

COASTAL COMMUNITIES IN VICTORIAN SCOTLAND: WHAT MAKES NORTH-EAST FISHER FAMILIES DISTINCTIVE?

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Introduction

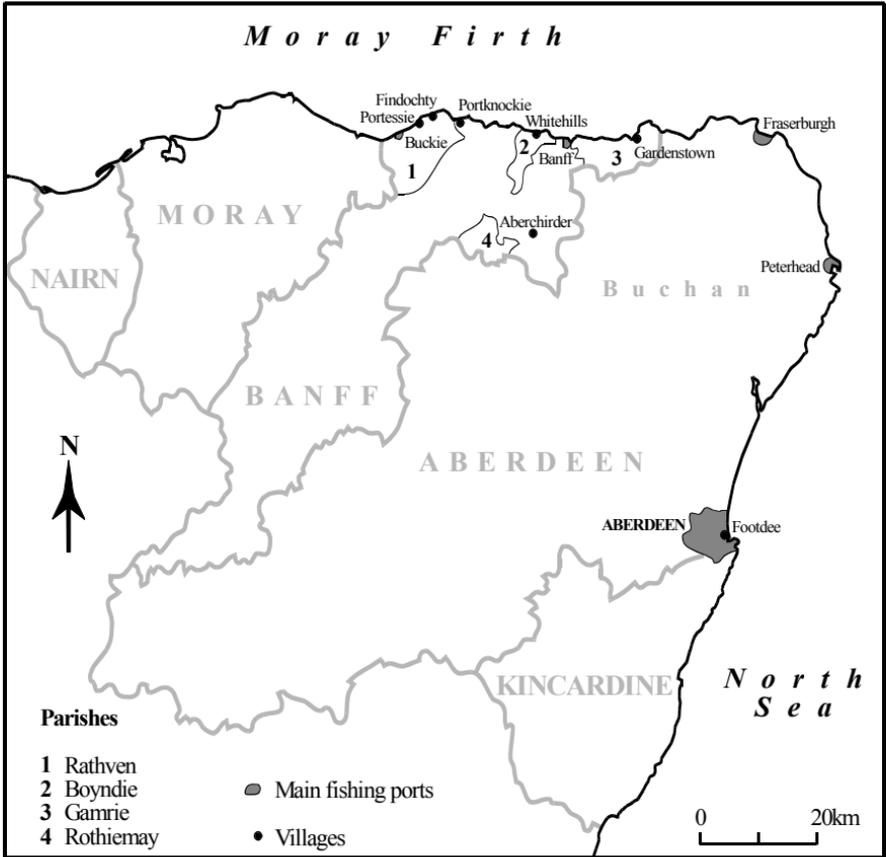
In their comprehensive analysis of Scottish population patterns from 1860 to 1914, Anderson and Morse make a convincing case for that country's demographic experience being decidedly different from that of its nearest geographical neighbours: 'Scottish marital fertility ... was higher than that for England and Wales. Scottish nuptiality was consistently lower'.¹ They conclude that the Scottish national regime was one of high fertility and high emigration but low nuptiality. Nevertheless, regional variations were affected by very different material considerations. For instance, late marriage in the Highlands occurred because crofters had to wait for fathers to die before obtaining their land, whereas in industrial areas of the Central Belt, the timing and incidence of marriage was more dependent on the state of trade.

Anderson and Morse's analysis says nothing specifically about the fishing communities that fringed eastern Scotland. However, these settlements made a distinctive demographic contribution. This paper aims to outline some of the more significant elements of that distinctive demography by examining a small selection of fishing villages around Scotland's north-east coasts.² The sample includes Rathven, a large parish on the central Moray Firth, and Findochty, one of its half-dozen constituent sea-towns; Gardenstown and Whitehills, two villages along the eastern reaches of the same coastline, some 15 miles apart; and Footdee, a fishing village at the mouth of Aberdeen harbour, some fifty miles to the south of these enclaves. For comparative purposes the discussion refers to relevant calculations made for the inland farming parish of Rothiemay, the inland village of Aberchirder, a middle-class residential district (West End) of Aberdeen city and to regional and national figures. A number of other locations in north-east Scotland are also mentioned (see Figure 1).³

The fishing economy

The fishing villages were traditionally involved in whitefishing. White fish (predominantly cod and haddock) are demersal (living in deep water or at the bottom of the sea) and were traditionally caught on lines. This required using

Figure 1 Northeast Scotland, showing locations mentioned in the text



baited hooks, a procedure that engendered high social cohesion since it was labour-intensive and drew upon all members of the family. In particular, women’s employment (and, to a lesser extent, that of children), included collecting bait, knotting hooks, baiting lines, preparing fish for sale and selling the catch, alongside domestic household work. As Baillie points out, these were not insignificant tasks. For example, each fishing trip would set out with up to 5,000 baited hooks aboard.⁴

The co-operative, kin-based, essentially egalitarian character of fishing – what Thompson and his colleagues refer to as ‘the moral order of free enterprise’ – was anchored by a share system:

To fish, a man had to invest in a vessel and its gear. Thus the crew of a boat were co-owners. Profits from fishing were shared out equally thereby creating social equality and cohesion in the community. Social cohesion was further

strengthened by a marriage system which undoubtedly developed as a consequence of business investments in boats. Young fishermen, because of the additional tasks required of a fisherman's wife, almost invariably chose a bride from within a fishing community and in this respect would have been encouraged to marry the daughter of a fellow crew-member. This practice would have consolidated capital investment in the boat. The result of the share system was that members of the community identified with boats, and hence other families, to which they had some attachment and not with a particular stratum of society.⁵

By contrast, the instability that typified the herring industry, with its seasonal and unpredictable fluctuations in supply and demand, required considerable adaptations to the old share system. Herring fishing with drift nets 'grew by slow erosion of traditional forms of fishing' as increasing numbers of fishermen were stimulated by curers offering to engage boats.⁶ Profit opportunities began to be realised in the 1830s, with expansion, both in boats and in people, beginning around 1850 and continuing until 1914. Larger boats were needed, and the movements of the fish during the herring season necessitated the development of an itinerant lifestyle at odds with a home-centred family economy as men and women followed the shoals around the North-east from July to September, and south to East Anglia in the autumn. While young women were employed at piece rates in their droves as gutters and packers, independent middlemen intervened as curers thus supplanting wives in their marketing role.

