIE BURN** wrecked from Methil to Le Havre with coal **19/4/1918**
Swedish Steamship **DORA** sunk from Hull to Methil **10/6/1918**
Dundee.Perth.Lndn Steamer **LONDON** sunk from Methil to London with coal **23/6/191**



Dundee, Perth & London S.S. Co. Steamer LONDON

Methil Ketch **CADORNI** missing from Dysart to Stornoway with coal **8/8/1918**
British Steamship **OTIS TETRAX** sunk from Methil to Rouen with coal **20/8/1918**
Naval Trawler **CHARLES HAMMOND** sank off Methil in collision **2/11/1918**

Methil Registered Fishing Boat Casualties

On the 28th July 1916 eight fishing boats were sunk while fishing off the Tyne by the German Submarine U.23 (Captain Ernst Voig) Five of the boats were all Methil registered motor fishing vessels. They were:

ANDREWINA (ML.40) of Pittenweem	Skipper Alexander Watson
GOOD DESIGN (ML.267) of St. Monans	Skipper T. Guthrie
JOHAN (ML.140) of St. Monans	Skipper John Mayes
JANET OVENSTONE (ML.264) of St. Monans	Skipper John Ovenstone
SPERO MELIORA (ML.240) A St. Monans owned boat but with a Buckhaven Skipper and crew.. They were Skipper Alexander Foster, W.M. Eason, W.M. Thomson, Alexander Taylor, and J. Thomson	

The other vessels sunk were the Steam Drifter **RENOWN** of Yarmouth, **VOLUNTEER** of Leith, **JANE STEWART** of Leith and **SPEEDWELL** of North Shields with former Buckhaven man Thomas Foster as Skipper.

On board the submarine at one stage were the crews of **SPERO MELIORA**, **SPEEDWELL**, **VOLUNTEER**, **ANDREWINA** and **JANE STEWART**.

The crews were treated courteously by the Germans then put into their own small boats and later picked up by a patrol boat
The fishing boats were sunk by scuttling charges and the crews' gear and personal effects went down with their vessels

Nearer home another St. Monans boat **PRESTIGE (ML.118)** was stopped by a German submarine but allowed to carry on. For security reasons her name and number was then changed to **CORONILLA (ML.383)**



From **FISHING NEWS** 12th August 1916 (Courtesy Scottish Fisheries Museum.)

Not only was it off Shields that fishing boats were being stopped and scuttled but at the mouth of the Forth also. On the 13th April 1917 the Dundee Steam Trawler **STORK (DE.115)** owned by the Dundee Fishing Co. was sunk by UC.41

The 99 Ton Steam Puffer **GORGON** built at Hamilton Hill in 1898 was operated by George Buttercase of Lundin Links from 1913 till 1915 when she was sold to Smith & Watt of Dunfermline.

DATA (66.3 x 18.4 x 8.9 Ft.) 24 HP Registered at Glasgow O.N.108727

Methil Registered Motor Fishing Boats Requisitioned in WW1

AGNES IRVINE (ML.50)	A. Irvine. St. Monans	(Minesweeper)
ANNIE MATHERS (ML.285)	J. Mathers. St Monans	(Minesweeper)
HAWTHORN (ML.444)	A. Watson. Pittenweem	
HONEY BEE (ML.5)	D. Allan. St. Monans	
MAJESTIC (ML.206)	A. Anderson. Pittenweem	
TINA WOOD (ML.307)	R. Wood. Pittenweem	
STAR OF HOPE (ML.243)	J. Mayes. St. Monans	



ANNIE MATHERS (ML.285)
(Courtesy Scottish Fisheries Museum. Anstruther)

Methil Registered Steam Drifters Requisitioned in WW1



LIZZIE HUTT (ML.122)
(Courtesy Scottish Fisheries Museum. Anstruther)

LIZZIE HUTT (ML.122)	J. Hutt. St. Monans	(Netlayer)
CHRISTINA MAYES (ML.123)	J. Mayes. St. Monans	(Netlayer)
MACKAYS (ML.125)	R. Mackay. St. Monans	(Netlayer)
REJOICE (ML.337)	W. Miller. St. Monans	(Netlayer)
DILIGENCE (ML.164)	T. Adam. St. Monans	(Netlayer)
EXPLORATOR (ML.12)	J. Dunn. St. Monans	(Netlayer)

Battle of the May Isle

On 31st January 1918 a fleet of approximately 40 ships left Rosyth for a naval exercise off Scapa Flow. The fleet included nine K Class submarines which were large coal fired vessels using steam for surface propulsion.

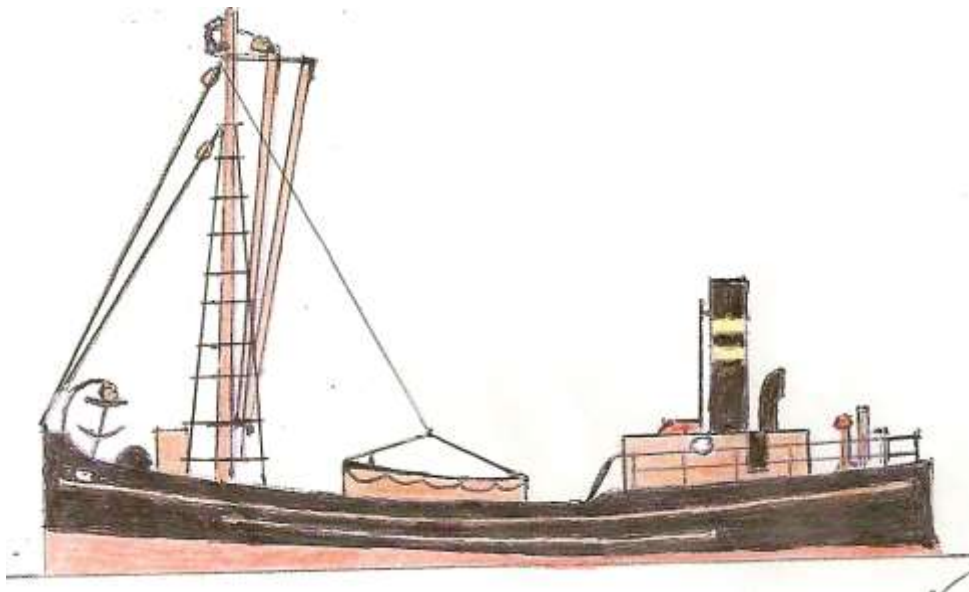
In the evening fog a couple of minesweeping trawlers were seen leaving Anstruther resulting in alterations in course by ships of the fleet and a number of catastrophic collisions occurred. The end result was Submarines K4 and K17 sunk. HMS FEARLESS and Submarines K6, K7, K14 and K22 damaged plus a loss of life amounting to 104 men. The incident came to be known as the Battle of the May Isle where not one enemy shot was fired. It remained secret till the end of WW1.

Methil Registered Steamships Operating in WW1

S.S. WANS FELL (Matthew Taylor. Methil)

S.S. CAIRNIE (Matthew Taylor. Methil)

S.S. SERGEANT (Matthew Taylor. Methil) Sold to Felixtowe in 1915



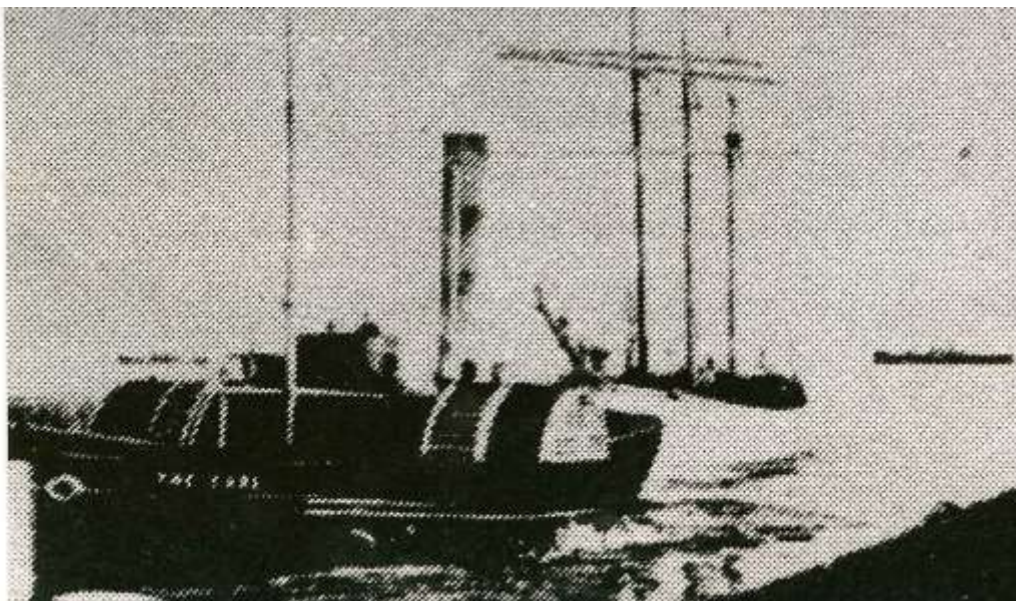
S.S. SERGEANT

S.S. GOLFER (Matthew Taylor. Methil)

S.S. LEELITE (Matthew Taylor. Methil) Purchased in 1917

S.S. RAYFORD (Matthew Taylor. Methil) Purchased in 1917

S.S. FAITHFUL (William Anderson. St. Monans)



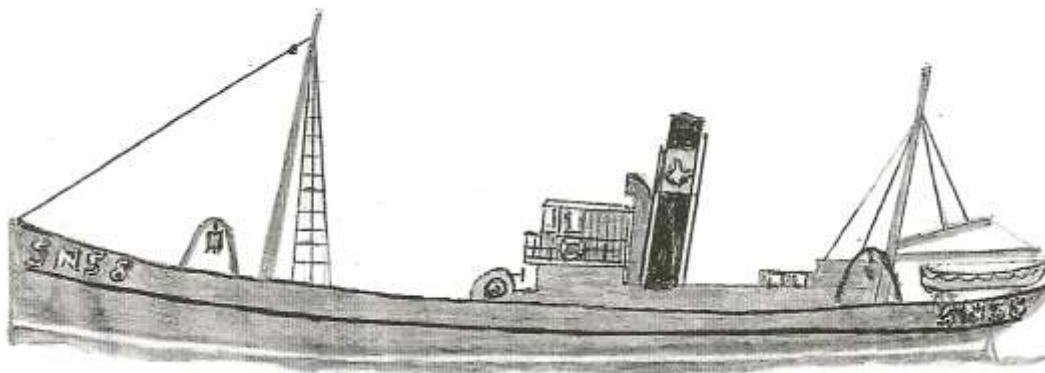
THE EARL Tug Stationed at Methil throughout WW1

WW1 Casualties (with local men in crew)

Although the casualty rate was not as high locally as in WW2 a number of men were lost individually on the following ships:

Hull Trawler	FLICKER (H.334)	Mined on 4/3/1916
Steam Yacht	HMS CETO	17/4/1916
Cruiser	HMS BLACK PRINCE	Sunk at Jutland 31/5/1916
Battle Cruiser	HMS INDEFATIGABLE	Sunk at Jutland 31/5/1916
Cruiser	HMS CRESSY	Sunk by U.9 24/9/1914
RNPS School	HMS PEMBROKE	19/12/1918
Leith Steamship	LADOGA	Sunk by U.73 on 16/4/1918
London Steamship	BLAGDON	Sunk by U.100 on 9/8/1917
London Steamship	LUCIDA	Sunk by U.75 on 4/11/1917
Whitby Steamship	GOATHLAND	Sunk by U. 84 on 4/7/1917
Liverpool Steamship	WAR PATROL	Sunk by U.69 on 10/8/1917
Glasgow Steamship	EARL OF FORFAR	Sunk 8/11/1916
Salvage Vessel	R.F.A. MESSENGER	23/10/1917
North Shields Trawler	SAXON PRINCE (SN.58)	Lost on 28/3/1916
North Shields Trawler	ETHELWULF (SN.344)	Mined on 1/12/1918

A further seven local Able Seamen were lost fighting in the trenches after being drafted into Naval Battalions to serve in France.



