

Trawling

September 23rd Tuesday

Went on Ricky Goodsall's boat 'My Jane' for a 13 hour trip in Rye Bay - 'ploughing a furrow' off Dungeness. Left on the tide at 8pm and back by 10am. We made a series of six catches. It is very hard work for the crew, who have to set the nets, haul them in and empty them, sort and grade the fish, gut them, and store them in the many plastic crates we carry aboard.

We were looking for sole in the main, and did well - but with a fair old collection of spider crabs, old plastic bags and lumps of coal (lost over board in the days of steam?). Ricky caught an old seltzer bottle on the last trip.

In addition to sole, we were looking for plaice, crabs, gurnard, cod (a bit early - they like colder waters) and dogfish. Dogfish are small sharks and include the huss or rock salmon. A large dogfish was referred to as a smooth hound.

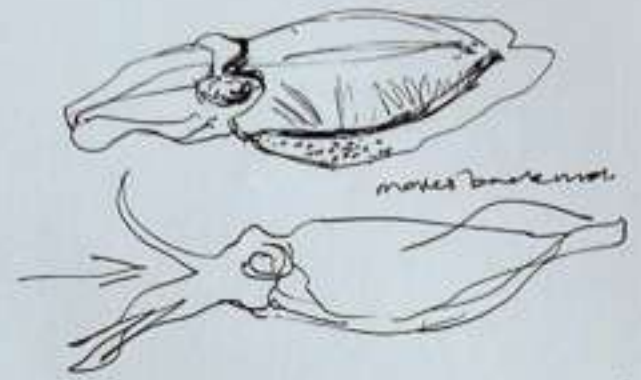
We landed a lot of small fry that were returned to the sea - though I doubt many survived the trauma of being caught up in the nets. Tomorrow's harvest became food for the scores of gulls that circled the boat throughout our journey.



There are only three crew including the skipper Ricky: Rick who is Ricky's son (and has only been fishing for six months) and Pete (who has returned to the sea after three years away). The crew is a 'family' too; they get on well and I believe enjoy going to sea, despite a continual banter that derides their supposed less than happy fate.

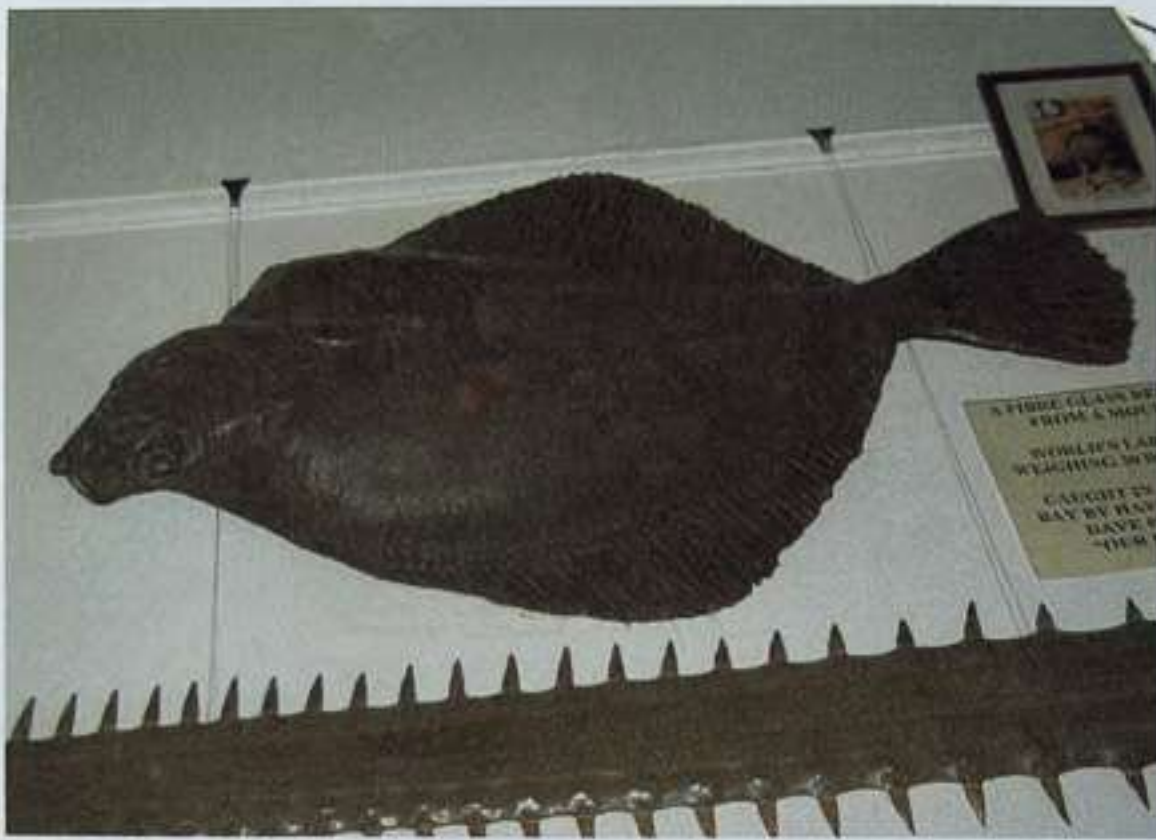
Pete says I should not call the gulls gulls. In fact any other name will do. (He preferred Sh*te hawks). The ones feeding as the fish are being gutted I dub Gutgulls and this is deemed acceptable. I ask if it is a custom, like not whistling on ships (you whistle up the wind).