The herring fleet consisted of many tiny parts drawn from over 100 separate communities along the Scottish east coast. Gardenstown fishers invested heavily in herring fishing, only returning to whitefishing as a mainstay after the boom, whereas Whitehills fishermen were rather less committed, retaining small, non-specialised vessels and a whitefishing presence throughout. In Findochty, as in Rathven's main port of Buckie, population growth, particularly after the 1880s, came as a result of the herring boom. Meanwhile, from 1880, steam trawling came to dominate whitefishing by concentrating activity in the larger ports, thereby putting an effective end to line-fishing along the Buchan and Kincardine coasts, although having little effect on the Moray Firth villages. Its technology also needed only one skilled fisherman per boat, with the others being simply maritime labourers. By contrast, the herring ports, despite occasional crises, developed apace without adopting steam drifters until after 1900, and the Moray Firth seatowns – a mixture of whitefishing and herring-based settlements – flourished as never before or since.

Population growth and intercensal change

Many of the fishing villages along the Moray Firth coast had been erected by individual landowners between the late-seventeenth and early-nineteenth centuries. For example, Findochty was settled in 1716 by fishers from Fraserburgh and Gardenstown in 1720 by Alexander Garden of Troup, a 'beneficent landlord who provided homes and boats in return for a share of

the catch'.⁷ Although often planned as direct resettlements, many sea-towns were massively affected by the Victorian boom and thrived as densely concentrated irregular and cramped settlements.

During the nineteenth century, the population of Banffshire rose at every census. However, at parish level the pattern was far from even. Upland areas declined steadily from 1831, with lowland agricultural parishes later, if rather less sharply, following suit. In marked contrast, however, the coastal districts, stimulated by a fishing boom, witnessed a population explosion. This cumulative expansion became particularly pronounced in the later Victorian period, and lasted until the First World War. For example, between 1801 and 1911, the population of Rathven grew five-fold: in 1801 it was 3,901; by 1861, 8,240; 1891, 12,995, and by 1911 it was 15,995.⁸ Gardenstown, meanwhile, grew from 348 persons in 1841 to 1,107 by 1901.

The fishing villages were characterised by strong and persistent positive rates of natural increase. Indeed Baillie notes that Gardenstown's fisher element would have doubled within 18 years had the rates of the 1860s continued. However, net migration trends fluctuated and – in Gardenstown, at least – the net in-migration of the 1860s and 1880s was counterbalanced by out-migration during other decades.

Crude vital rates

In Gardenstown birth frequencies rose from around 25 per annum in the 1850s to between 40 and 50 per annum by the end of the nineteenth century, achieving a maximum of 60 in 1898.⁹ However, when figures are adjusted into rates for Rathven, the crude birth rate remains consistently below both regional and national levels throughout the half-century. In view of the information that follows on nuptiality and fertility, these figures are perplexing, although – as with all calculations discussed in this paper – there is a potential problem of distortion due to small numbers.¹⁰

Rathven's low death rate (in 1871 it was 10.2 per thousand as against the north-east Scotland mean of 17.3) partially accounts for a high level of population retention, although one assumes that in-migration attendant upon the success of the fishery was a major factor.

Age structure

The coastal villages had a younger overall structure than the inland farming areas, although the proportions within the reproductive age-range (15–49) were almost identical. A recurrent feature of the age pyramids constructed for Gardenstown and Whitehills was the depletion of adult males. However, since fertility levels appear to have been unaffected by this, we must conclude that this was an artefact caused by the (temporary) absence of men at the fishing on the night that the census was taken. Certainly, the prevalence of 'fisherman's wife' as a common designation among household heads would imply this.

Table 1 Crude birth rate, selected samples, 1861–91

	1861	1871	1881	1891
Rathven	26.1	25.0	26.9	23.8
Northeast region	32.7	33.0	32.7	29.5
Scotland	34.8	34.7	33.6	30.8

Sources: Civil registration certificates; census enumerators' books; M. Flinn, *Scottish population history: from the seventeenth century to the 1930s*, (Cambridge, 1977), 340.

Sex ratios

The distortion created by persons absent at the fishing is also reflected in the recorded sex composition of village populations, with sex ratios indicating disparities in levels of absenteeism from one census to the next. In 1861, Findochty's sex ratio, expressed as the number of men per one hundred women, was just 50 in the 15–49 year age range. This was partly due to the temporary absence of 103 men and 83 women, engaged in fishing and related activities on the night the census was taken. Assuming all these 186 individuals to be aged between 15 and 49 years, the ratio when augmented to include them is still only 82. In 1871 only one inhabitant was recorded by the enumerator as being absent on census night, and the sex ratios for the 20–24 and 25–29 year age ranges were identical at 94. However, the overall ratio at ages 15–49 years was just 79. A female bias within the reproductive, working-age section of the population was similarly evident along the coast, both at Whitehills (81 in 1851, 76 in 1861 and 74 in 1871) and – more markedly – Gardenstown (84 in 1851, 46 in 1861 and 59 in 1871). In both these instances the sex ratios quoted are for fishers only – according to adult occupation – aged 15–44 years.¹¹ Imbalances were most strongly reflected in divergent sex ratios amongst single people. Thus, whereas Rothiemay records more men than women amongst the unmarried aged 20–34 years, in Findochty there were more single women than men in all reproductive age-ranges.¹² We would expect such skewness to affect both marriage rates and fertility in that the probabilities of women finding husbands from their own age-group were restricted on average by around 20 per cent, and often considerably more, with a corresponding reduction (ignoring illegitimacy) in maximum possible fertility.