Steam Trawler SAXON PRINCE (SN.58)

BETWEEN THE WARS

In 1919 the Tug **WHITBURN** arrived on station at Methil. This was the first local Tug owned by Grangemouth & Forth Towing Co. as the previous Tug owner John S. Wilson had died within this period.

The area stood witness to the many strikes and industrial unrest such as the 1926 general strike. Many miners waited for casual work at Methil Docks daily and at weekends. Later on towards the start of WW2 the docks shipped the highest tonnage of coal anywhere in Scotland.

As the loss of shipping during the First World War took a high toll on ships available many old ships remained in service until the Second World War and later. It is a tribute to the crews of these vessels who kept them going in poor states of repair for so long. Also the fact that radar was not available and many vessels were not fitted with radio. This resulted in a number of collisions and strandings which also hit the local fleet

A number of ex sailing Fifies and sloops were motorized and converted for cargo work with five of them being registered at Methil.

CHRY SOPRASE O.N.114883 Built 1903 at Peterhead. 40 Tons 68 Ft. Long.

Motorized Owner D. Morris. St. Monans. Converted to Fishing (**ML.84**) prior to WW1

CUNZIE BURN O.N.124706 32 Ton Sloop Built 1896 at Buckie. Motorized in 1919 Owner Thomas Cunningham. Anstruther. (70 x 19 x 7 Ft.) 26NHP

WHARRIE GLEN O.N. 124710 49 Tons Built 1901 at Sandhaven Motorized Owner Thomas Cunningham. Anstruther. (66.1 x 20.2 x 7.2 Ft.) 20HP

GREEN CRAG O.N.124708 Built 1897 at Pittenweem 67 Ft. Long. Owner A. Anderson. Pittenweem.

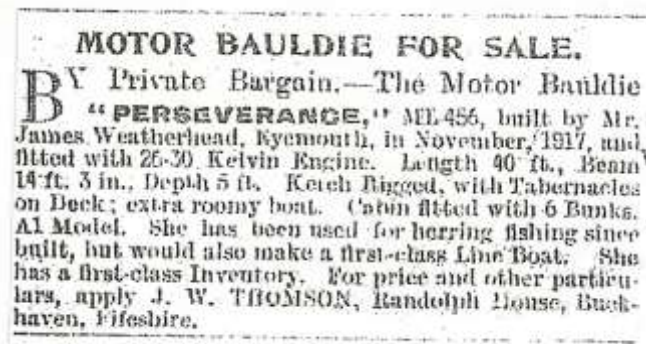
JANET ALLAN O.N.124707 57Tons Built 1906 by Noble. Fraserburgh Owners D. & J. & G. Allan. St. Monans (70.5 x 20.5 x 7.6 Ft.)

On the 14th August 1922 while on passage St. Monans to Middlesbrough in ballast, a fire occurred in the engine room off St. Abbs Head and she foundered. The crew were rescued by the Granton Trawler **FORTH HAVEN (GN.60)**

Buckhaven Fishing Fleet was seen to be reorganizing after the war with a change to motor driven boats while others were being sold. The following are advertisements in copies of the FISHING NEWS dated 1919 and 1920
(Courtesy Scottish Fisheries Museum. Anstruther)



Here we see an advert for the St. Monans yawl **IRIS (ML.345)** built in 1915 which was purchased by Thomas Taylor of Buckhaven to replace the sailing Fifie **ISABELLAS (ML.115)**



This Bauldie of 12.87 Tons is for sale and was replaced by a larger **PERSEVERANCE (ML.52)** of 19 Tons



PERSEVERANCE (ML.52) with passengers. The 1916 built yawl **MAGGIE DEAS (ML.359)** the longest serving motor boat in Buckhaven is alongside the pier. She was sold to Hartlepool in 1952 and renamed **BOY KEN (HL.82)** then to Sunderland in 1959.
(Thomas "Piper" Thomson Collection Courtesy. Scottish Fisheries Museum. Anstruther)

List of Largo Bay Motor Fishing Boats from WW1 till WW2

ALLIES (ML.314) 2.57 Tons T. Taylor. Buckhaven

BLUEBELL (ML.59) 4.09 Tons R. Hutton. Largo

BONNY BAY (ML.129) 2 Tons 21 Ft. D. Melville. Largo

BRITANNIA (ML.316) 2.7 Tons William Robertson. Buckhaven

CLAREWOOD (ML.46) 3.4 Tons J. Lawrie. Largo

COMELY (ML.360) 5.54 Tons 29 Ft Built 1901 D&A. Deas. Buckhaven

CROWN OF GALICEA (ML.358) 4.51 Tons J &W & J. Thomson. Buckhaven

EXPEDIENT (ML.309) 4.31Tons J.&W. Thomson & J. Taylor. Buckhaven

FRANCES TENNANT (ML.111) 2.78 Tons 23 Ft Built1913. R. Thomson. Buckhaven

INDUSTRY (ML.18) 3.92 Tons George Gordon & James Thomson. Buckhaven

IRIS (ML.345) 3.53 Tons 26 Ft. Built 1915 Thomas Taylor. Buckhaven

IVY (ML.187) 2.59 Tons W. Foster & H. Taylor. Buckhaven

KATIE & MARY (ML.22) 2.93 Tons Peter Thomson. Buckhaven

LARK (ML.346) 2.97 Tons J.& R. Walker,& T. Thomson,& J. Deas. Buckhaven

MAGGIE DEAS (ML.359) 6.04 Tons 29 Ft. Built 1916 John Deas. Buckhaven

MAGGIE & ISABEL (ML.485) 6.13 Tons 26Ft. Andrew Taylor. Buckhaven

PERSEVERANCE (ML.456) 12.8 Tons 40 Ft. Built 1917 J Thomson. Buckhaven

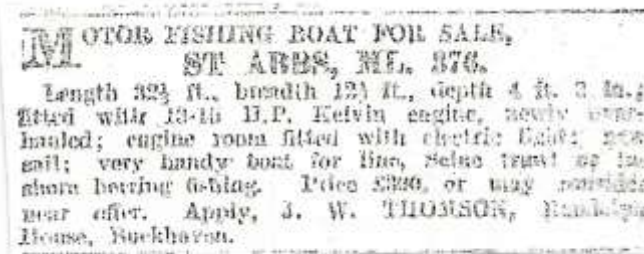
PERSEVERANCE (ML.52) 19 Tons J.W. Thomson. Buckhaven

PURITAN (ML.141) 6.39 Tons 29 Ft. Built 1900 Andrew Allison. Methil

ST. ABBS (ML.376) 7.86 Tons 32.5 Ft. J & W. Thomson. Buckhaven

VENUS (ML.446) 4.67 Tons W. & A. & J. Logie & J. Thomson. Buckhaven

Twenty two sailing boats were still fishing in the Largo Bay area in 1928 and at least one was still fishing in 1940



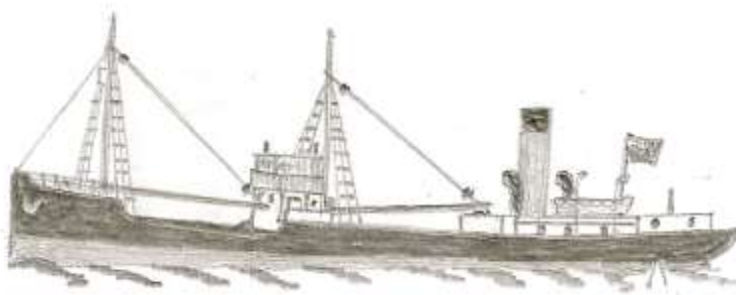
**The Buckhaven motor yawl ST. ABBS (ML.376)
is seen for sale in September 1920**

Buckhaven Lifeboat was launched on the 6th May 1922 and stood by the Faeroese Schooner **TOLAELES MINDE** who was in difficulties.

The first Methil tragedy occurred on 3rd October 1926 when **S.S. LEELITE** sunk off the Humber after collision with the Grimsby Trawler **AMORELLE (GY.239)**. Four of the crew lost their lives including the master Captain Grigor from Aberdeen and Able Seaman Duncan Nicholson from Methil. The chief Engineer and fireman both from Southern England were also lost. The remaining five crew including Seaman Thomas Fisher from Methil were rescued.

A collision in fog saw the sinking of the Methil Registered **S.S. WESTOWRIE** off Flamborough Head on 8th July 1927 after being hit by **S.S. LAMBETH** of London. Her master David Allan of St. Monans and his crew took to the small boat and were picked up by a steamer and landed at North Shields. The whole event had been seen in a dream by the mate who reported it to the master.

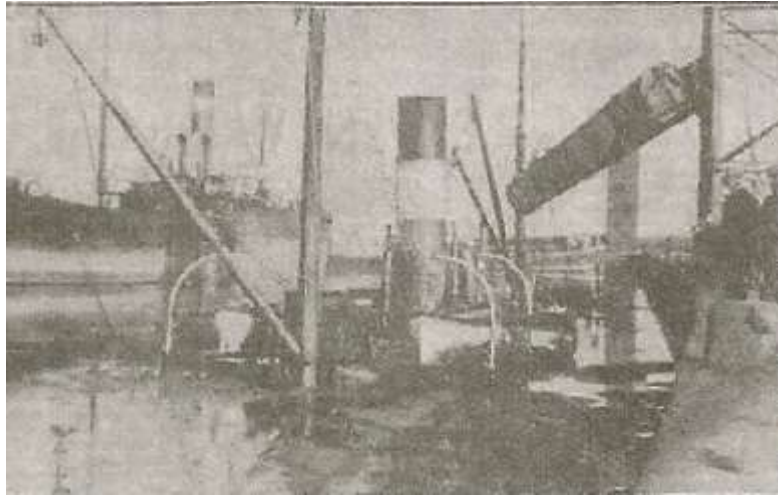
Buckhaven Lifeboat was launched to go to the aid of the Dundee Steamer **BROUGHTY** which sank after hitting the Pier at Kirkcaldy on the 23rd November 1927. At the mouth of Buckhaven Harbour the Lifeboat was caught by a sea and swept on to the rocks west of the Harbour. Members of the standby Lifeboat crew ran with ropes etc. to save the boat. One of the volunteer crew James Keddle was pulled off the harbour wall by a rope and injured. The Lifeboat was saved but badly damaged. Jimmy Keddle later became skipper on the Admiralty MFV's for many years, retiring in the 1960's.



