



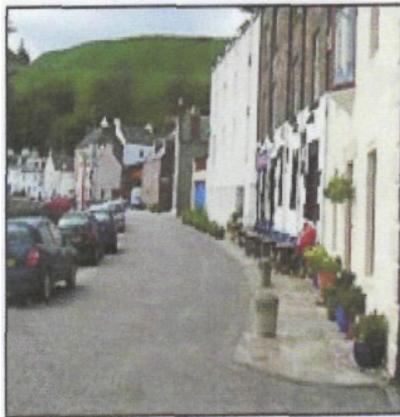
## Stonehaven Harbour

Certainly one of the prettiest in the north east, if not the entire country, Stonehaven harbour has long been the focal point of the town. Although the origins of Stonehaven are unknown, the best guess is that the town began as a collection of a few fishermen's dwellings.

Throughout the Dark Ages and into the mediaeval period, Stonehaven harbour achieved some note through visits, not always friendly from the Norsemen. Although Stonehaven enjoyed physical aspects which could have made it an important trading port, it was dealt a hefty blow in 1506, when the merchants of Montrose complained about Stonehaven, and the Angus town was granted favourable rights for trading in the likes of wool, radically altering the progress of Stonehaven.

The town did not die however, and in fact, soon became notorious along the east coast of Scotland as a haven for pirates, leading to one 17th Century captain, Richard Franck, to comment in his Northern Memoirs:

"Now at the foot of this pavement there is a small harbour which they call Steenhvye which serves only for pirates and picaroons, but it accommodates the Highlander for depredations. I take the liberty to call it stinking hive because it is so unsavoury."



During the Jacobite period, Stonehaven saw many landings, from both sides of the revolt. In 1715, James, the Old Pretender, landed at the harbour, although he was far too late to have any impact on the rebellion. General Wade was forced aground here in 1725 when his ship ran into difficulties offshore, while during the 1745 rising there are many stories that French troops were actually landed at Stonehaven.

The glory days for Stonehaven harbour were yet to come however, and, as with many other Scottish ports they came with the herring boom of the 19th Century. The harbour was dramatically reconstructed during the latter part of the 18th and early part of the 19th Century, with the South Pier being constructed by Robert

Stevenson, the celebrated engineer and grandfather of Robert Louis Stevenson. The impact of these changes was not felt at first, but by 1875 there were 88 herring vessels in the port, compared with only three eighty years before.

These were heady days indeed, with 600 men and women involved in haddock fishing alone. However, it was not to last, and in common with many other fishing ports throughout the country, the fishing industry of Stonehaven went into long-term decline. Only nine vessels were left in operation in the 1990s, and today a cursory glance around the harbour shows that pleasure craft are the order of the day.

The businesses of the shorefront also clearly illustrate the change in direction of the harbour, with the pubs on the shorefront presenting a family-friendly outlook, and upmarket restaurants dominating the Tolbooth end of the pier. It is in these physical signs of change that one can really see the impact of the decline of Scottish fishing, and the new directions that the fishing communities are being forced to look to.