Age at first marriage

In 1794, the minister of Rathven wrote of his parishioners: 'They go to sea as boys, at 14 years of age, become men at 18, and marry soon after; for it is a maxim with them, apparently founded in truth, that no man can be a fisher, and want a wife. They generally marry before 24 years at farthest; and always the daughters of fishers from 18 to 22 at most'.¹³ Sixty years later (1855–59) mean ages at first marriage in Gardenstown (calculated from individual ages recorded on civil marriage certificates) were 26.4 for men and 23.5 for women,

and for the long period stretching from 1855 up to 1974, the modal age for grooms was 24 and brides 23. In Whitehills the corresponding modal ages were 26 and 21 respectively. The low female ages are especially marked and compare with mean ages of marriage that never fell below 25.3 or rose above 26.7 in any decade from 1851 to 1900 for inland farming parishes, the North-east region or indeed Scotland overall.

Fertility

Clearly, one would expect low marriage ages to contribute to high fertility levels. In 1871, Gardenstown's general fertility rate (GFR) was 205.7 and Whitehills's was 186.0.¹⁴ These very high rates, which compare with GFRs of 135.4 for the North-east region, 135.5 for Scotland as a whole, and 114.0 for Rothiemay, were still higher for the fisher sectors of their respective populations, a figure of 226.3 being computed for Gardenstown.

Nuptiality

Anderson and Morse point out the striking contrasts in patterns of fertility and nuptiality between England and Scotland, noting how Scottish marital fertility was higher throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, while nuptiality was consistently lower.¹⁵ Between 1861 and 1901, the crude marriage rate for Scotland (which was always lower than that for England and Wales, but well above Ireland) hovered around 7.0 per thousand.¹⁶ Rates in the western Moray Firth parishes fluctuated considerably – Whitehills peaked at 105 (1881) and Gardenstown at 106 (1861), while both also saw rates as low as 37 (Gardenstown, 1901) and 66 (Whitehills, 1891). Meanwhile, though its crude marriage rates were never as low as those found among inland parishes affected by high levels of unmarried motherhood (33 for Marnoch (including Aberchirder) in 1881), Rathven never achieved a higher level than 52 per thousand between 1861 and 1891.

This said, the proportions of women ever married were higher in each age-group than the North-east regional mean, a trend that was most marked in the 25–29 year age group, clearly reflecting the impact of a relatively early mean age at marriage. This compares with figures of 55.7 per cent of women married in the 25–29 year age group in Scotland as a whole, 52.1 per cent in the North-east region, and just 39.9 per cent in the Highland Counties.¹⁷

The proportion of men married in their twenties was much lower in the farming parishes than the regional average, but the reverse was true in the sea-towns. Thus in Findochty the proportion of men aged 20–24 in 1871 who were married (27.6 per cent) was over twice that for the North-east as a whole (13.5 per cent). The impact of relatively early marriage ages was most evident in the 25–29 year age group, in which 87.5 per cent of Findochty men were married compared with just 48.1 per cent regionally. In the 30–34 age group the percentage was again much higher (85.7 per cent as against 69.7 per cent) and decidedly above that of the agricultural zone. By contrast, in 1861 the inland farming parish of Rothiemay shows just 29.7 per cent of men aged 25–29 years

Table 2 Percentage of selected female age-groups ever married, 1871

Age group	Northeast	Scotland
20–24	29.0	23.5
25–29	70.6	52.1
30–34	80.0	66.3
50–54	81.8	77.7

Sources: Census enumerators' books; M. Flinn, *Scottish population history: from the seventeenth century to the 1930s*, (Cambridge, 1977), 326–7

married and, even allowing for the effect of later marriage, only 61.5 per cent of men aged 30–34 years.

Throughout Scotland during the late nineteenth century, relatively low proportions of women – around 80 per cent – had ever married by the end of their reproductive period. Likewise, overall proportions never married stayed stable in Banffshire, shifting from 21.7 per cent to just 22.7 per cent between 1871 and 1911. And, taking 1871 as a guide, the proportion of Findochty women in the 50–54 year age group who were married or widowed was 81.8 per cent (88.9 per cent for ages 45–54). Nevertheless, the proportions married at different ages prior to this diverged sharply between fishing and farming parishes as we have seen. Measures of marital fertility and nuptiality show that compared with most of Western Europe, Scotland's nuptiality stayed relatively constant through the early fertility decline, despite increased proletarianisation. Low levels occur for inland parts of the North-east region, particularly in the arable and livestock feeding zone characterised by small farms on poorer soils.¹⁸ However, because of the boost provided by the fishing communities, levels remained relatively high in the region overall.