S.S. BROUGHTY of Dundee. Owned by the Dundee, Perth & London Shipping Co

While loading coal at No 13 Hoist at Methil the Swedish cargo ship **EDDA** was rammed and sunk by the Danish ship **FLYNDERBORG** on the 14th February 1929. The **FLYNDERBORG** had a pilot on board and the tug connected astern when a sudden squall of wind pushed her bows round hitting the **EDDA** above and below the waterline. Nine trimmers were working in the hold finishing off the cargo loading and they plus the ship's crew had to make a dash for their belongings and get ashore as the ship sunk within half an hour.

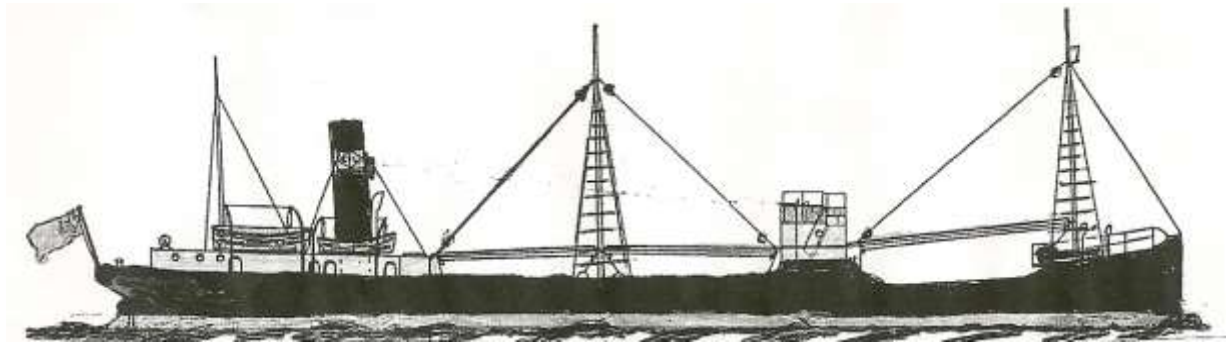
On the 6th May 1929 the ship was raised by the East Coast Salvage Company of Dundee watched by crowds of spectators.



S.S. EDDA sunk at Methil

On the 2nd October 1929 **S.S. WANS FELL** was severely damaged while loading at her berth in Hartlepool by the Fraserburgh Steam Drifter **GIRL PATRICIA (FR.237)** running into her. Captain Andrew Grant from Methil and the crew were rescued while the ship was towed to a nearby beach but was found to be beyond repair. Over the years **WANS FELL** had her fair share of adventures having demolished a jetty and run aground in Shetland after her engine failed to go astern. In 1923 on a voyage from Dysart to Dagenham she had to be towed in with defective machinery. Again in 1926 her engine failed to go astern in Tayport and she damaged her bows after hitting the jetty. Despite her troubles this 47 year old ship had traded faithfully from Methil for 23 years.

On the 1st February 1930 the British Steamer **GATWICK** dragged her anchors in a gale and even with her engines going astern was unable to prevent herself being driven ashore to the west of Methil. The crew were rescued by Leven Coastguard Breeches Buoy under Mr. H.E. Munnings. She was temporarily repaired and refloated on the 13th February 1930. The **GATWICK** owned by E.T. Lindley of London was a regular trader to Methil. The deck crew on board were all local men, they were Bosun W. Spinks of St. Monans and four Able Seamen Alex. Reekie of St. Monans, James Gorman of Methil, A. Hansen of Methil and J. Ross of Leven



S.S. GATWICK

In May 1930 the recession began to bite and Matthew Taylor was forced to sell **S.S. PARKHILL**, a steamer built new for him in 1923. She was sold to a Cardiff company and renamed **MAYWOOD** returning to Methil in convoy a number of times during WW2.

Methil Pilot Boat **SCOTIA** was launched in June 1930 by Jas. N. Miller at St. Monans.

Next was **S.S. GOLFER** who run ashore at Shesader on the Island of Lewis on the 10th September 1932 on passage from Methil to Stornoway with coal. Her master Captain Alexander Cargill and the crew were rescued in the ships boat.

Later 16 locals from the village of Shesader were fined in Stornoway Sheriff Court for theft of various articles from the ship. A repeat of “Whisky Galore” without the whisky.

Off the coast of Portugal **S.S. METHILHILL** was abandoned and gutted after fire broke out in the esparto grass cargo on 4th August 1935. The Liverpool steamer **CAMPEADOR** picked up the crew including the master Captain Johnstone from Edinburgh and landed them in Gibraltar.

The Leith steamer **SHETLAND** towed the burning hulk to the River Tagus with the Battleship **HMS. VALIANT** standing by.

Eleven of the crew were landed in London by a Japanese ship from Gibraltar while the remaining eleven were returned at a later date.

S.S. RAYFORD sank after collision with the Dundee steamship **LONDON** off the Humber on 29th August 1937. The crew including the master Albert Slater from Methil and 2nd Engineer Robert Ritchie from Anstruther were rescued. Captain Slater also had his wife and child on board.

The final loss prior to WW2 was **S.S. PYLADES** having foundered in the English Channel near Fecamp on 12th November 1937 on passage Havre to Antwerp Her master Captain Kerr from Edinburgh and the remaining crew of nine were rescued.

Another item which hit the headlines was the loss of the yawl **CELERITY**.

The **CELERITY** was a seventeen foot racing yawl owned by Eddie Watson of Methil a former Trawler skipper who along with George Robertson and Peter Munro, both of Methil, set sail on Sunday the 2nd August 1931 for North Berwick. All three men were experienced seamen and the yawl had won Regattas at Buckhaven, East and West Wemyss.

The yawl reached North Berwick and set off back to Methil at six o' clock at night then was seen to disappear off Fidra Island.

Searches were carried out around the coasts of Fife, East Lothian and Berwickshire but apart from some items of clothing and wreckage nothing was ever heard from the yawl or her crew again.



A Racing Yawl similar to CELERITY. This is a model of BARNCRAIG built by the late Bill Fairfull of West Wemyss. It sat outside his model shop in Port Adelaide. South Australia. Bill was one of her crew when she was racing. (Author's)

After the 1926 strike, the East Neuk Steam Drifters and Aberdeen Trawlers adopted the habit of steaming to Methil for Bunker Coal rather than having it delivered to their home ports by rail. The preferred coal was "Battle Dross" a cheap bunker fuel easy to stow and burn. This became quite a lucrative trade at Methil but it led to a number of Trawlers being wrecked off the Fife Coast either on route or returning from Methil. Trawlers such as the **DOWNIEHILLS (PD.277)** of Peterhead wrecked at Fife Ness on the 18th January 1926 and the Aberdeen Trawler **JANE ROSS (A.454)** wrecked near Crail on the 14th September 1934. Both vessels were making for Methil in fog.

Another such trawler was **GARELOCH (A.276)** who ran aground at Billowness. Anstruther in fog having loaded 100 Tons of bunker coal at Methil. She became a total constructive loss and a replacement was found for her in Milford Haven in 1935. Her owner W. Gove of Aberdeen took Alexander Taylor of Methil as his partner in this venture. Alec was the son of Matthew Taylor the Shipowner and Broker. The trawler was:

CHARMOUTH (A.381) a 195 Ton Steam Trawler built by J. Duthie at Aberdeen in 1910 Official No. 187082 with dimensions (110 x 21 x 11.5 Ft.) 68 HP.

She lasted till April 1937 when she was sold back to Milford Haven owners.

On the 27th November 1940 she was damaged by aircraft bombing and gunfire then on 14th November 1946 she was lost with all hands after striking a mine off Ballycotton.

Herring landings were prominent at Methil from 1926 till 1939 when Adolf put an end to the habit. The drifters usually combined landing herring and bunkering coal at the same time. An average of 25 Tons of coal was bunkered by the drifters each time, all loaded by hand. In 1938 the steam drifters landed 2,208 Crans of herring at Methil and 1,952 Crans in 1939 prior to the war when most of the drifters were requisitioned by the Admiralty.

SECOND WORLD WAR



The Shore Base at Methil in WW2

The old Miner's Institute which is now Methil Community Education Centre was the shore base for the Royal Navy at Methil in WW2. The building had the temporary wartime name of **H.M.S. SENTINEL** from the 1st September 1939 till the 15th November 1945. This is where the Convoy meetings took place between the Shipmasters, the Commanding Officers of the Naval Escort ships and the Convoy Commodore (Merchant Navy).

Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships (D.E.M.S.) Gunners were under the command of Captain F.A. Rundall (Royal Scots) for convoys at Methil.

Prior to a convoy sailing a meeting would be held at **SENTINEL** attended by the Master and Second Mate of each ship. At the meeting the Master was given his secret orders and the Second Mate a list of Chart amendments. The Chief Steward and one seaman also came ashore to obtain what victuals they could from the NAAFI, ship chandlers and provisioners. The NAAFI had their own vessel **M.V. FAIR ENDEAVOUR** registered and stationed at Methil in WW2.

INITIAL RECRUITMENT

The Customs house at Methil was the recruiting office for Royal Navy personnel in WW2. A number of local young coal miners turned up to enlist but were told they were unable to do so as coal mining was a reserved occupation in wartime. However not to be

deterred their next step was to travel along to Kirkcaldy and present themselves to the recruiting officer there. When asked what their occupations were they replied “Buckhaven fishermen” whereupon they were snatched up and drafted into the Royal Naval Patrol Service to crew the minesweeping trawlers. This branch of the Royal Navy had the biggest casualty rate in WW2 within the Senior Service

METHIL CONVOYS

When WW2 started the convoy system began immediately as experience had been gained in the First World War. The coastal convoys to London were the first followed by the Norwegian Convoys to Bergen until that country was occupied by the Germans The FN and FS convoys operated on an almost daily basis and were open to attack by submarines, E. Boats, mines or aircraft. They sailed through a fixed swept channel known as the “Tramlines” a few hundred yards wide between shoals and minefields marked by light buoys every five miles.

With wartime blackouts plus bad weather, collisions and groundings were numerous as will be seen.

Thames to Methil	F.N.	Started 6th September 1939
Methil to Thames	F.S.	Started 7 th September 1939
Bergen to Methil	H.N.	Started 7 th November 1939 Ended 9 th April 1940
Methil to Bergen	O.N.	Started 4 th November 1939 Ended 5 th April 1940
Methil to Clyde	E.N.	Started 2 nd August 1940 Ended 6 th April 1941 Restarted 3 rd November 1941
Methil to Loch Ewe	E.N.	Started August 1940. Originally to Clyde
Clyde to Methil	W.N.	Started 16 th July 1940
Oban to Methil	W.N.	Started 3 rd September 1941
Loch Ewe to Methil	W.N.	Started July 1940 Originally from Clyde
Methil to Tyne	M.T.	Started November 1940 Ended February 1941

In November 1940 Blyth replaced Methil as the main convoy assembly point for a few months until air raids put an end to it.

