

7. An claf a worthebas dhodho, "Arluth, nynsyu dhym den vyth dh'm gorre yn pol, pan yu an dowr muvys, mes hedre dhof vy ow tos, den arall a dhyesken adhyragof".

8. Ihesus a lavar dhodho, "Saf yn ban, doga dhe wely, ha kerdh".

9. Ha dysempys ef a ve yaghys, hag ef a dhuk y wely hag a kerdhas, hag ythese an dydh Sabbot.

10. Rag henna an Edhewon a lavare dhe'n den a ve yaghys, "Sabbot yu; nynsye gesys dhys don dhe wely".

11. Ef a worthebas dhedhe, "Neb a'm ruk yagh, ef a leveras dhym, 'Doga dhe wely ha kerdh'".

12. Rag henna y a'n govennas, "Pyu an den-na a leveras dhys, 'Doga dhe wely ha kerdh'?"

13. Ni wor an den a ve yaghys pyu o ef, rag Ihesus a ymdennas a a'n ruth a ve guryys yn teller-na.

14. Wose henna Ihesus a'n trovys yn Tempel, ha leveras dhodho, "Mir, ty yu guryys yagh, lemmyn na wra pegha, rag own tra weth dhe wharvos dhys".

## A FISHERMAN'S DIARY, 1879-1881

By P. A. S. POOL, M.A. (Gwas Galva).

THE Cornish seine pilchard fishery has been often described, from Carew's *Survey* until its decline and virtual extinction in the present century, but these records are mostly the impressions of outside observers and not of the working fishermen actually engaged in the industry. But for three seasons from 1879 to 1881 Matthew Nicholas of Sennen Cove kept a diary for Messrs. Coulson of Penzance, owners of one of the Sennen seining concerns; this document was presented to Penzance Public Library in 1936 by Mr. J. Coulson Loam, and I am grateful to the Librarian, Mr. J. H. I. Cable, for bringing it to my attention. It is not easy reading, for there is no punctuation and the spelling is a phonetic rendering of broad dialect.

Coulsons was one of three seining concerns operating at Sennen, the others being the Old Company (or Old Covers) and the New Company (or Young Men). Coulsons differed from the others, which were owned by cove men on a partnership basis, in being Penzance-owned; it also operated a seine at Penberth Cove, to which men were transferred from Sennen when necessary, and one of its seine-boats was steam-driven. This boat, called by Nicholas the *Stimer*, seems to have been a great novelty, probably the only one in Cornwall so used; it is mentioned by W. J. Henwood in 1871 (*J.R.I.C.* XIII p. iv), so was apparently in use for at least ten years.

The diary, headed simply "Sainnen in Sinnen", opens on 11th August 1879, "Cold [called] in to sain wint to Pinbarth", and the next entry is for the 25th, "Shot in Pinbarth tock hop [took up] 60 or 70 hogest" [hogsheads]. On 1st September the Old Covers took up 200 hogsheads at Sennen, and on the 13th the Young Men took 120 there; on the same day Coulsons' men returned from Penberth. On 4th October all the companies had catches; Coulsons and the Young Men each had 60 hogsheads in two seines, and the Old Company 30 in one seine. Nothing more is recorded until the 18th, after which the entries are daily. The weather was poor to the end of the month, and the boats were launched several times without success; on the 31st there was "great expation to day bot nothen seen". On 4th November they "be gon to brack hot [break out] the fish", i.e. transfer them from the curing vats to the barrels. The month brought better weather, but no fish until the 14th, when several shoals passed deep and the Old Company missed one that came nearer land. On the 19th the Young Men took 100 hogsheads, and on the 24th came the largest catches of the season, when the Old Company shot 500 hogsheads (the best catch recorded by Nicholas and one not cleared from the seine until 27th) and the New Company 200; it seems - though here the diary is rather confused - that Coulsons missed as they "diden gow to nit [net] tim a nof" [enough]. At the end of the month the seines were hauled to grass, dried, and put aboard again. December began discouragingly ("shours of snow bloun hard frosen hard nothen seen") and on the 3rd Nicholas noted "a quante of foul flin a bout". On the 8th they went to Penberth to bring the boats to Sennen, but this took several days, as first a westerly wind drove them back to Penberth and then the steamer sprung a leak and had to go to Penzance. There were no further catches that season, despite "pilchers pasen in the Longsheps" on the 15th and reports of catches at St. Ives and elsewhere, and the season's record ends on the 27th, "Pot holl the things in the laft . . . and holl ands dis charged".

The record of the 1880 season begins on 30th August, with several shoals in the bay; the crews were called in, lots were cast for choice of the stems (fishing grounds), and the Old Company shot in the Gamper (one of the stems) and missed. Next day that company shot twice and took up 18 hogsheads, and Coulsons once for nine. On 10th September fish were reported at Penberth, and some men sent there, and on the 13th the weather worsened; on the 17th Nicholas noted, perhaps rather complacently, "non hout bot whe", and next day they "barked the new twin [twine] for the tock net". On the 24th, after four days "vire clous and foge", they took 115 hogsheads at Penberth. On the 26th, a Sunday, there was "a great cry of fish vire larg shols in the bay"; Coulsons, sinking their sabbatarian principles, launched at eleven that night, and the other companies early next morning, but no catch resulted. There was no success in October; the weather was very variable, and on the 27th "In the nit blod a hokren [hurricane] blod honkel [uncle] ales boat over clif and a pont or tow" [punt or two].