Brian Stent (Blogsie) is waiting on the Jetty when I return from trawling. 'Did you get an idea of what it's like? He asked. 'It's a young mans life'. He told me that as a lad he used to work on the Enterprise (an old beam trawler in The Fisherman's Museum in Hastings. He once owned Akela, Mick Caister's wooden hulled trawler. 'She was built in Sandwich in 1966'.





The largest Plaice ever caught in Rye Bay weighed 20lbs 10oz. It was caught by Dave Peters in 'Our Pam and Peter' in 1994

This fish was cast in plaster and now lives on the wall of the Fishermen's Museum in Hastings

'The fish are getting smaller' says James over a mug of tea. Three years ago if you caught 8 stone of plaice 5 might be a good size, 2 average and 1 small. Today it is the other way round'.

Fisherman's Museum. September 25th

I like the idea of the Winkle Suit, created by Slogger Hoad, the Winkle King. Hoad was a member of the Hastings Winkle Club created in 1908, to raise money to look after the local poor.

Maybe I will create a Scallop cape for a Rye Scallop Queen?

Income from fishing was never great and so smuggling was a part of the fisherman's trade in the early 19th Century. Rye boat builders even made fishing smacks with concealments for contraband.

Gaff rigged boats fished for blue flints-'boulders', to be sent to the Staffordshire Potteries. The same flints were used to 'cobble' Rye's streets.

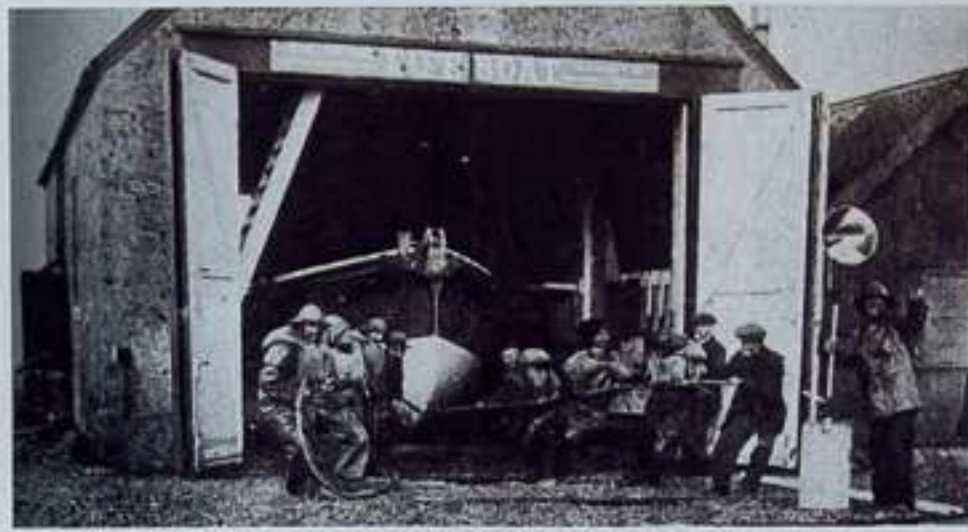


October 2nd. Visit to old lifeboat house at Rye Harbour beach.

