

# **The fishermen are saving lives By sweeping seas for mines So you'll not grumble, “What, no fish?” When you have read these lines**

Ministry of Food advertisement, 1940

During the Second World War, fishermen were indeed saving lives. In the Naval Reserve they took part in minesweeping, patrolling, convoy protection, setting anti-submarine nets and all manner of duties to defend Britain's coasts against attack. Others joined the Army, Royal Navy or RAF.

However, they also left many people behind in Scotland's fishing communities and the War touched their lives no less intensely. Whether they were men in the Home Guard or in Reserved Occupations such as boat-building; women drafted in to work in factories or on the land; or children rushing to take shelter while enemy bombers streaked through the skies overhead, the War left its mark on everyone.

Fisherfolk were, in many senses, on the Front Line of Britain's war effort. With their unique knowledge of the sea and navigation, fishermen played an active part in keeping supply routes to the UK open. Their communities at home, particularly on the east coast, would have been the first affected if Germany had invaded.

Fishing communities were also affected by the interruption to their normal working lives. Perhaps more than any other industry, fishing depends on open and free access to the seas. Fishermen were used to sailing out, in their own boats, as weather and tide dictated, fishing wherever they chose, and landing their catch at the most convenient port. The outbreak of War immediately made this way of life impossible. And, with few fish being caught, those on shore had to seek alternative employment too.

The experiences of wartime, which forced communities to look outside their traditional roles, had long term effects once the War was over. With the return of Peace came not stability but further upheaval in an industry that had been changed forever.