

Fred's Thread

JANUARY 2011

RE – ENACTING THE PAST

If we look closely enough , old photos offer up numerous questions. What are these women carrying ? To where are they carrying their loads ? . How did they manage to carry such weights ? More interesting to us locally may be the fact that this would have been an everyday scene here in Portlethen , well Old Portlethen to be precise .

I'm sure you'll agree that the image portrays a tough existence , though one that was the norm in North East Scotland , So , what about the lives of these fisherwomen .

In Old Portlethen , when the men were set to sail , their female compatriots would remove their sheen (shoes) and stockings , tuck up their skirts and begin the task of "floating " their male counterparts , an arduous task of carrying them on their backs through open sea to their boats , to ensure their precious feet were kept dry during the voyage .

On return to land with their catch , the women were once again on hand –to carry the men ashore , but also to fill their creels with the bounty of fish . Creel on their back , the women would deliver them , up the hill and past the Neuk and the Mains of Portlethen , to the train station for transportation to market in Aberdeen . May I add that this was following the opening of the station in 1848 . Prior to this , the women would walk along the coast road to Aberdeen , quite a feat with this heavy load of fish ..

For more information, please visit **Portlethen Library**
or email Fred at Fred.Stewart@tphs.org.uk

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Enough of this History lesson for now! Let me introduce myself , My name is Fred Stewart and I am what the local people call “ The Heritage Mannie “ In short I run the Heritage Society in Portlethen . My reason for writing this short piece is to capture interest in putting together a local event that looks both back at the history of our community , while at the same time uses this to “put Portlethen on the map “ at the current time .

Local coastal towns like Stonehaven Inverbervie and Johnshaven hold annual festivals that are linked to the history of their communities , and I would like to do something similar for Portlethen ..I was thinking of using the “ Creel Walk “from the shore to the station as a symbolic beginning to such an event . This could be for charity and would hopefully involve local people of all ages .

I have many thoughts on a “ creel walk “ but would appreciate the help and ideas of local people to get this up and running.. If you have found this interesting , would like Portlethen to host something unique , get in contact with me at fred@frederickstewart.myzen.co.uk . Thank you

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