

Transcript of interview with Iain Angus Macaulay, Great Bernera

Where are you from?

I am a fisherman from Great Bernera, Isle of Lewis. My father, grandfather and great grandfather were all fishermen. Most of the Bernera men were fishermen long ago. My father and grandfather fished for lobster whereas my great grandfather did more with the great line.

Is the sea in the blood?

I believe it is I was a fishing skipper for 26 years. And from then I started working with the Coastguard, looking after people who found themselves in danger at sea alerting the helicopter and the lifeboat . I did that for 5 years and I'm now lecturing on the Maritime Course at Lews Castle College. I've never been that far from the sea. There is a connection of some kind there.

Do islanders miss the fishing?

There are a lot in Bernera still. It doesn't leave you. We are always looking out to sea Thinking about catching a couple of lobsters. Something ties us They all do different things today but still look longingly at the ocean You quite often hear. "Have you seen those waves out there today?" The first thing they do in the morning is look out to see what the sea is like.

Why a lobster pond?

The price of lobsters aren't so good during the summertime. As it gets closer to Christmas the price rises significantly. They used to keep the lobsters in a pond. It was a stone dyke pond in a bay. Then when it got closer to the end of the year they would fish them out and sell them when the prices were better.

What kind of creels did they use?

The creels we used when I first started were the traditional wooden creels and they did the job. of all we used the old style wooden creels. My father said they were better. At the time they hauled the creels in the morning, noon and evening. Nowadays they leave the creels for a day or more. They didn't have many creels they hauled them oftener.

The Atlantic swell impacts the creels, after a fierce storm the wooden creels would be left like matchsticks on the shore line. The saws and hammers came out to make new creels. Today's steel creels are a lot stronger.

Did they use sails?

They used sails most often when they went long line fishing west of the Flannan Isles. They'd go quite far out with the sail, out past the Flannan Isles and even further west sometimes. They had various fishing marks, one of them was when the island of Soraidh, it sank below the horizon.

Did they fish for ling?

They had a gauge on board to measure the ling. They took them to the curing stations, in Tobson and Little Bernera. There they were dried and salt cured. The Bernera fishermen took long voyages to sell the fish. They even sailed as far as the Baltic.

Did the community have shares in the boat?

Throughout Scotland in days gone by the men used to have shares in a boat. They had to supply their own creels perhaps a dozen or so. They were expected to turn to and work their own creels. Nowadays it is the boat owner that supplies the creels nowadays. It's a good job as the creels are a bit pricey nowadays.