After this excitement they overhauled the seine, and by the 30th the weather was "mor modreter". Early November brought repeated news of catches by the St. Ives drifters, but again the month was a blank for Sennen; on the 12th "Young Compony lost a grabel riden to stim". On the 22nd the sea rose rapidly when the steamer and other boats were out, and Nicholas reported "smert work to bring in the boats see sow big". Early December brought no better fortune, and the 10th and 11th were spent putting the nets and equipment away in the loft; some men however, agreed to serve on half-pay for a further week, and on the 13th they "got to rits to gow a flot a gin". But the weather remained bad and at the end of the week all were paid off after another disappointing season.

The 1881 season began on 8th August when Nicholas went to Penberth; the weather was bad at first but improved later in the month. On the 23rd an attempt was made on a fine shoal, but they missed as it was too deep. On the 26th there was "gret prepacon for the regata", and next day fine weather for that event. On Friday 10th September, after a fine but fishless week, it was decided to move to Sennen on the Monday; that same evening 4 hogsheads were taken at Penberth, but the Old Company took 10 at Sennen. Lots were cast for the Sennen stems on the 12th, and on the 15th the three companies each shot two seines, the only recorded occasion of this, but the fish were very light and only 6 hogsheads were taken by the Old Company and 4 each by the others. Larger shoals appeared at Sennen on the 28th, the day after 80 hogsheads were taken at Penberth; the Young Men took 15 or 20 hogsheads and the Old Company 110, but Coulsons missed a fine shoal owing to a mishap with the steamer; "the fan got the twin" probably means that a rope got round the screw. Early in October many shoals appeared, but were all too deep for seining except for a small catch of 10 hogsheads at Penberth on the 5th. On the 7th the Old Company shot at Sennen but the fish were too light to be worth tucking, and on the 13th Nicholas noted "a sholl in the Yong Mens stim wosen in tim for them". The entries for the week beginning 17th October are the most interesting in the diary:

- 17th. Lonched 2 boats see modret S.E. whe shot 1 sain in the Gamper had in hear a vire fin shol of fish 5 sains shot in the bay whe tock hop 200 hogest from the Gamper the Young Men tock hop 200 from won of ther sains the Old Company tock hop 100 from 1 of thear sains bloun vire hard from E.S.E.
- 18th. A starm E.S.E. whe tocked the Gamper sain a gin tock hop 80 hogest and to lock at the sain whe shoden now it was ane tock hout of ir the rist crous diden tock it was sow (?) mouen wind whe lost the cock boat she brock a way it was bloun so hard whe coden gow after ir and she wint a way to see.

- 19th. A starm still the Young Men tock hop 1 sain and the Old Compony tock hop 1 sain fish still in the rist sains vire fin shols see big and a starm E.S.E.
- 20th. Fish oll gon tock hop oll the sains the wos biten to pises with the dog fish S.S.W. and S.W.
- 21st. Hold holl the sains to gras had 2 wimen from St. Just to gow a bout them bot Gornes Had sain.
- 22nd. Brot hom Garnes Had sain.

The purchase of the seine mentioned in the last two entries may mark the end of the seine fishery at Gurnard's Head in Zennor. In the first week of November some salt arrived at Sennen for curing the catch, and on the 7th the shoals returned. Coulsons took 180 hogsheads, the Old Company 130, and the Young Men missed a "vire fin shol". Two days later the old Company took 230 "and left gow a lot mor", and the Young Men took 50 at their second shot after missing the first, but success eluded Coulsons: "the sain diden com rond and whe losed holl the fish". After that the weather broke, and on the 26th "part of the slip card [carried] a way with the see". The men were paid off on 3rd December, and so ends this remarkable record of the excitements and frustrations of a seine fishery.

A full account of seining at Sennen is given by J. Harris Stone, who visited the cove about 30 years later (*England's Riviera*, 1912, Chap. 6). There were still three companies, the "Success", the "Fisherman's Friend", and the "Unity", but it seems that all were then owned by partnerships of Sennen men; lots were still cast for the stems at the start of each season. Stone noted that each company needed to possess at least two seine nets, two tuck nets, a seine boat, a volyer or cock boat for the tuck net, a smaller boat called the "lurker", and several large barge-like boats for taking the catch ashore; in all, capital of £800 - £1000 was needed to equip a seine. There were three curing establishments at the cove, to which the companies would contract to sell their season's catch.

Although seining for pilchards is now only a memory at Sennen, and the slip (now protected by a stone breakwater) is sadly empty, a small seine is still maintained for the occasional shoal of mullet, and the covers stoutly maintain their ancient rights.