Illegitimacy and bridal pregnancy

To a degree the low levels of marital fertility inland are explained by high levels of non-marital fertility. North-east Scotland was distinctive for its high bastardy ratios during the Victorian era.¹⁹ However, the pattern clearly disaggregates into high levels in the inland farming areas with more moderate levels (by Scottish standards) in the coastal parishes. Between 1858 and 1886, the 24 Banffshire parishes returned an alarming mean illegitimacy ratio of 16.2 per cent, almost twice the Scottish average. However, the variation between parishes was such that the five coastal parishes occupied the bottom five slots in the local bastardy league (with a mean of 11 per cent) while the top three parishes, all inland and dominated by agriculture, shared a mean of 24 per cent. Undoubtedly, since these are parish figures, the coastal areas were to a

degree affected by the mores of the farming sub-populations of their landward parts. Thus Seafield, consisting almost wholly of the sea-town of Portknockie and the parish with the lowest farming acreage, returned the lowest ratio of all at 7.3 per cent.²⁰

Social control of sexual behaviour

The local commentator William Cramond claimed that in 1858, 'there was not a single illegitimate case of a fishergirl or fisherman's daughter' in the county while in 1868 there was only one.²¹ Similarly, his contemporary Gerrard made the point that many fishergirls became pregnant, but ample housing provision and a distinct requirement for wives in the fishing economy ensured early marriages and relatively low bastardy ratios.²² Bridal pregnancy was not unheard of: Cramond found that in Seafeld one sixth of first births between 1881 and 1886 occurred within six months of marriage. However, the Kirk Session Minutes for adjacent Rathven show considerable, and regular numbers of 'antenuptial fornication' cases.²³ While the churches in the fishing parishes appear to have taken a rather less dim view of bridal pregnancy than of illegitimacy, Gregor nevertheless indicates the high degree of parental control over marriage: 'A would-be groom indicated his wishes to his father who then contacted the bride's parents to discuss details of worth and property. Announcements were only made after an agreeable settlement had been reached.'²⁴

While 'displeasure and scorn' was vented against unmarried mothers in these tight, highly religious communities, young fishermen, unlike their rural counterparts, faced 'no obstacle to renting'. Indeed, a thinly disguised fictional account of Gardenstown remarks that 'the bridegroom's father provides a new house completely furnished for the young couple'.²⁵ Various contemporary accounts also note that in the fishing villages the occupational organisation demanded early marriage 'rules'. Meanwhile, both contemporary folklorists and recent oral histories of the early twentieth century remark upon the crucial role of wives in the fishing economy.²⁶

Surname analysis and marital endogamy

Most Scottish communities were sufficiently open to allow considerable migratory traffic in marriage partners and incoming families. For instance, a total of 692 surnames appeared in the civil registration certificates of the farming parish of Torthorwald, Dumfriesshire (mean population c. 1,010) during the 84-year period between 1855 and 1939. Nevertheless, the remoter Hebridean islands were sometimes affected by limited outside contact. Thus, between 1776 and 1854 (a period of 78 years), just 49 surnames occur among the births and marriages recorded in the Coll parish registers (mean population c. 1,190). One third of the population was called McLean.²⁷

Geographical isolation, though, was not necessary to restrict outside contact. The North-east region's fishing villages were not geographically remote, but

there was remarkably little interaction between them and the surrounding farmland and intermarriage between fishing families and those from the immediate agricultural environs was rare indeed.²⁸ While methods of hiring farm labour ensured that people (particularly those in the key reproductive age groups) moved frequently between farms and districts, the fishing villages were extremely self-contained.

Endogamous marriage was a feature of the coastal settlements. Between 1855 and 1974, 55 per cent of Boyndie marriages were contracted between partners living less than one kilometre apart; in Gamrie, the proportion was 44 per cent.²⁹ Meanwhile, taking the census year 1881, 84.4 per cent of married women aged 16–49 years in Findochty hailed from within the parish (Rathven) while nearly 88.1 per cent of single women in the same age-range did so (82.1 per cent being native to Findochty itself).³⁰ These figures have to be set against the drastically different proportions of 18.6 per cent and 45.3 per cent respectively for Rothiemay.³¹ Similarly, in 1891, while 56.5 per cent of all Aberdeen residents were native to the city, 95.1 per cent of the residents of the Footdee squares were Aberdonians.³² Rev. William Henderson had written some forty years previously that the fisherfolk of Aberdeen ‘seldom marry with persons not of their own community’.³³

They also tended to marry relatives. The frequency of particular surnames within fishing communities indicates pronounced genetic concentration and reflects high levels of marital isonymy (marriage between individuals with the same surname). For the eastern Moray Firth, Baillie finds 197 surnames in the Gardenstown marriage registers between 1855 and 1974, and 342 in Whitehills. However, in Gardenstown the majority of marriage partners (54.3 per cent) shared just four surnames: Watt, West, Wiseman or Nicol; in Whitehills 32.2 per cent were called Watson, Ritchie, Lovie or Findlay.³⁴ In Findochty, most people were named Anderson, Flett, Smith, Sutherland or Thain. The same applies to the west: among 202 household heads recorded in Portessie in 1881 no less than 81 (41 per cent) had the name Smith and 59 per cent of the population shared just four surnames. As a consequence, individuals were recognised by everyday ‘tee-names’, which also appear in the census enumerators’ books. For example, in Portknockie, where Mair was among the commonest surnames, household heads were recorded as ‘Mair “Big”’, ‘Mair “Bo”’, ‘Mair “Bobbie”’, ‘Mair “Bobbin”’, ‘Mair “Cock”’, ‘Mair “John”’, ‘Mair “Shavie”’, ‘Mair “Shay”’, and so on, with entire families appearing thus:

John Mair “Shavie”, head
Eliza (Strachan Milne) Mair, wife
Eliza A. Mair “Shavie”, daughter
Alexander Mair “Shavie”, son
Andrew Ritchie Mair, son
David Mair “Shavie”, son
Elspeet Smith Mair, daughter.³⁵

This phenomenon was not confined to the Moray Firth, but was widespread throughout the fishertowns of the North-east. Thus in Footdee, eight surnames spanned two-thirds of the population, and one third were called Baxter, Morrice or Guyan. Here, 'Bowfer', 'Pokie's Dod' and 'Foveran's Ondy' were all Baxters, as were 'Annie Baxter One' and 'Annie Baxter Two'.³⁶ Strikingly, not only do these patterns demonstrate concentrated gene pools, they also reflect just how enduringly micro-local the social ambits of each village were. Gardenstown and Whitehills are fewer than fifteen miles apart, yet the dominant surnames in each were quite different. The same may be said for all of the fisher enclaves around the North-east coast. By comparison, Lasker and Mascie-Taylor found that the four most common surnames throughout England and Wales for a sample period during the 1970s accounted for less than 4 per cent of all names mentioned in the marriage records.³⁷

