

Kippers Collections

The Herring Lasses

As part of Women's History Month, join Kipper to celebrate the wonderful and inspiring history of the herring lasses.



Hello everyone! Today I am excited to tell you about the herring lasses! This photograph was taken in the 1930s and the lasses are **gutting herring** at Craig's Yard in Dunbar, not too far away from Edinburgh. They came from every **fishing town and village** from the Shetland Isles, the Western Isles and North East of Scotland all the way down the Eastern coastline, including Fife where I live! Some Scottish lasses would travel down to England too and work on the Yorkshire coast and Great Yarmouth in Norfolk.

I am perched next to the **farlans** to find a tasty fish! Farlans are large wooden troughs where lasses would stand and gut herring outside. Fisher lasses were busy bees, and some of the most experienced lasses could gut up to 60 fish per minute! The fisher lassies sometimes had to work until midnight when there was a good catch of the day.

The lasses used a sharp knife called a **futtle** to gut herring and **cured** them with salt before packing in barrels. The bandages on their fingers were often made of rags or old cloth flour bags and were known as **clouties**. Sometimes they asked for help to dress their wounds at the **Fishermen's Mission stations** found in some herring ports.

The lasses loved to knit and were taught from a very young age by their Mothers and Grandmothers. They knitted special patterned jumpers called **ganseys** for their family members who worked at sea.

Lasses would learn how to knit the gansey patterns through listening to others and discovering new patterns in different fishing villages - enjoying knitting, singing and chatting together whenever they had a spare moment!

I hope you are all inspired by the herring lasses and their role in the fishing industry during the herring industry boom of the 19th and 20th centuries!