REQUISITIONED VESSELS STATIONED AT METHIL IN WW2

The following vessels requisitioned by the Admiralty along with their civilian crews were stationed at Methil in WW2:

Mine Observation Patrol Vessels

MFV VENUS STAR (FR.223), Yachts DAWN, KIA ORA, CATERINA

Balloon Barrage Vessels

Drifters HEATHERY BRAE (FR.41), RESTORE (BF.286), VINE (FR.209) Yachts CARIAD, GOLDEN HIND, KIRIN, MAIMIE, PANOPE THENDARA, CLORINDE

Anti-Aircraft Guardship

BOURNEMOUTH QUEEN

Naval Control & Naval Officer in Charge Service

Drifters AURILIA (BF.89), COSMEA (KY.21), GIRL ENA (YH.464)

GOLDEN WEST (FR.59), LASHER (KY.25), LEMNOS (BF.2), LAVATERA (BF.652), MACE (KY.224), RAMBLER ROSE (BF.263), STAR OF LIGHT (FR.221), TRADE WIND (BF.575), Trawlers OCEAN BRINE (LH.78), CONFIANCE (Belgian) MFV's CELTIC (KY.171), GOOD HOPE (KY.165), PROCYON (KY.181) Tugs CERVIA



Thames Tug CERVIA at Methil in WW2

Degaussing Service

Drifter LILLIUM (PD.67) Sank in Dock on 28th October 1941 and later raised.

D.E.M.S. Service

MFV DORANDO PIETRI

Kite Balloon Service

Belgian MFV's **MADELINE CAMILLE**, **MAURICE ANDRE** Norwegian **WAILET**

Air Sea Rescue Service

RAF Steam Trawlers **No. 347** and **No. 348** Rescue Craft **LUNARY**

Paddle Minesweepers

GLEN USK, **GLEN AVON**, **WHIPPINGHAM**

NORWEGIAN CONVOYS

The Convoys HN which started on 7th November 1939 with HN0 and lasted till 9th April 1940 with HN25 mostly sailed to Methil Roads then the ships dispersed under various convoys to other destinations.

However a number of ships sailed directly for Methil to load coal then rejoin the return ON convoy back to Norwegian waters where they also dispersed to various countries. The majority were Danish ships as was the case in WW1. That is why Shipping Agents and Consuls such as David Dewar were found in Methil catering for the requirements of these ships.

Below is a list of the ships which voyaged to the port of Methil under the Norwegian HN Convoys.

ALF (Danish) HN23A

ASCANIA (Finnish) HN22)

BALDER (Norwegian) HN11

BAROSUND (Finnish) HN18

BELGIEN (Danish)

DAGO (Danish) HN23B

DELAWARE (Finnish) HN20

FANO (Danish) HN23A

FYLLA (Danish) HN22

GRENAA (Danish) HN15

GUDRUN (Norwegian) HN15

HOLLAND (Danish) HN24

INGER TOFT (Norwegian) HN24

JACOB CHRISTENSEN (Nor...n) HN11

JOEDEREN (Norwegian) HN11 & HN20

LARS KRUSE (Danish) HN24

LYSAKER IV (Norwegian) HN23B

MARI (Norwegian) HN11

MONA (Swedish) HN10B

N.C. MONBERG (Danish) HN23B

PARIS (Danish) HN22

ROYAL (Norwegian) HN24A

SIAK (Norwegian) HN19

SKAGERAK (Danish) HN22

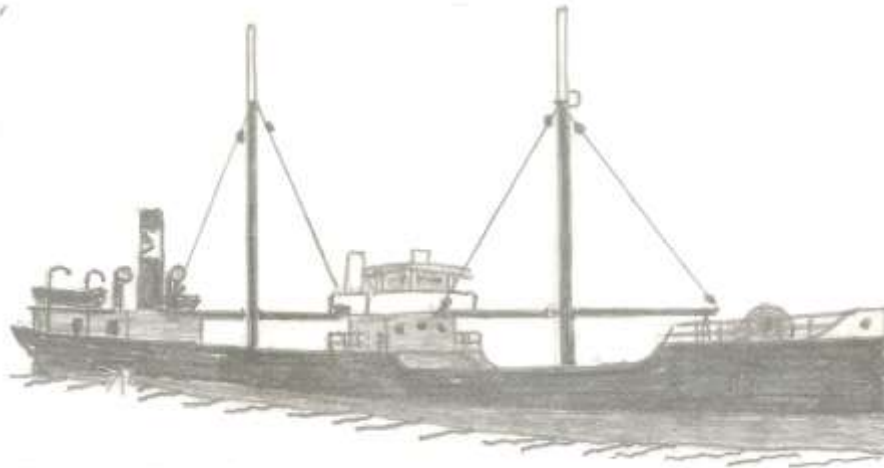
SOPHIE (Danish) HN21

STADION II (Norwegian) HN24

VESTLAND (Norwegian) HN11

WW2 CASUALTIES SUNK BY U. BOATS

London Steamship	ESKDENE	Methil Roads/Oban 2/12/1939
Danish Steamship	MAGNE	Denmark/Methil 9/12/1939
Danish Steamship	BOGO	Gothenburg/Methil 17/12/1939
Norwegian Steamship	FREDVILLE	Drammen/Methil 11/1/1940



Norwegian Steamship FREDVILLE

London Steamship	BALTANGLIA	Norway/Methil Roads/Rochester 23/1/1940
Norwegian Steamship	PLUTO	Bergen/Methil Roads/Middlesbro 23/1/1940
Norwegian Steamship	FARO	Norway/Methil 27/1/1940
Estonian Steamship	REET	Methil/Gothenburg with coal 3/2/1940
London Motor Tanker	IMPERIAL TRANSPORT	Methil Roads/Loch Ewe 11/2/1940
Danish Steamship	SLEIPNER	Methil/Esbjerg with coal 15/2/1940
Danish Steamship	RHONE	Methil/Esbjerg with coal 16/2/1940
Destroyer	HMS DARING	Bergen/Methil Roads 18/2/1940
Panamanian Steamship	EL SONADOR	Methil/Gothenburg with coal 18/2/1940
Danish Steamship	CHARKOW	Kirkwall/Methil/Esbjerg 19/3/1940
Dutch Steamship	ALWAKI	London/Methil Roads/Durban 10/7/1940
London Steamship	PEARLMOOR	Freetown/Methil Roads/Immingham 19/7/1940
Sunderland Steamship	KING ALFRED	Halifax/Methil 4/8/1940
Norwegian Steamship	KERET	N Shields/Methil Roads/Sydney CB 23/8/1940
Middlesbro Steamship	BROOKWOOD	London/Methil Roads/Sydney CB 24/8/1940
Whitby Steamship	STAKESBY	Cape Breton/Methil Roads/Tyne 25/8/1940
Liverpool Motor Tanker	ATHELCREST	Bermuda/Methil Roads/London 25/8/1940
London Steamship	EMPIRE MERLIN	Bermuda/Methil Roads/Hull 25/8/1940
Swedish Steamship	ALIDA GORTHON	London/Methil Roads/St. Johns 29/8/1940
Hull Steamship	CHELSEA	Halifax/Methil Roads/London 30/8/1940
Liverpool Steamship	MARDINIAN	Sydney CB/Methil Roads/London 9/9/1940
Glasgow Steamship	BLAIRANGUS	Halifax/Methil 21/9/1940
Norwegian Steamship	SIMLA	Halifax/Methil 22/9/1940
London Steam Tanker	BRITISH GENERAL	Tyne/Methil Roads/Abadan 6/10/1940

London Motorship	LA ESTANCIA	Halifax/Methil Roads/Middlesbro	20/10/1940
Norwegian Steamship	SAMNANGER	Hartlepool/Methil Roads/Oban/Pepel	2/12/1940
Norwegian Steamship	SVEIN JARL	Methil/Oban	24/2/1941
Swedish Steamship	CALABRIA	Belfast/Methil Roads/Hull	22/6/1941
London Steam Tug	EMPIRE OAK	Methil Roads/Gibraltar	22/8/1941
Dutch Steamship	WINTERSWIJK	Sydney CB/Methil	10/9/1941
Swedish Steamship	GARM	Sydney CB/Methil Roads/Kings Lynn	11/9/1941
Hartlepool Steamship	CARPERBY	Methil/Oban/St. Vincent	1/3/1942
Norwegian Motorship	TYR	Hull/Methil Roads/Loch Ewe/Halifax	9/3/1942
London Steamship	EMPIRE WHALE	Freetown/Methil Roads/Tyne	29/3/1943
Norwegian Naval Trawler	NORDHAV II	Methil/Dundee	10/3/1945
Swedish Steamship	MAGNE	Methil/London	14/3/1945
Canadian Steamship	AVONDALE PARK	Hull/Methil Roads/Belfast	7/5/1945
Norwegian Steamship	SNELAND I	Blyth/Methil Roads/Belfast	7/5/1945

The Merchant Navy Badge was issued to seamen on British ships in January 1940 as many seamen were made to feel uncomfortable on shore with no uniform. Stories are told of survivors from torpedoed merchant ships being attacked by little old ladies with umbrellas in the street and accused of being cowards as they were not wearing uniform. However the badge still did not improve matters and the seamen turned to inverting their badges so they read **NW** (Not Wanted)



WW2 Merchant Navy Badge

When a ship was torpedoed or wrecked the crew ceased to be paid wages. While surviving in lifeboats in often terrible conditions no wages were being paid. The mates and engineers if they were employees of the shipping company remained on pay but if they got the job through the Shipping Federation, they received no wages either. The following poem by an unknown writer was composed in WW2 and is a tribute to the Merchant Seaman:

OUR MERCHANT SERVICE

You have seen him in the street rolling round on groggy feet,
You have seen him clutch the pavement for support,
You have seen him arm in arm with some girl of doubtful charm,
Who was leading Johnny safely into port.

You have shuddered in disgust as he grovelled in the dust,
You've revolted when you've seen him on the spree,
But you haven't seen the nip of his lonely merchant ship,
Ploughing furrows through a mine infested sea.

You have cheered our Naval lads in their stately "Iron-clads",
You have spared a cheer for Tommy Atkins too,
But you've trembled in a funk when you've read of steamers sunk,
Though you've never cared a damn about the crew.

He brings your wounded back on a "sub – infested" track,
He ferries all your troops about at night,
He belongs to no Brigade, he's neglected, underpaid,
But he's always in the thickest of the fight.

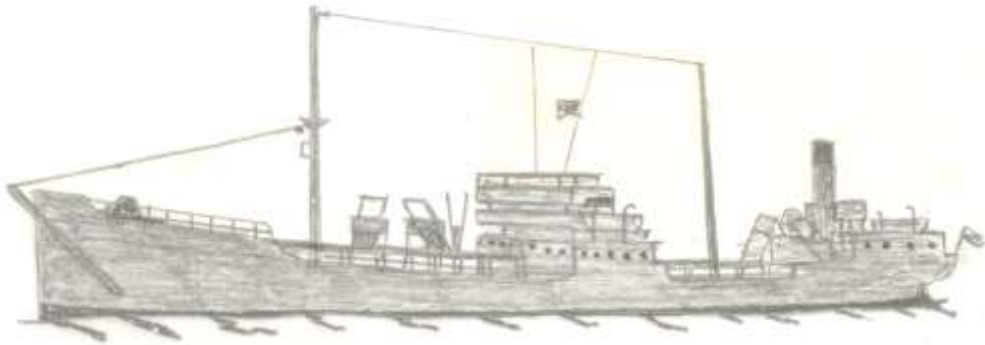
He fights the lurking Hun with his "pipsqueak" little gun,
He'll ruin Adolf Hitler's mighty plan,
He's a hero, he's a nut, he's the bleeding limit, But...
He's just a Merchant Service Sailor Man.