Implications for inbreeding

Baillie's study found clear distinctions between fishers and non-fishers within village populations. Marital isonymy was negligible amongst non-fishers, whereas amongst fishers 12 per cent of marriages were isonymous. Consequently, there were great occupational differences in the coefficient of inbreeding, with exceptionally high values among fishers. Here the degree of relationship was consistently at a level between first cousin and second cousin, thus representing values close to those obtained for the isolated Hutterite population of central North America, a homogeneous religious sect whose complete avoidance of birth control and communal living ensured maximum, unrestrained fertility. Arguably such values were attributable to random mating within a small population. However, evidence of 'positive assortative mating with reference to surname' was found in Whitehills where less high values prevailed. The effects of such inbreeding are difficult to judge, although contemporary medical writers suggested that both mental and physical health may have been impaired.³⁸

Levels of endogamy were connected to patterns of boat-ownership, and may have been higher where small-scale whitefishing predominated than in villages where herring fishing provided a livelihood.³⁹ Exogamous marriages could have threatened the whitefishers because the introduction of non-village individuals would have meant dividing profits per boat amongst additional people. On the other hand, where fishermen had taken up long-distance herring fishing, their boats were financed by fewer individuals, often capitalists from outside the village. There was thus less pressure to maintain endogamous links. This theory is highly plausible, and is borne out in the different rates calculated for Whitehills (higher endogamy, whitefishers) and Gardenstown (lower endogamy, herring fishers). Nevertheless, taken as a whole, the impact appears minor and the fishertowns of the North-east coast, regardless of the type of fishing, are highly endogamous by comparison with any other type of community in Scotland at the time.

Another factor, which remains to be researched, is the influence of fundamentalist religion. The revivals of 1859–1860 precipitated the formation of evangelical splinter groups, and since the mid-nineteenth century the fishing villages of Northeast Scotland have been the main UK focus of the Plymouth Brethren. These include several sects, notably the ‘Closed’ Brethren, who refuse communion with those of other persuasions, and the ‘Exclusive’ Brethren, a subset with strict rules of dress and conduct. Brethren assemblies insist upon female silence in meetings and submission in the home, and arguably such constraining sect beliefs and practices had the effect of isolating villagers from the wider community and of promoting social as well as religious exclusivity.⁴⁰

Family size

Fertility levels provide no real clue to the numbers of children per family group, although the majority of births in coastal parishes were to fisher couples whose propensity to have more than ten offspring was between two and three times that of non-fishers. Among marriages within Whitehills between 1880 and 1904, the proportion that ever produced any children within the village was 76.7 per cent, but among the fishing sector alone it was 95.7 per cent.⁴¹ Non-migrant families were generally larger than those of migrants.

Household size and structure

The Moray Firth villages appear distinctive in their demography. Assessing the extent to which population patterns were reflected in an equally distinctive pattern of household composition requires comparison between urban, rural and coastal contexts across the region. As Table 3 indicates, the nuclear family predominated. Siblings, in-laws, parents, aunts and cousins were rare, whilst nephews, nieces and sons- and daughters-in-law formed minuscule fractions of overall household memberships. The fishing communities, Footdee included, were characterised by higher levels of nuclearity than elsewhere, in that proportions of simple family units were greater than in the countryside or, in the Aberdeen case, other parts of the city. Whilst in the inland farming parish of Rothiemay and the rural village of Aberchirder, roughly half of all households were simple family units, the proportion climbed to almost three quarters in Findochty. The same division applied in Aberdeen, where married couples with children comprised just over three quarters of all households in Footdee, whereas in an elite suburb in the West End of the city approximately half conformed to this pattern.

The comparatively high rates of solitariness (largely amongst the widowed) in Rothiemay and Aberchirder help to explain differentials in mean household size – 4.8 in Rothiemay, 4.1 in Aberchirder and 5.2 in Findochty. However, in Aberdeen city, despite a very high rate of solitariness in the wealthy West End, household sizes did not vary markedly. Size variations tell us relatively little, since a domestic group could be smaller or larger because of either

Table 3 Household typology, selected samples

Type	Northeast Scotland						Aberdeen city							
	Findochty 1881		Rothiemay 1881		Aberchirder 1881		Footdee 1861		West End 1861		Footdee 1891		West End 1891	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Solitary	4	2.2	33	11.7	74	20.7	5	4.5	24	18.5	8	5.0	36	23.1
No family	6	3.3	20	7.1	17	4.7	1	0.9	15	11.5	12	7.5	31	19.9
Simple	132	72.9	138	49.1	188	52.5	87	77.7	76	58.5	121	76.1	75	48.1
Extended	39	21.5	90	32.0	79	22.1	19	17.0	15	11.5	18	11.3	14	9.0
Total	181		281		358		112		130		159		156	

Notes: 'Solitary' – widowed and single; 'No family' – co-resident siblings, co-resident relatives of other kinds, persons not evidently related; 'Simple' family households – married couples alone, married couples with child(ren), widow(er)s with child(ren), married parent alone with child(ren), unmarried parent with child(ren); 'Extended' family households – upwards, downwards and lateral, including multiple family combinations. The presence or absence of servants does not affect this typology (e.g. solitaries are taken as living with themselves, even when there are servants in the household). Individuals defined by the compiler as 'son', 'daughter', 'grandson', 'granddaughter', 'nephew' or 'niece' are counted as children unless they are married – age does not enter into the definition.