On November 15th the SS Alice of Riga was in distress off Dungeness Point and in need of assistance. The Mary Stanford Lifeboat was launched from Rye Harbour into the teeth of one of the worst gales ever experienced in Rye Bay. Powered only by oars and a steadying sail, she was soon lost to sight in the huge seas piled up in the offshore winds. She was sighted once and briefly, before the first of 17 bodies was washed ashore along with the capsized lifeboat.

The crew were all from fishing families in Rye harbour. The dead included cox Herbert Head and his two sons, bowman Henry Cutting and two brothers, three Pope brothers, two Clark brothers and two Downing cousins. A large memorial in the village churchyard marks the graves of the 17 lifeboat men, who perished. All were fishermen.

It is hard to separate this catastrophe from the wider malaise of the 1920s economic slump. The fishing fleet had already fallen to two steam trawlers, one sailing trawler and to three motorboats. By 1930 the steamboats had been scrapped and the sailing boat lost in a collision.



A huge and enduring blow
to a small community
that touched the nation.

Jeff Carter
Fisherman.

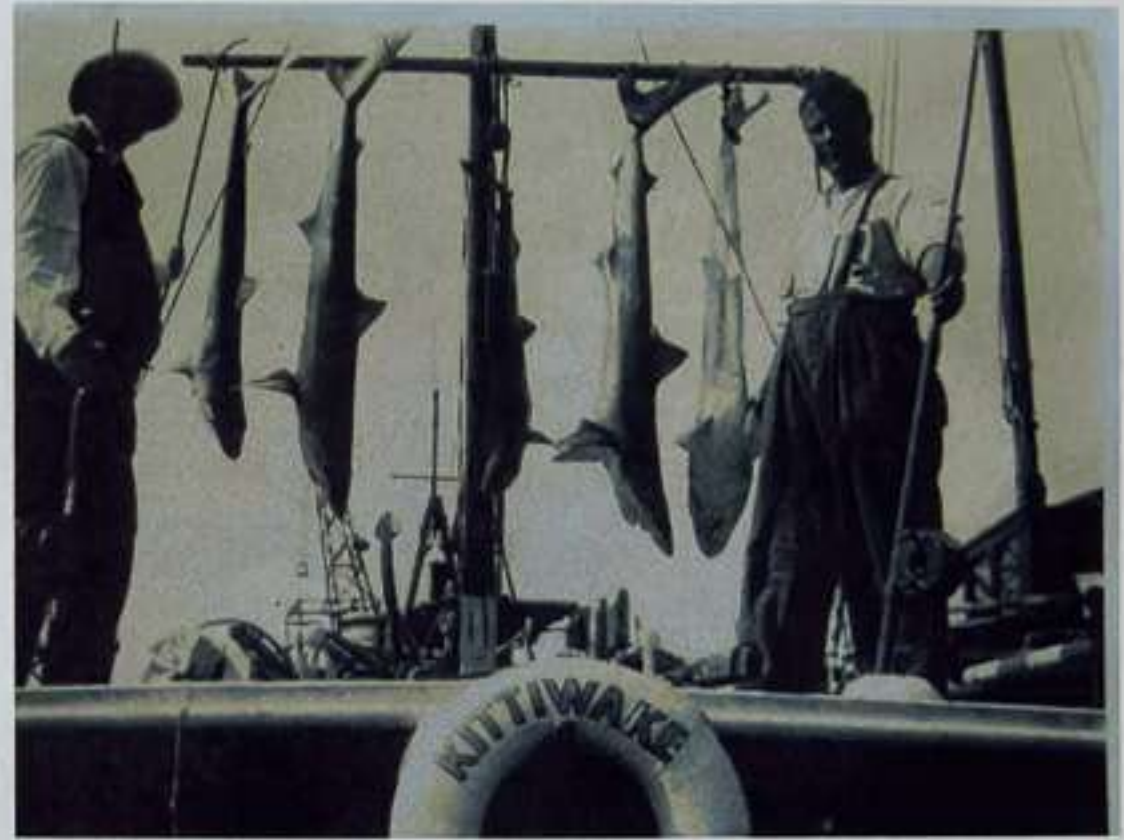
'This picture was taken of my dad on the 'Kittywake' an angling boat in about 1936, holding up 'Tope'. They look like DogFish, that we call 'smelly hounds' or 'smooth hounds'.