When this wretched war is over, don't forget the Straits of Dover,
And all the blessed Seven Seas as well,
Are alive with men like these bringing you your bread and cheese,
You will remember won't you. Will you Hell.

The Danish Schooner **ISAFOLD** was wrecked by fire at Methil on the 19th January 1940

Another Danish Auxiliary Schooner **KAREN** sunk after an explosion and fire off
Methil on the 5th February 1940.

The Dutch ship **ARIZONA** was mined after sailing from Methil on the 29th September
1940. A young British seaman Allan Kinsland who was part of the crew having joined at
Methil is buried in Methilhill Cemetery.



Tanker SAN ROBERTO vessel with the most WW2 convoy runs to Methil Roads

WW2 Casualties sunk by U. Boats (With local men in the crew)

The following list is vessels having being sunk by U. Boats with local men in the crew.

Leith Steamship **GLENFARG** Trondheim/ Methil Roads **4/10/1939** (1 Saved 1 Lost)
 Battleship **HMS ROYAL OAK** Scapa Flow **13/10/1939** (1 Saved 2 Lost)
 British Steamship **ORSA** Tyne/ Bordeaux **21/10/1939** (1 Saved 1 Lost)
 Liverpool Steamship **CARMARTHEN COAST** Kirkcaldy/London **9/11/1939** (2 Saved)
 Methil Steamship **PARKHILL** Blyth/Kirkwall **18/11/1939** (2 Lost)
 Leith Steamship **ABBOTSFORD** Ghent/Grangemouth **9/3/1940** (1 Lost)
 British Steamship **HARPALYCE** Halifax/Methil/Hull **25/8/1940** (1 Lost)
 British Steamship **JOSE DE LARRINAGA** New York/Newport **7/9/1940** (1 Lost)
 Hartlepool Steamship **HINDPOOL** Freetown/Middlesbrough **8/3/1941** (1 Lost)
 Newcastle Steamship **KORANTON** Sydney Cape Breton /Hull **27/3/1941** (1 Lost)
 Belgian Steamship **VILLE DE LIEGE** New York/Liverpool **14/4/1941** (1 Lost)
 British Steamship **AELYBRYN** Durban/UK **10/5/1941** (1 Lost)
 British Stmr **HARPAGUS** Halifax/Barry **20/5/1941** (1 Lost ex NORMAN MONARCH)
 Norwegian Stmr **CHRISTIAN KROHG** Methil Roads//St. Lawrence **10/6/1941** (1 Lost)
 British Steam Tanker **SAN FLORENTINO** Glasgow/Halifax **1/10/1941** (1 Lost)
 Destroyer **HMS BROADWATER** off Iceland **18/10/1941** (1 Lost)
 Glasgow Steamship **GRETAVAL** Sydney CB/Loch Ewe **3/11/1941** (1 Lost)
 Battleship **HMS BARHAM** off Malta **25/11/1941** (1 Lost)
 Destroyer **HMS MATABELE** **17/1/1942** (1 Lost)
 Leith Whaler **SOTRA** Tobruk/Alexandria **29/1/1942** (1 Lost)
 British Steamship **EMPIRE SPRING** Manchester/Halifax **14/2/1942** (1 Lost)
 Grimsby Trawler **NORTHERN PRINCESS** Londonderry/USA **8/3/1942** (1 Lost)
 Glasgow Steamship **LOCH DON** New York/Capetown **1/4/1942** (1 Lost)
 Dutch Steam Tanker **AMSTERDAM** Texas/Freetown **16/4/1942** (1 Lost)
 British Steamship **EMPIRE HOWARD** Methil Roads/Murmansk **16/4/1942** (1 Saved)
 British Steamship **HARPAGON** New York/Capetown **20/4/1942** (1 Lost)
 British Steamer **HARDWICKE GRANGE** Trinidad/Buenos Ayres **12/6/1942** (1 Lost)
 British Steamer **EMPIRE HAWKSBILL** Belfast/Capetown **19/7/1942** (1 Lost)
 Leith Whaleship **SOURABAYA** New York/Liverpool **27/10/1942** (1 Saved)

British Steamship **EMPIRE LEOPARD** Sydney CB/Avonmouth (1 Lost)
 British Steamship **CHULMLEIGH** Methil Roads/Archangel **6/11/1942** (6 Lost)
 British Steamship **ORFOR** Capetown/Virgin Isles **14/12/1942** (1 Lost)
 Greek Steamship **OROPOS** London/Methil Roads/Halifax **18/12/1942** (2 Lost)
 St. Ives Steamship **TREWORLAS** Capetown/Baltimore **28/12/1942** (1 Lost)
 Greek Steamship **MOUNT MYCALE** Halifax/Loch Ewe **21/1/1943** (1 Lost)
 Glasgow Steamship **TOWARD** Halifax/Greenock **7/2/1943** (1 Lost)
 British Motor Tanker **ROSEWOOD** New York/Clyde **9/3/1943** (1 Lost)
 Hospital Ship **NEWFOUNDLAND** Bombed off Salerno **13/9/1943** (1 Saved)
 Naval Trawler **ORFASY** Lagos/Freetown **21/10/1943** (2 Lost)
 Cruiser **HMS PENELOPE** **18/2/1944** (1 Lost)
 RFA Salvage Ship **SALVIKING** Colombo/Addu Atoll **14/7/1944** (1 Lost)
 Tank Landing Ship **LST.404** Seine Bay/Southend **15/8/1944** (1 Lost)
 Destroyer **HMS GOODALL** Murmansk/UK **29/4/1945** (1 Lost)

WW2 Casualties sunk by other than U. Boats (With local men in crew)

British Steamship **MOORTOFT** missing in North Sea **3/12/1939** (1 Lost)
 London Steamship **HARLEY** Bombed **3/2/1940** (1 Lost 1 Saved)
 Grimsby Trawler **THURINGIA** mined **28/5/1940** (1 Lost)
 Hull Trawler **CAYTON WYKE** Sunk by E. Boats **8/7/1940** (1 Lost)
 Steamship **PORTUGAL** **20/1/1941** (1 Lost)
 British Steamship **WARLABY** Sunk by German Cruiser **12/2/1941** (1 Lost)
 Merchant Cruiser **VOLTAIRE** Sunk by German raider THOR **9/4/1941** (1 Lost)
 RNPS Training Establishment **HMS PEMBROKE** **26/4/1941** (2 Lost)
 London Steamship **AMBROSE FLEMING** Sunk by E. Boats **28/4/1941** (3 Lost)
 Destroyer **HMS JUNO** Bombed **21/5/1941** (1 Lost)
 Dutch Minesweeper **VAN MEERLANT** **4/6/1941** (1 Lost)
 Naval Trawler **CYPRESS** **17/7/1941** (1 Lost)
 DEMS Training Establishment **HMS PRESIDENT III** **28/12/1941** (1 Lost)
 Yangtze Gunboat **HMS SCORPION** Sunk by Japanese Destroyers **13/2/1942** (1 Lost)
 Destroyer **HMS JUPITER** Sunk by Japanese Destroyers **27/2/1942** (1 Lost)
 American Tanker **OHIO** Malta Convoy **26/9/1942** (1 Lost)
 Aircraft Carrier **HMS DASHER** Explosion in Clyde **27/3/1943** (1 Lost)
 Naval Steam Drifter **HIGH TIDE** Foundered off Wales **30/3/1943** (1 Lost)
 Hull Trawler **DANEMAN** Collision with icebergs **9/5/1943** (1 Lost)
 RFA Tanker **ENNERDALE** Bombing off Bardia **13/7/1943** (1 Lost)
 British Steamship **FORT LA JOIE** Bombing off Bardia **2/12/1943** (1 Lost)
 Indian Steamship **JALAPADMA** Nearby ship exploded **14/4/1944** (1 Lost)
 French Submarine **LA PERLE** Bombed by friendly aircraft **8/7/1944** (1 Lost)
 Shore Establishment **HMS VICTORY** **31/7/1944** (1 Lost)
 Destroyer **HMS QUORN** **3/8/1944** (1 Lost)
 Destroyer **HMS ALDENHAM** mined in Adriatic **14/12/1944** (1 Lost)
 Tug **EMPIRE BASCOBEL** **9/11/1945** (1 Lost)
WRENS (2 Lost)

In 1940 the 969 Ton **S.S. RUDMORE** of Middlesborough was in the thick of air attacks. Her master Captain E. Thomson from Buckhaven managed to pull his ship through a number of such incidents.

30th January 1940, Bombed and machine gunned in the North Sea.

18th September 1940, bombed in the Thames Estuary with damage to steel plates causing the vessel to be run ashore to prevent sinking.

6th October 1940 bombed in River Thames. Crew's quarters and stores badly damaged. Again the ship was repaired and survived the war.

METHIL OWNED & MANAGED SHIPS IN WW2

S.S. PARKHILL (2) (Matthew Taylor. Methil). One of the early casualties of the war occurred on the 18th November 1939. While on passage from Blyth to Kirkwall with coal **S.S. PARKHILL** was torpedoed by U.18 (Max – Hermann Bauer). The vessel was NW of Kinnaird Head and had missed a torpedo fired half an hour earlier by U.18. The second torpedo caused a heavy explosion and the ship sunk taking the lives of all nine crew. One of the crew, George Thresher, was believed to be a survivor from R.M.S. TITANIC.



Memorial to crew of S.S. PARKHILL at Tower Memorial. London (Author's)

S.S. CAIRNIE (Matthew Taylor. Methil) (Sailed in 2 Convoys)

On the 3rd April 1941 **S.S. CAIRNIE** was attacked and bombed by German aircraft S.W. off Tod Head on passage from Methil to Holme with coal. She was badly damaged and down at the stern, however, with Aberdeen Lifeboat standing by, steam was raised and the small collier was beached at Aberdeen where her coal cargo was discharged.

Unfortunately the damage was so bad that she had to be broken up where she lay.

S.S. ABERHILL (Matt. Taylor. Methil) (Sailed in 16 Convoys)

9th April 1941 S.S. ABERHILL damaged by bombs and machine gun fire in Tees Bay while on passage London to Leith with cement. Her steering gear was put out of action and two men were injured but she arrived at Methil the following day.

On the 6th August 1941 while sailing in Convoy FS559 from Sunderland to London with coal in a full gale and visibility reduced, the Naval Trawler AGATE missed one of the buoys and ran on to Haisborough Sands followed by six merchant ships, one of which was ABERHILL. The rest of the convoy realized what had happened and altered course swiftly but for the seven vessels it was the end. The other ships were PADDY HINDLEY (Stephenson Clarke), DEERWOOD (Wm. France Fenwick), OXSHOTT (Hudson SS. Co), plus two M.O.W.T ships GALLOIS, and TAARE.