Sources: Census enumerators' books. Typology adapted from P. Laslett and R. Wall, *Household and family in past time*, (Cambridge, 1972), 31.

poverty or affluence. Both Footdee and the West End had a mean household size of around five persons. However, the density of individuals per dwelling varied massively, with between four and five persons per windowed room in overcrowded Footdee, but nearer two windowed rooms per person in the spacious West End.

Table 4 shows that grandchildren lived in 21 per cent of Rothiemay households and in nearly 17 per cent in Aberchirder, but they were found in less than 12 per cent of Findochty homes. The incidence of illegitimacy varied positively with the proportions of households headed by grandparents. It was rare for grandparents and grandchildren alone to co-reside (1.7 per cent of households).

In large part, the Rothiemay and Aberchirder patterns reflect interdependency between grandparents, unmarried mothers and their illegitimate children. For similar reasons (and because rents were cheap and therefore attractive to impoverished widows and farmers' wives whose husbands lived on distant farms), almost half (48.9 per cent) of all heads in Aberchirder were women, including 81 (22.5 per cent) who were never-married. By contrast, in

Table 4 Households including grandchildren, selected samples, 1881

	Rothiemay		Findochty		Aberchirder	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Head+wife+g/c	13	4.6	0	0.0	7	2.0
Widow(er)+g/c	3	1.1	3	1.7	14	3.9
Head+wife+child(ren)+g/c	21	7.5	9	5.0	18	5.0
Widow(er)+child(ren)+g/c	12	4.3	4	2.2	10	2.8
Other combinations+g/c	10	3.6	5	2.8	11	3.1
All including g/c	59	21.1	21	11.7	60	16.8
Total number of households	281		181		358	

Sources: Census enumerators' books; family reconstitution forms: see A. Blaikie, *Illegitimacy, sex and society: northeast Scotland, 1750–1900*, (Oxford, 1993).

Findochty, where illegitimacy was low, the total was just over a fifth (22.1 per cent). Only four heads (2.2 per cent) were single women, a further 21 (11.6 per cent) were widows and 15 (8.3 per cent) were married. Similarly, very few widows lived together with their children plus grandchildren. In Footdee, a few widows lived alone, but most non-nuclear households consisted of interdependent relatives in extended families, or, in 1891, co-resident relatives.

The high incidence of simple family units in the fishing communities may be explained by several possible factors. First, as already noted, the womenfolk were pivotally involved in all aspects of the trade, from mending nets and baiting lines to selling the fish. Fishing still essentially relied on the combined labours of the family unit. Secondly, many residents lived in one-room cottages, in which nets and other equipment had also to be stored. This militated against the inclusion of further family (or indeed, any inmates). A mean family size of five is not large, yet the overcrowding of North and South Squares was the main reason why Aberdeen City Council resolved to develop a third square in Footdee in the 1870s. At that time, tenants were given the opportunity to buy their homes, and new storeys were added by owner-occupiers, facilitating multiple occupancy – but in separate households. Thirdly, as we have again seen, most residents were closely related to one another as well as being native to the district. As they came of age, young men and women in the village married one another and moved into houses a matter of yards away, rather than co-residing with either spouse's parents. In the Moray Firth villages, the cramped, higgledy-piggledy layout of the seatowns was created by piecemeal development as

grooms' fathers built houses for their sons prior to marriage, often adjacent to or abutting the family abode.⁴²

In mid-Victorian Footdee, 25 (22.3 per cent) households each employed a single living-in servant.⁴³ Seven housed lodgers, and six boarders. Just over half of all servants and half the boarders and lodgers stayed with nuclear families. By 1891, only three families (1.9 per cent) kept a servant, four included a single boarder, and one had three boarders. By this time Footdee, like all the fishing communities in the study, was very clearly dominated by close-knit simple family units, reliant on scarcely any extra-familial support.

Patterns of dependency

Given their rapid expansion, youthful profile and high fertility, most dependants in these villages were young. Moreover, the high degree of nuclearity suggests most were cared for within simple families rather than extended units. The buoyancy of the herring trade also shielded most against poverty. Unsurprisingly, in a total population of 936 only seven individuals, all women over 55, were recorded in the 1881 Findochty census as 'parochial dependants' (i.e. paupers). However, rather than being isolates, as Laslett's 'nuclear hardship' hypothesis would predict, all lived in three-generation households: six were grandmothers, the other a great aunt.⁴⁴ It is difficult to draw any conclusions from this pattern since they were so few in number, even compared with overall number living in non-nuclear households, and certainly do not justify any inference that high levels of collective welfare prevailed.

Conclusion

Hajnal's west European marriage pattern suggests high proportions of women never marrying (around 15–20 per cent on average), with those that do marry marrying at relatively advanced ages.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, Anderson and Morse's Scottish variant demonstrates high fertility but low nuptiality. Our limited sample of fishing communities in the late nineteenth century indicates a different form again, for the regime of the seatowns was one of early marriage, high proportions marrying and high fertility. Undoubtedly, the buoyancy of maritime trade contributed massively to this pattern as village populations mushroomed. Age pyramids stayed relatively broad-based and youthful, although decreasing death rates were not offset by especially high birth and marriage rates at all times.⁴⁶

The social structure was at least as important as the economy in determining population patterns, and while the two intermeshed in the organisation of co-operative, family-centred tasks that bound trade in with the domestic division of labour, the social control of marriage was deeply constraining. These influences were to be seen in the extraordinarily endogamous nature of kinship links regarding both geography and genealogy.⁴⁷

Demographic and social trends are mirrored in patterns of household composition, especially in the overwhelming predominance of the simple

nuclear family and the corresponding scarcity of extended family forms. Non-kin were conspicuous by their absence while few elderly dependants were evident – a fact that reflects the contemporary prosperity of these communities as well as their relative youth.⁴⁸ And, as we have seen, those that were impoverished relied on close family support through co-residence rather than living independently. Again, the underlying determinants lie in the social organisation of production and reproduction. The occupational horizons of whole families often stretched as far as Yarmouth and Lowestoft, as they followed the herring migration, but their discrete social world maintained a hermetic family culture that brooked no incursion from the surrounding hinterland. Unlike those in the pluriactive crofting townships to the west who fished while tending a patch of land and engaging in migrant labouring, these were specialist fisher families through-and-through.