People catch all kinds of things. Michael (Jeff's son) has caught four anchors. He 'caught' the one outside the Tourist Office off Dungeness about ten years ago while fishing in Wayward Lad RX6. It had miles of chain attached'

I started fishing in 1942 on my father's boat. I was the tea boy and I got seasick every trip for two months! I used to push a handcart full of dogfish to Taylor's fish and chip shop. It's now an Indian Restaurant' 'You could only fish from sunrise to sunset. It was dangerous fishing. Boats could be blown up after catching mines in their nets'

'After the war there were 30-40 boats operating from Rye. French and Belgian boats would come into the harbour on Sunday so the crews could go to church'.

'Times got harder with competition from new jobs that paid better. Not all the fishermen came back from the war either. In 1950 my 'Rose' was the last boat fishing', built by Phillips in Rye. It picked up later.



Cliff Bloomfield
October 7th

'The other threat was enemy aircraft'. 'Charlie Lock was fishing in his boat Mizpah in Rye bay and he was shot at by a FW190. Two men were killed and Charlie got the British Empire Medal' The fish caught were not rationed and provided extra food for local people. 'You queued up at the harbour. Quite a crowd would gather waiting for the boats and you paid one shilling for a sand-bag full of fish'.

Natural History, Bexhill Museum. October 10th.

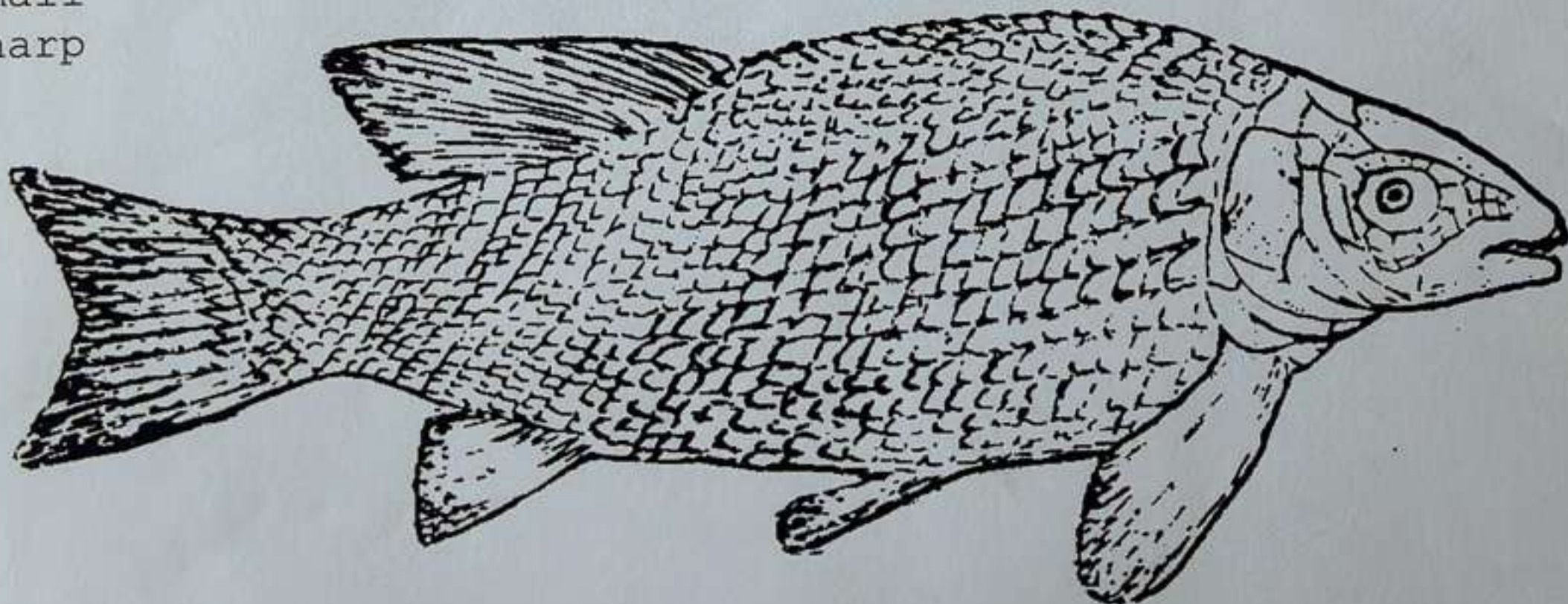
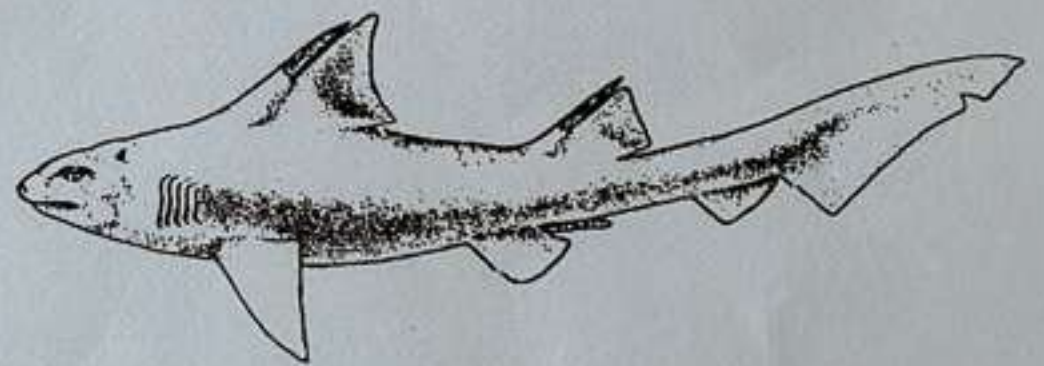
'130 million years ago, what is now Rye Bay was part of a large freshwater lake that stretched to central France. Evidence suggests that the sea was nearby as creatures favouring brackish water are also a part of the local geology'.