Lifeboats were launched from the Norfolk coast to go to the aid of the stricken vessels and the Gorleston Lifeboat LOUISE STEPHENS rescued the crew of 23 from ABERHILL. Coxswain Charles Johnston and his crew were decorated for the rescue.

S.S. MAINDY HILL (Matthew Taylor. Methil)

From the 20th August 1939 S.S. MAINDY HILL discharged coal at Gibraltar then Naples. After loading esparto grass at Oran she joined a Gibraltar convoy back to UK then an FN Convoy to Methil Roads. From there she steamed to Granton where she discharged her esparto grass cargo and back to Methil where she loaded coal.

This voyage was repeated another twice with additional calls at Nemours, Mostaganem and Bona.

While on Admiralty service she joined Convoy TM14 to Methil where she loaded coal and left on 8th March 1940 in Convoy FS63 to Bayonne. On the 10th March 1940 she sank in Tees Bay after collision with the American Steamship ST. ROSSARIO. Twenty three crew members of MAINDY HILL one injured were landed at Hartlepool.



S.S. MAINDY HILL with esparto grass

(Courtesy Mary Reilly)

S.S. SOJOURNER (Matthew Taylor. Methil) (Sailed in 35 Convoys)

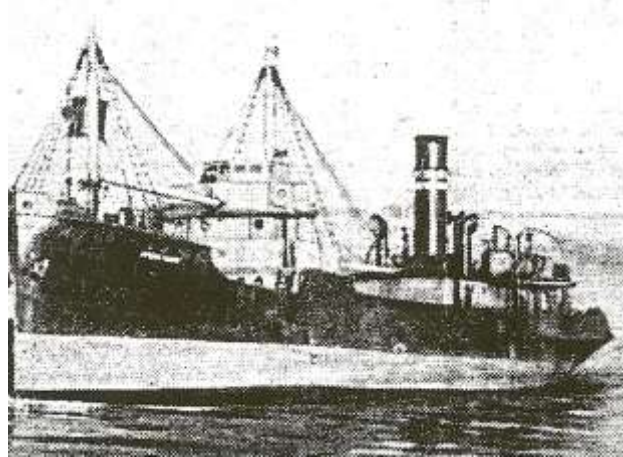
S.S. Sojourner took part in Normandy Landings in Convoy ETC 8 with supplies for Omaha Beach.

S.S. MOORLANDS (Matthew. Taylor. Methil) (Sailed in 67 Convoys)

14th February 1941 S.S. MOORLANDS damaged by bombs near Banff.

20th February 1941 again damaged by bombs while lying in Buckie Harbour.

S.S. MOORLANDS took part in the Normandy Landings in Convoy ETC 22W with supplies for Juno Beach.



S.S. MOORLANDS

S.S. METHILHILL (2) Matt Taylor. Methil) (Sailed in 25 Convoys)

S.S. METHILHILL took part in the Normandy Landings in Convoy ETC 10 as a collier at Sword Beach . She was anchored for twelve days until the storms which had prevailed during the Normandy Landings resulted in the loss of both anchors and she was forced to return to Portsmouth.

Motor Ship **EMPIRE CREEK (M.O.W.T.)** Mngr. Jas Taylor. Methil (Sailed 15 Convoys.

13th June 1941 disabled by bombs in the North Sea and towed to Aberdeen for repairs.

M.V. EMPIRE CREEK took part in the Normandy Landings in Convoy ECBC 12 discharging 384 Tons of cased petrol at Utah Beach

Belgian Steamer **SAPHIR (M.O.W.T.)** Manager Jas Taylor. Methil (Sailed 2 Convoys)

Danish Aux. Schooner **NORDSTJERNEN (M.O.W.T.)** Mngr. James Taylor. Methil

French Water Tnkr **RUISSEAU (M.O.W.T.)** Mngr. James Taylor. Methil (3 Convoys)

She was also used with a local crew supplying water to the ships in Methil Roads.

The Local Tug **WHITBURN** was requisitioned by the Navy to work at Rosyth Dockyard in WW2. She was replaced at Methil by the Tug **ISAAC WILSON**.

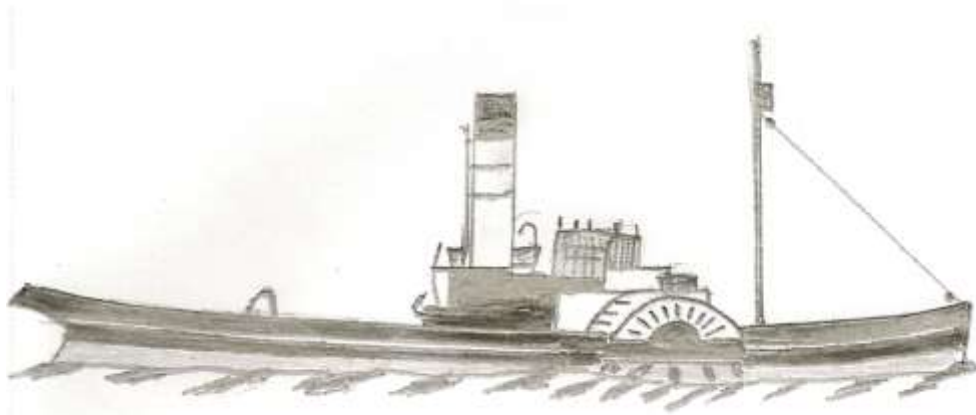
Mines

On the 23rd January 1941 a mine came ashore at West Wemyss causing the death of five local inhabitants.

The 5th June 1941 saw another mine coming ashore at Buckhaven beach which caused the death of ten locals.

In 1941 the new Minesweeper for the New Zealand Navy **HMNZS. MOA** on her first sea trip from the builders in Leith to Methil sailed over a newly laid defensive minefield at the entrance to the docks and was fortunate to survive being blown up while many spectators watched from the pier.

On the 10th November 1941 the Broughty Ferry Lifeboat **MONA** was creeping her way blindly to Methil for fuel in blackout conditions after a rescue mission. She amazingly navigated between the ships in the convoys without seeing one vessel and missed the minefield also before suddenly seeing waves breaking on Methil pier out of the darkness.



Methil Tug in WW2

ISAAC WILSON

FN CONVOYS from Southend to Methil

Although the majority of the shipping was directed to Methil Roads the Port itself was kept busy with the regular traders, a list of some is attached here. All of these vessels sailed in the FN convoys to Methil. If the vessels name is underlined it signifies that she was lost sometime during the war.

Wm. Cory & Son Ltd. London

CORMINSTER

CORSEA

CORLAND

CORFIRTH

CORFEN

CORHEATH

CORSTAR

CORBRIDGE

CORDENE

CORFLEET

CORCREST

CORFELL

CORCHESTER

CORBROOK

CORFERRY

CORMARSH

CORMOUNT

CORHAMPTON

CORMEAD

CORDALE

CORGLEN

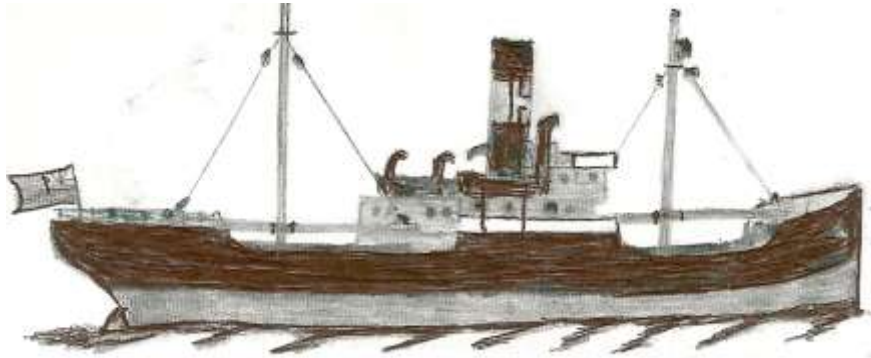
CORDUFF

Wm France Fenwick & Co. Ltd. London

<u>DEERWOOD</u>	<u>MONKWOOD</u>	<u>HELMWOOD</u>	<u>DALEWOOD</u>
<u>BETSWOOD</u>	<u>DASHWOOD</u>	<u>PINEWOOD</u>	<u>HAWKWOOD</u>
<u>MARLWOOD</u>	<u>KIRKWOOD</u>	<u>MOORWOOD</u>	<u>CHATWOOD</u>
<u>CORNWOOD</u>	<u>GWYNWOOD</u>	<u>CHELWOOD</u>	

Hudson Steamship Co. London

<u>OXSHOTT</u>	<u>UPMINSTER</u>	<u>HORNCHURCH</u>	<u>LOLWORTH</u>
<u>DAGENHAM</u>	<u>BRASTED</u>	<u>HETTON</u>	<u>BRAMHILL</u>



The Collier LOLWORTH (Hudson Steamship Co.) was a regular visitor to Methil for 20 years till 23rd April 1940 when she was mined and sunk.

Stephenson Clarke & Co. Ltd. Newcastle

<u>SIR RUSSELL</u>	<u>PITWINES</u>	<u>MATCHING</u>	<u>PORTSLADE</u>
<u>LEA</u>	<u>GRANGE</u>	<u>PETWORTH</u>	<u>SYLVIA BEALE</u>
<u>FLATHOUSE</u>	<u>WILLIAM CASH</u>	<u>CERNE</u>	
<u>ELEANOR BROOKE</u>		<u>ELIZABETH LYSAGHT</u>	

The Electricity Boards Colliers (Managers Stephenson Clarke)

<u>JOSEPH SWAN</u>	<u>FULHAM V</u>	<u>FERRANTI</u>	<u>CHARLES PARSONS</u>
<u>FULHAM</u>	<u>FULHAM III</u>	<u>TYNDALL</u>	<u>ARTHUR WRIGHT</u>
<u>HENRY MOON</u>	<u>FULHAM IV</u>	<u>FULHAM II</u>	<u>GEORGE BALFOUR</u>
<u>FRANCIS FLADGATE</u>		<u>ALEXANDER KENNEDY</u>	
<u>COLONEL CROMPTON</u>		<u>JOHN HOPKINSON</u>	

Shipping & Coal Co. Ltd. Newcastle

<u>WATERLAND</u>	<u>FORELAND</u>	<u>QUEENSLAND</u>
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Hawkesfield & Son Ltd. Dover

<u>KENNETH HAWKESFIELD</u>	<u>KATHLEEN HAWKESFIELD</u>
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A.F. Henry & MacGregor Ltd. Leith

BARRA HEAD	<u>KINNAIRD HEAD</u>	ST. ABBS HEAD	<u>NOSS HEAD</u>
TOLSTA HEAD	<u>DUNVEGAN HEAD</u>	HOLBURN HEAD	
DUNNET HEAD	<u>RATTRAY HEAD</u>	CANTICK HEAD	

John Stewart & Co. Ltd. Glasgow

RUDMORE	YEW VALLEY	YEWDALE	YEWARCH
<u>YEWFOREST</u>	YEWGLEN	YEW PARK	YEW TREE

J. Hay & Sons Ltd. Glasgow

THE DUKE	THE DUCHESS	THE EMPEROR	THE BARON
<u>THE SULTAN</u>	THE VICEROY	THE COUNTESS	
THE MARCHIONESS		THE MARQUIS	

William Robertson. Glasgow

FLUOR	CITRINE	NEPHRITE	PEARL
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Richard Hughes & Co.(Liverpool) Ltd.