NOTES

1. M. Anderson and D.J. Morse, 'High fertility, high emigration, low nuptiality: adjustment processes in Scotland's demographic experience, 1861–1914', *Population Studies*, 47 (1993), 5.
2. Creek Returns indicate 39 fishing ports around the coast from Aberdeen to Rathven. Their size varied from 11 to 180 boats, and from 23 to 480 fishermen per port. Findochty grew from 69 boats and 201 fishermen (1855) to 126 boats and 230 fishermen (1881). Over the same period, Gardenstown increased from 41 boats, 115 fishermen to 98 boats, 155 fishermen; and Whitehills from 51 boats, 150 fishermen to 89 boats, 188 fishermen. Aberdeen (including Footdee) expanded from 29 boats and 63 fishermen to 82 boats and 224 fishermen. These figures exclude large numbers of men and women involved in ancillary trades as coopers, gutters, packers and vendors: see K. Walton, 'The distribution and structure of the population of Northeast Scotland, 1696–1931', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1951).
3. Further data and source details for Rathven (including Findochty), Rothiemay and Aberchirder may be found in A. Blaikie, *Illegitimacy, sex and society: northeast Scotland, 1750–1900*, (Oxford, 1993). For Footdee and other parts of the city of Aberdeen, see A. Blaikie, 'People in the city', in W.H. Fraser and C.H. Lee, eds, *Aberdeen, 1800–2000: a new history*, (East Linton, 2000), 47–73. The information for Gardenstown and Whitehills cited in this paper is from S.R. Baillie, 'The structure of population in fishing communities of North-east Scotland', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1984).
4. Baillie, 'Structure of population', 19; Rev. G. Donaldson, 'Parish of Rathven', in J. Sinclair, ed., *[Old] Statistical account of Scotland*, vol. 13, (Edinburgh, 1794), 424; P. Thompson (with T. Wailey and T. Lummis), *Living the fishing*, (London, 1983), 227–63.
5. Thompson, Wailey and Lummis, *Living the fishing*, 227–63; Baillie, 'Structure of population', 21–2.
6. M. Gray, *The fishing industries of Scotland, 1790–1914: a study in regional adaptation*, (Oxford, 1978), 58. The herring boom effected rather less drastic social changes along the southern Moray Firth, where a large fishing population already existed, than it did along its northern shore in Caithness. See also J.R. Coull, *The sea fisheries of Scotland: a historical geography*, (Edinburgh, 1996).
7. Donaldson, 'Parish of Rathven', 401; Baillie, 'Structure of population', 3.
8. Walton, 'Distribution and structure'; H.Hamilton, ed., *Third statistical account*, vol. 10, County of Banff (Glasgow, 1961), 36–9.
9. Baillie, 'Structure of population', 186–9 provides line graphs indicating annual frequencies but does not compute the crude birth rate.
10. These figures do not appear to have been distorted by the 'snapshot' effect of the census such that an itinerant segment in Rathven's population contributed to the enumerated population but did not bear children there. The herring season depended heavily upon temporary migrants, mainly from the west coast, who would have been resident around the Moray Firth from July to September, but not in April when the census was taken. Although age structures and sex ratios were affected by the temporary *absence* of Findochty fishers in 1861 (but not 1871), just five persons were recorded as 'temporarily present' in 1871, and three in 1881.