Lepidotus was the local fish. Scales and teeth are found quite often in the rocks on the fore-shore. They are of a glossy brown nature. The fish could grow to nearly a metre in length and its body was covered in really tough diamond shaped scales. Its teeth were good for cutting and eating shellfish.

The shark Hybodus also lived in the freshwater of the lake. They grew up to two metres in length. As they are composed of cartilage, fossil remains are scarce, but their small sharp

teeth survive. Shark droppings, coprolites, are often found.

The fish catcher of the time was baryonyx, a small dinosaur with crocodile shaped jaws, it had 128 teeth with sharp serrated edges. Its hooked claws that were used to scoop up passing fish, rather like a bear would do today.



Viriparus - 'Bethersden Marble'



'This is polished Sussex or Bethersden marble. It is really a limestone composed of compressed *Viriparus* shells (small molluscs each about 1.5cm) part of the Weald Clay Formation.

Bethersden marble was used in 1864 to build the Bethersden Primary School

In the 1820's London was fed by large French fishing boats working off the south coast, until in 1843 a new three mile limit was established to protect British waters. In 1879 twenty nine trawlers were fishing in the 16 -18 fathoms of water of Dungeness in winter, fuelled by the demands of a rising population and new steam technology

Ripiers Ride...

1.10.03

Spoke to John Priestley, who is a member of the Rye Rotary Club, who managed a novel way of drawing attention to the cultural significance of fishing in Rye, whilst raising money for the new Rye Memorial Health Care Centre. Ripiers used to carry a daily shipment of fish from Rye to London for general sale at Billingsgate. The King or Queen also had first call on Rye Bay Plaice. On 27 June 1993, John arranged for a symbolic cloth fish to be carried by horse from the Fishmarket in Rye for 65 miles to Buckingham Palace; by way of Hawkhurst, Tudeley, Sevenoaks and Chevening, This long distance equestrian event was supported by locally based riders. The real fish, packed in ice were carried on the support vehicles.



Kiddle or Keddle ?

Kid"dle\, n. [Cf. LL. kidellus, Armor. ki[=a]el]

A kind of basketwork wear in a river, for catching fish. [Improperly spelled kittle.]

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Is this a North American usage?



George and Jimper tending the nets...
hoping for a fine keddle of fish?

'No one knows what the future holds but it's a safe bet that like hundreds of years before, there will always be someone fishing in Rye bay'.

Ronnie Simmons Harbour Master, 2000



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