<u>DUDLEY ROSE</u>	MAURICE ROSE	DOROTHY ROSE	DENNIS ROSE
FOCH ROSE	DORRIEN ROSE	MOSS ROSE	<u>ANGLESEA ROSE</u>

The famous Tanker **SAN DEMETRIO** was at Methil Roads in Convoy FN263 . She was later torpedoed and broke in half in the Atlantic. Some of the crew later reboarded her and managed to start the engines then proceeded slowly to the Clyde where they were able to discharge their much needed oil cargo. The events which took place were portrayed in the film SAN DEMETRIO LONDON.

THE ROYAL NAVY AT METHIL IN WW2

Many Royal Navy ships took part in the escorting of convoys to and from Methil Roads with some of them actually berthing at the docks. One of the most famous warships to escort convoys at Methil was the Battleship **HMS. HOOD** taking part in the Norwegian Convoys ON6, HN6, HN11 and ON14.

The majority of Naval ships taking part in convoy escorts were requisitioned trawlers acting as minesweepers. They were based at North Shields, Granton and Aberdeen. covering the MT, FS and EN convoys. The crews were mostly Royal Naval Patrol Service personnel.

A wide variety of Naval ships were experienced on convoy escorts and to list all would take up pages plus an enormous amount of research.

The following list indicates some of the RN classes of warships which did take part in Methil Convoys. Names underlined means the vessel did not survive the war:

Battleships HOOD

Cruisers ARGONAUT

Aircraft Carriers **SPEAKER, RANEE** Each based at Methil for six weeks from September 1944 till January 1945 as Deck Landing Training Carriers.

Destroyers **AFRIDI, BEDOUIN, ECO, ENCOUNTER, ESCAPADE, ILEX, IMOGEN, IMPERIAL, JACKAL, JAGUAR, JAVELIN, JERVIS, JUNO, JUPITER, TARTAR, VEGA, VERDUN, VIVIEN, WESTMINSTER, WHITLEY, WOLSEY, WALLACE.** (HRH. Prince Phillip served on board WALLACE at this time)
Sloops **BITTERN, EGRET, FLEETWOOD, HASTINGS, LONDONDERRY, PELICAN, STORK.**

Corvettes **HIBISCUS** **Minesweepers** **JASON, SUTTON** **Minelayer** **PLOVER**

Mine Laying Submarine **NARWHAL** **Anti-Aircraft Ship** **ALYNBANK**

Paddle Minesweepers **AMBASSADOR, DUCHESS OF ROTHESAY, PRINCESS ELIZABETH, WHIPPINGHAM, GLEN USK, GLEN AVON**

Trawler Minesweepers **BEN MEIDIE (SN.340) SAURIAN (GY.901), KINGSTON BERYL (H.499), GAROLA , OCEAN BRINE (LH.78)**

WARTIME STANDARD SHIPS

A number of WW1 Standard Ships were present in the WW2 Convoys. They previously were named with the prefix WAR. Burntisland Shipbuilding Co. were instrumental at building a number of these vessels with the engines being built by Douglas & Grant of Kirkcaldy. They were nearly all sold to private shipping companies.



American Liberty Ship JEREMIAH O'BRIEN took part in six convoys to and from Methil Roads in WW2
(Author's)

EMPIRE SHIPS

All British Merchant Ships built from 1939 onwards came under the Ministry of Shipping and were named with an EMPIRE prefix. This naming system was also adopted for the captured Italian and German ships.

American and Canadian built Liberty Ships along with the Fort, Park and Ocean classes became more evident as the war progressed and featured more in the convoys.

The Leith Whale Factory Ship **S.S. SOURABAYA** was torpedoed by a U. Boat on the 27th October 1942. One of her Engineers Glen MacDonald from Methil was awarded the M.B.E. for his efforts at trying to keep the ship afloat.

CAPTURED ITALIAN & GERMAN SHIPS TAKEN TO METHIL

During the war a number of captured Italian merchant ships were taken to Methil and became Ministry of War Transports (M.O.W.T.) where they were allotted to various merchant ship-owners who had lost ships during the war and renamed with an EMPIRE prefix. At the end of the war many German merchant ships were brought over to Methil and the same routine was administered.

A few of the ships are recorded here:

ITALIAN SHIPS

PAMIA	10/6/1940 renamed EMPIRE PROTECTOR
PELLICE	10/6/1940 renamed EMPIRE STATESMAN
MOSCARDIN	10/6/1940 renamed EMPIRE GUNNER
BARBANA G.	10/6/1940 renamed EMPIRE AIRMAN

GERMAN SHIPS

BISCAYA	20/6/1945 renamed EMPIRE UNITY
POTSDAM	20/7/1945 renamed EMPIRE JEWEL
HANSA (ex British GLENGARRY) 5/1945 renamed EMPIRE HUMBER	
HUBERT SCHRODER 5/1945 renamed EMPIRE CONQUEST and was under the management of James Taylor, Methil	
WARNOW 5/1945 renamed EMPIRE CONLEVEN also under the management of James Taylor, Methil.	

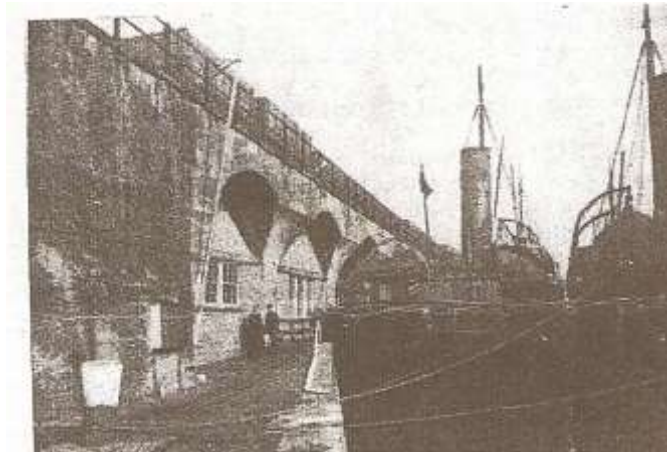
With most fishing vessels being requisitioned by Admiralty the price of fish increased due to the shortage. This persuaded many older men and coal miners to buy boats or register their existing vessels with ML. fishing numbers for part time fishing.

Approximately 50 boats ranging from 12 Ft. to 29 Ft. were registered at Methil from the district Crail to Buckhaven. during the period 1940 till 1944.

On the 18th January 1945 **S.S. EMPIRE CLANSMAN** a M.O.W.T. collier managed by Stephenson Clarke was delayed when loading coal at Methil and tried to catch up with Convoy EN.470 to Belfast. However a gale had risen and when in the vicinity of the Bass Rock the master decided to turn and seek shelter which resulted in running aground at the Bass Rock. The vessel broke in three and one of the crew was lost. The sections were later towed to Leith and repaired.

The Steamship **ROLFSBURG** of Newport. Wales while at anchor in Largo Bay sank after collision with the **S.S. EMPIRE SWORDSMAN** on the 13th July 1945.

THE MISSION TO SEAMEN (Flying Angel)



The Flying Angel was opened at Methil in November 1939 using a house in High Street. Most of the patrons then were the crews of the requisitioned drifters who were fishermen from the North East Scottish ports and came from deeply religious backgrounds. As the war progressed the amount of personnel using the mission increased and the LNER came to the rescue by offering them an archway under the railway alongside No1 Dock where a canteen was built and lasted throughout the war until the new premises were built in the High Street. The archway was then taken over as the Dockworkers Club and lasted until the demise of the docks.

As can be seen in the photograph, the mission was only four feet from the quayside and often the lay reader would be saying the Benediction to the sound of windlasses and shouts of “All secure for’ard”

With the amount of distressed Merchant Seamen being landed at the port the mission became a place of great importance. For example in October 1940, on convoy HX79

from Halifax, 12 ships were sunk and survivors from seven of them were landed at Methil. They were:

S.S. UGANDA 40 survivors	S.S. BILDERDIJK (Dutch) 39 survivors
S.S. MATHERAN 72 survivors	S.S. LOCH LOMOND 39 survivors
S.S. PRIMULA (Norwegian) 7 survivors	M.V. LA ESTANCIA 7 survivors
S.S. RUPERRA 7 survivors	

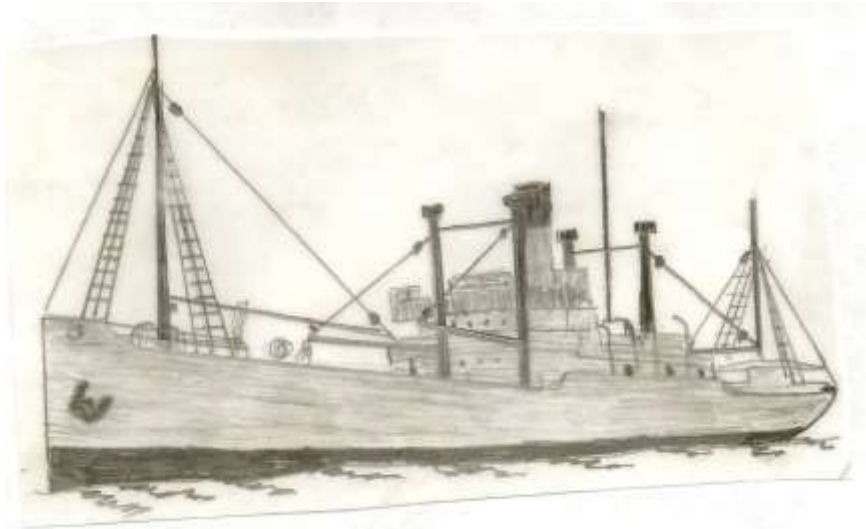
Convoy Rescue Ships landed 33 survivors

TOTAL = 244 Survivors at one time

A Danish Steamship **HALLAND** was attacked by German aircraft off Dunbar in 1940 with the loss of seventeen lives. The five survivors were picked up by the trawler **SPARTA** and landed at Methil.

On the 25th January 1940 the Norwegian Steamship **GUDVEIG** was torpedoed off the Farne Islands. Ten of her crew were lost and the eight survivors were landed at Methil. The above list shows just how busy the Mission was in caring for seamen some of whom were injured. The Women's Guild did a great job in assisting the seamen and this went on until the 7th May 1945 when the last two ships were torpedoed off the May Island after peace had been declared:

S.S. AVONDALE PARK 36 survivors	S.S. SNELAND I (Norwegian) 22 survivors
TOTAL = 58 Survivors at one time	

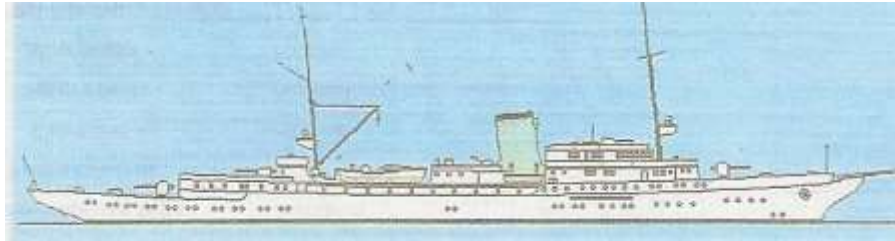


S.S. SNELAND I

POST WAR

The requisitioned excursion steamer **ATALANTA** was decommissioned at Methil in April 1945. She lay at Methil till October 1946 when then taken to Ghent and broken up.