11. Baillie offers no explanation for the dramatic change in the sex ratio in Gardenstown between 1851 and 1861. The shift was still more marked in the 45 and over age range (from 67 to 23). This was very probably due to differences in classification by occupation – a retired, widower fisherman would be classified as a fisher whereas a fisherman's widow might describe herself as 'net weaver' and thus be classified as a non-fisher (Baillie, 'Structure of population', 160). The corresponding ratios in the 45 and over age range for Whitehills were 107 (1861) and 100 (1871).
12. The impact of an excess of young males in agriculture on the marriage market was a common phenomenon throughout nineteenth century Britain. See M. Anderson, 'Marriage patterns in Victorian Britain: an analysis based on registration district data for England and Wales, 1861', *Journal of Family History*, 1 (1976), 55–78.
13. Donaldson, 'Parish of Rathven', 424.
14. The general fertility rate as calculated here is the number of live births per thousand women aged 15–49 years, calculated as a three-year mean centred on the census year.
15. Anderson and Morse, 'High fertility', 5.
16. N.L. Tranter, *Population and society, 1750–1940* (London, 1985), 51.
17. Calculations from M. Flinn, *Scottish population history: from the seventeenth century to the 1930s*, (Cambridge, 1977), 326–7.
18. Arguably, a peasant mode of production still prevailed here in the 1870s, and it was this area that suffered greatest stress during the subsequent agricultural depression. Whereas high nuptiality had been encouraged during the phase of agrarian improvement from 1840 to 1870, marriage rates fell between 1880 and 1914. See A. Blaikie, 'Scottish illegitimacy: social adjustment or moral economy?', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 29 (1998), 221–41.
19. High illegitimate fertility does not appear to have had the effect of depressing marital fertility. Rothiemay's marital fertility rate in 1870–1872 (a three-year mean of legitimate live births per thousand married women aged 15–49) was 278, compared with a North-east region figure of 240 and a Scottish figure of 247. Its illegitimate fertility rate for the same period (a three-year mean of live births per thousand unmarried women aged 15–49) was 55 per thousand as against regional and national values of 35 and 23 respectively.
20. W. Cramond, *Illegitimacy in Banffshire: facts, figures and opinions* (Banff, 1888), Table 1. The national mean between 1861 and 1885 varied between 8.37 per cent and 9.8 per cent.
21. W. Cramond, 'Illegitimacy in Banffshire', *Poor Law Magazine*, 2 (1892), 578.
22. J. Gerrard, *The rural labourers of the north of Scotland: their medical relief and house accommodation as they affect pauperism and illegitimacy*, (Banff, no date[1862]), 14.
23. Cramond, *Illegitimacy in Banffshire*, 34–6; Rathven Kirk Session Minutes, New Register House CH2/308/2 (1799–1828), thereafter c/o Rev. F. Coutts, Buckie.
24. Baillie, 'Structure of population', 354.
25. 'An Old Fisherman' [George Green], *Gordonhaven: scenes and sketches of fisher life in the north*, (Edinburgh, 1887), 74.
26. W. Gregor, *Notes on the folk-lore of the north-east of Scotland*, (London, 1881), 97; 'An Old Fisherman', *Gordonhaven*, 67–9; Donaldson, 'Parish of Rathven', 424; J. Gardiner, 'Parish of Rathven', in *[New] Statistical account of Scotland*, vol. 13, (Edinburgh, 1842), 257; Thompson, Wailey and Lummis, *Living the fishing*, 165–81.
27. A. Blaikie, 'Unhappy after their own fashion: infant lives and family biographies in Southwest Scotland, 1855–1939', *Scottish Economic and Social History*, 18 (1998), 111.
28. T.C. Smout, *A century of the Scottish people, 1830–1950*, (London, 1986), 175–6; Thompson, Wailey and Lummis, *Living the fishing*, 251–2.
29. S.R. Baillie, 'The structure of population in traditional fishing communities of north east Scotland: Whitehills and Gardenstown, 1855–1974', *Northern Scotland*, 6 (1984), 54.
30. Scottish census enumerators normally gave the parish in the 'Where born' column. However, for Rathven natives the settlement of birth within the parish was recorded in 1881.
31. Rothiemay was a high-bastardy parish, and when the unmarried mothers are considered separately a much higher proportion of 72.7 per cent are recorded as being native to the parish. A considerable part of this difference consisted of return migration to the home parish by women to bear their children. In other inland parishes, where bastardy levels were lower, we might therefore expect correspondingly low proportions of native women to be enumerated in

- the census. Consequently, the dichotomy between the 'stayers' of the fishing villages and the 'movers' of the farming parishes may be still more marked generally than our sample comparison indicates.
32. In Footdee the proportions recorded as being engaged in fishing and ancillary work were 71.7 per cent in 1861 and 81.6 per cent in 1891.
 33. Rev. W. Henderson *et al.*, 'City of Aberdeen' in [*New*] *Statistical account of Scotland*, vol. 10, (Edinburgh, 1845), 74.
 34. Baillie, 'Structure of population [thesis]', 218–9, remarks that marriage records are most indicative since they screen out 'noise' from individuals who failed to reproduce.
 35. New Register House CEN 167 (Seafield, 1881), ED 3. In nearby Buckie there were reputedly no less than 25 co-existent males whose birth certificates bore the name George Cowie. See P.F. Anson, *Fishing boats and fisher folk on the east coast of Scotland*, (London, 1930), 203.
 36. D. Morgan, *Footdee and her shipyards*, (Aberdeen 1993), 48.
 37. G.W. Lasker and C.G.N. Mascie-Taylor, 'Surnames in five English villages: relationship to each other, to surrounding areas, and to England and Wales', *Journal of Biosocial Science*, **15** (1983), 25–34.
 38. A. Mitchell, 'On consanguineous marriages in Scotland', *Edinburgh Medical Journal*, **10** (1865), 1,074–85.
 39. Baillie, 'Structure of population [thesis]', 353.
 40. Culture in general and religious influences in particular are not the concern of the present paper. E. Knipe, *Gamrie: an exploration in cultural ecology. A study of maritime adaptations in a Scottish fishing village*, (Lanham, 1984) provides a detailed anthropological examination of Gardenstown.
 41. Baillie, 'Structure of population [thesis]', 359. Since these proportions are calculated from civil certificates alone and do not account for outmigration they are underestimates.
 42. 'An Old Fisherman', *Gordonhaven*, 74; Gerrard, *Rural labourers*, 14.
 43. In all, 36 women and one man gave their occupation as servant, but 12 were family members, mostly daughters, who lived at home but worked in service elsewhere.
 44. A. Blaikie, 'Nuclear hardship or variant dependency? Households and the Scottish poor law', *Continuity and Change*, (forthcoming) considers the operation of the poor law and its impact on household and family composition.
 45. J.Hajnal, 'European marriage patterns in perspective', in D.V. Glass and D.E.C. Eversley, eds, *Population in history* (London, 1965), 101–43.
 46. Although the historical sociology of fishing communities elsewhere around the Scottish and English coasts has been explored – see for example, Thompson, Wailey and Lummis, *Living the fishing* – it would be useful for comparative purposes to know more about their demographic structures.
 47. Did the marked isolation of fishing villages – economic, social and cultural – from the surrounding countryside, captured in the local saying that 'the cod and the corn dinnae mix', have parallels elsewhere? M. Edgar and A. Hinde, 'The stone workers of Purbeck', *Rural History*, **10** (1999), 75–90 consider the relationship between one 'occupational community' and co-existent local agriculture. Here the stone industry was economically exclusive but socially and culturally integrated through marriage and religious worship. Lead, tin and slate quarrying also suggest potential studies, although the social organisation of fishing had singular demographic implications.
 48. In 1871, just 10.2 per cent of Findochty's population was aged over 50 years compared to 20.4 per cent in Rothiemay.