In May 1945 Hitler's Yacht **AVISO GRILLE** was brought from Trondheim, Norway to Methil where she lay anchored in the Roads for three weeks before being taken to Hartlepool where her future was decided. She was one of over one hundred German ships anchored off Methil awaiting their fate from the Ministry of War Transport.



Hitler's Yacht **AVISO GRILLE**

A captured German Tanker **TRAVE** was brought to Methil in May 1945 and renamed **EMPIRE CHLORINE**. She lay in No.1 Dock at Methil for seven years before being returned to Germany in 1953 where she was renamed **TRAVE**. Since then she experienced a number of name changes and may be still sailing under the Norwegian flag

Another requisitioned vessel, the Polish Trawler **LAWICA (GDY.141)** was laid up at Methil from November 1945 till the 9th April 1946 when she sailed for Gdynia with a Polish crew.

In June 1946 the 23 Ft. Norwegian built fishing boat **HYACINTH (BCK.162)** was purchased from Portknockie by David Deas and John Foster of Buckhaven and became **(ML.142)**. This boat escaped from occupied Norway with a family in WW2 on the Shetland Bus route and must have been one of the smallest vessels to make the crossing. She was sold to Portknockie owners shortly after arriving in Shetland.



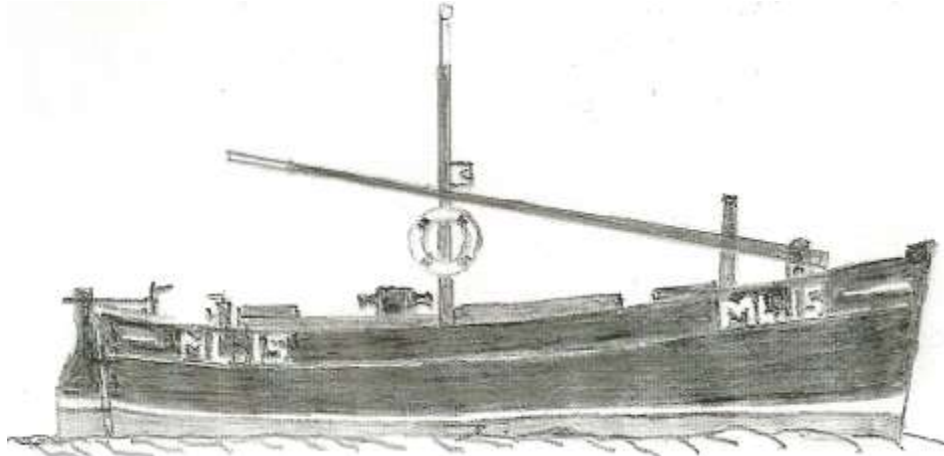
HYACINTH (ML.142) at Mid Shore Buckhaven

1947 was the last year that Buckhaven was mentioned as a home port for fishing boats in the Methil Register of Sea Fishing Boats.

On the 18th October 1949, **HMS. ALBION** was being towed from the Tyne to Rosyth by three Tyne Tugs in a gale. In the vicinity of the Longstone (Farne Islands) the weather was causing **ALBION** to yaw widely which resulted in a collision and sinking of the Swansea collier **S.S. MAYSTONE**, with the loss of twenty one crew members and four being saved. **MAYSTONE** had sailed from Methil earlier in the day with a cargo of coal.

One of the last Fife Herring Drifters **INTEGRITY (ML.108)** was launched by Jas. N. Miller in 1949 for Alexander Taylor of Methil and Robert Mackay of St. Monans

In May 1950 the St. Monans built yawl **SILVER CLOUD (ML.15)** was purchased from Gourdon by Andrew Allison of Methil and Ben Taylor of Buckhaven. She was destined to fish from Methil for over two decades. During the summer months she fished for lobsters off the west coast of Scotland until the initial closing of the Forth & Clyde Canal. She also fished lobsters and the seine net in the Firth of Forth until sold to Port Seton in 1971.



SILVER CLOUD (ML.15)

James N. Miller the Boatbuilder launched the Motor Torpedo Boat **HMS. DARK HUNTER (P.1116)** on the 18th March 1954 at St. Monans and she was towed to Methil for fitting out. This started the habit which continued until the yard finished.

The Swedish ship **S.S. ROSSO** sailed from Methil with a cargo of coal for Oaxen on the 7th March 1952 and foundered off Eyemouth with the loss of twenty two lives.

HMS. TONGHAM (M.2735) an inshore Minesweeper was launched by James N. Miller at St. Monans on the 30th November 1955. The hull was then towed to Methil for fitting out which took till the 18th June 1957.

Matthew Taylor the Methil Shipowner and broker died on the 24th September 1953. His business interests were carried on by his four sons and two grandsons.

On the 23rd October 1953 Arbroath Lifeboat **ROBERT LINDSAY** capsized while entering harbour after a call out. Six of the crew of seven were lost including the Bowman Thomas Adams, a native of West Wemyss.

December 1955, only four Steam Drifters remained in the Anstruther fleet. Three of them were laid up in No. 3 Dock at Methil until February 1956.

CORIEDALIS (KY.21) The last Anstruther Steam Drifter. Broken up at Bo'ness in 1957.

FAIR HAVEN (KY.173) Broken up at Charlestown September 1956.

WILLIAM WILSON (KY.293), Sold to Milford Haven in 1956 as a Trawler.

WILSON LINE (KY.322) Sold to Yarmouth in 1956 and converted to diesel.

A Ferry for the West Indies named **YOUTH OF TORTOLA** was launched by James N. Miller at St. Monans on the 11th January 1957 and towed to Methil for fitting out.



The last vessel to load coal at West Wemyss Harbour was in 1915. Since then it was allowed to fall into a state of disrepair with only fishing boats using it. The photo taken in the 1950's shows the **ELIZABETH (AH.3)** owned by Willie Adams of West Wemyss and at the Dock Gates is the **AGNES BLYTH (KY.182)** owned by James Taylor of Methil.

West Wemyss wet Dock was filled in during 1967 having been an important coal exporting Dock since 1873.



The old Dock Gates at West Wemyss as it now appears (Author's)

In September 1954 **S.S. METHILHILL (2)** was broken up at Granton.

S. S. MOORLANDS was sold to Greek owners in April 1957.

The last Methil registered ship **S.S. SOJOURNER** was towed from No.1 Dock where she had been laid up for eighteen months to Grangemouth for breaking up on the 26th August 1959.

1967 saw the closure of the Wellesley Colliery and Michael Colliery. This marked the beginning of the end for the coal trade at Methil.

In 1975 the entrances to No.2 and No.3 Docks were blockaded by fishing boats to prevent shipping entering the port. This was a protest throughout British ports to the government against prices, restricted fishing grounds and quota systems. Boats from both sides of the Forth blockaded Methil.

18th May 1977 the collier **SIR JOHN SNELL** left No.3 Dock at Methil with the last coal cargo to be loaded at the port which had been shipping coal for 317 years.



SIR JOHN SNELL

The 3rd September 1980 saw the sail training charter Brig **MARQUES** docked at Methil. She was tragically lost in the Atlantic four years later with the loss of 19 out of 28 passengers and crew.



INTER NOS II (KY.57) for Crail owners fitting out at Methil in 1980 (Author's)

James N. Miller of St. Monans entered the field of building Steel fishing boats in 1972. The original firm had now been taken over but the practice continued of towing the hulls to Methil for finishing. A new enclosed shed was constructed over the "cut" in No.2 Dock where work could be continued afloat despite weather conditions.



Miller's Shed in No.2 Dock and part of an oil rig being constructed to the right.

Also in the 1970's the construction of oil rigs at the site of the old Wellesley Colliery began bringing further employment into the district. This also provided a boost to the Docks with oil industry vessels using the port.

On the 18th September 1976 the former lightship **COMET** which had been anchored off Dunbar as the Pirate Radio Station **RADIO SCOTLAND** was towed into Methil prior to her disposal. A sale of records took place from their collections.



RADIO SCOTLAND (Author's)

Matthew Taylor was the agent for many of the oil rigs and tankers anchored off Methil. Grandson Douglas Taylor purchased the former fishing vessel **INCENTIVE** as a tender to carry stores and provisions to the rigs.



INCENTIVE and Pilot Boat BEAVER (Author's)

A number of local men have been involved in tragedies within the oil industry over the years either on the rigs or in helicopter crashes.

On the 6th July 1988 the fire on board the PIPER ALPHA rig claimed 167 lives. Four men were awarded the George Medal for their part in rescuing survivors from the rig. Charles Haffey from Methil a seaman on the Rig Tender **SILVER PITT** was one of the recipients.

When the Customs House closed at Methil around 1981, the registering of fishing boats at the port ceased. However, in 1988 the Merchant Shipping Act was changed and all fishing boats had to be re-registered. A port of choice was introduced into the registers with Methil and Kirkcaldy appearing on the list of choices. Since then approximately twenty one boats have been registered at Methil.



Prawn Trawler HARVEST REAPER (ML.4) and others about 1997 (Author's)

From around 1990 till 2010 a fleet of six Prawn Trawlers and six Lobster boats worked out of Methil but the quota system and other regulations within the fishing industry has decimated the prawn fleet to only one Trawler and only the creel boats remaining. The Buckhaven Shellfish Supplies Ltd at Aberhill Industrial Estate in Methil collects most of the catches.

Over the centuries the district has had highs and lows within the maritime industries of Largo Bay and at present the construction of wind and wave generators at Methil is providing jobs locally while approximately one pulp boat per month is the only thing keeping the once busy port alive.

One wonders what the old mariners and fishermen would say if they saw the area today. With No.3 Dock partly filled in and the sea wall crumbling while even the lighthouse looks neglected for want of a coat of paint plus fences erected as if an invasion is imminent. Hopefully happier times are planned.

ADDENDUM

In MARITIME LARGO BAY it was wrongly assumed that Captain Robert Thomson was the son of William Thomson of the NEILSON but his son died aged 16 years.

The Robert Thomson who later owned the shipping company in London was born in the same year at Limekilns, Fife.

However in the words of old sailors, “Never let the truth stand in the way of a good story”.

One of the ships built for Robert Thomson of London was the 366 Ton **S.S. ROBIN** built at Blackwall in 1890 and towed to Dundee where her engine was fitted by Gourlay Brothers. She was sold to Glasgow owners then sold to Spain where she traded under the name **MARIA** surviving both world wars and running the gauntlet of submarines in the Bay of Biscay with goods for France and Britain.

In 1974 she was purchased by the Maritime Trust and returned to UK under her own power where she has been restored to her former glory on view at Victoria Dock in London. She is the sole survivor of the hundreds of coastal steamers of this type which once plied the coasts of Britain and the ports in Fife.

Robert Thomson's final ship was **S.S. GOLFER** which was sold to Goole then to Matthew Taylor of Methil.



S.S. ROBIN

(Author's)

NB Where photographs have no attribution, the identity of the photographer is unknown.
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KEY TO DATA

(Length x Beam x Draft) in Feet
O.N. = Official Number