

Enabler Publishing and Alan are based on the edge of the Scottish Borders town of Eyemouth

Altogether, Alan has lived in Scotland for about a third of his working life. He used to live and work from the small fishing village of Burnmouth, the first settlement north of Scottish/English border on the east coast. His home and office were 'up the brae', meaning up the hill from the small fishing harbour. He lived there from about 1983-88, while he worked for the Scottish Office as publications and training officer for Scotland, and the industrial fishing newspaper, *Fishing News*, as their local editor/reporter. He then moved 'back south' to become the publisher for the Pearson publishing companies, Longman, Churchill Livingstone and Pitman.

Alan returned to the area in 2007 says: *'It has felt like coming home... There's clean air, open spaces aplenty, and what a coastline, with wild coves and spectacular views. The people are 'real' – it is still a proper community. Come and try my 'local', The Fleet, just off the town square, and you'll see what I mean!'*



Burnmouth Harbour

Alan continues to run Enabler Publishing Services, providing editorial and printing services to a range of clients, including the Chartered Institute of Housing; Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Communities Scotland, universities and publishing houses. 'Enabler Publications' is used as an imprint for its own publications.

March 2010 sees the publication of a local guide for visitors offering info on a range of proper off-road walks and cycle rides. Alan, with his friend and colleague, Oliver Carfrae, has collected up to date mapping info together. Together, they have created something a bit different from existing guides. In particular, they are test-walking new routes made accessible under the new legislation, the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, which came into force in



Walking along the Eye Water

2005. In particular, it is hoped that new walking routes can be used 'around the margins of fields' (Scotways (2006) *Rights of Access to the Outdoors in Scotland*).

The book brings together a lively and informative collection of info about the Eyemouth area. It isn't some dense historical tome, but hopefully should provide the basis for visitors and locals to enjoy the natural environment and

understand a bit more about the past and present. History is a process of evolution and we are all making it.

The fishing industry and heritage is a good example. When Alan worked for the *Fishing News* in the 1980s, the fishing industry dominated every aspect of local life. Then, it was possible to walk from one side of the harbour to the other across the decks of the fishing fleet vessels. Fishing quotas, especially for cod, environmentally damaging fishing methods, over-fishing, competition and costs for diesel and harbour dues have all taken their toll. No longer does the fleet sail out together into the North Sea on a Sunday, not to return until Thursday evening with their catch. A much depleted fishing fleet still exists, often with crew from the Philippines and Eastern Europe. Cod, hake, halibut, prawns and lobsters are among the fruits of the sea all regularly landed in Eyemouth. The Fisherman's Mutual Association (FMA) is the co-operative market organisation for the Eyemouth fishermen.



And the past history of Eyemouth and its people is always hovering like a spectre in the background. This is a place steeped in history. A history of battles between the Scots and the English, religious dissent, witchcraft and fishing. In particular, the fishing disaster, now referred to as Black Friday in 1881. The tithes dispute with the local Church of Scotland kirk is seen locally to have been a major factor in the decision of the fleet to go to sea. The

church was demanding tithes even at a time of a shortage of income. Weeks of bad weather meant that families were short of funds. Friday 14th October 1881 was apparently a calm morning. Despite a low barometer reading, the fleet put to sea. In those days it was all or none of the boats which went to sea.

It was at noon, just as the fleet vessels had begun to fish, in those days using lines, that the east coast of Scotland was hit by one of the most violent storms in living memory. Most of the skippers and their crews who came from Eyemouth and the local fishing villages of Burnmouth, St Abbs, Coldingham and Cove tried to make it back to the shelter of port. However, as they tried to negotiate the treacherous rocks, which lie outside the local harbours, their boats capsized or were smashed. The Hurkar rocks guard the Eyemouth harbour entrance – and, perhaps most tragically, many of the the fishermen's wives, children and loved ones looked on helplessly as their men drowned as their boats were crushed and broken on the rocks.



Altogether, 189 men died in the Black Friday tragedy. It remains the worst fishing tragedy in Scotland's history. Many of the current residents of Eyemouth and the surrounding villages are descendents of those who lost their lives or their loved ones that fateful day in 1881. The fishermen who died left 93 widows and 267 children. Eyemouth alone lost 129 men, and one third of its fleet. 24 came from the nearby village of Burnmouth, three from St Abbs/Coldingham Shore and 11 from Cove. The 'Ariel Gazelle' returned, damaged but with no loss of life to the port two days after the storm – they had headed further out to sea rather than making the dash to port.

New sculptures have been erected in Eyemouth, St Abbs, Burnmouth and eventually Cove, and a very fine memorial they are too, fashioned in bronze by local artist, Jill Watson.



In 2007, a musical play/presentation created by Howard Purdie, commemorating the event was performed at the EU church in Eyemouth. Entitled the 'Lament for the Little Boats' it provides a further, evocative memorial to the events of 1881. The fishwives' choir from Innerleithen struck just the right balance, evoking the strength of local character, the brutality of the work and sadness. It is due to be performed again at the Edinburgh Festival 2008. Willie Spears, later the fishermen's leader in the dispute with the kirk, claimed that on Friday 14th October 1881 that he anticipated 'an earthquake'.



Elsewhere in the town, near to the harbour and town square there is an interesting museum, which includes a tapestry of the fishing disaster; a museum of boats; a lively Leisure Centre with a swimming pool and gym not far from the main car park by the Co-operative store. There is a local bowling club situated just off the Coldingham Road below the primary school. The new secondary school opened in 2009.

From Wikipedia we learn that the town of:

'Eyemouth (historically spelt Aymouth) is a small town and parish in Berwickshire, in the Scottish Borders. It is two miles east of the main north-south A1 road and just 8 miles north of Berwick-upon-Tweed. It has a population of circa 3,420 people (2004).

The town's name comes from its location at the mouth of the River Eye. The Berwickshire coastline consists of high cliffs over deep clear water, with sandy coves and picturesque harbours. A fishing port, Eyemouth celebrates an annual Herring Queen Festival. Notable buildings in the town include Gunsgreen House and a cemetery watch house built to stand guard against the Resurrectionists (body snatchers). Many of the features of a traditional fishing village are preserved in the narrow streets and vennels – giving shelter from the sea and well suited to the smuggling tradition of old.'

Also in the Wikipedia description of Eyemouth is a quote from a 1860s magazine, which both raises a smile and may give pause to reflect on Eyemouth now and then!

'Between Abbs Head and Berwick, however is situated Eyemouth, a fishing-village pure and simple, with all that wonderful filth scattered about which is a sanitary peculiarity of such towns. The population of Eyemouth is in keeping with the outward appearance of the place. As a whole, they are rough, uncultivated, and more drunken in their habits than the fishermen of the neighbouring villages. Coldingham Shore, for instance, is only three miles distant, and has a population of about one hundred fishermen, of a very respectable class, sober and well dressed, and "well to do." – 'The Fisher Folk of the Scottish East Coast', Macmillian's Magazine. No.36 October 1862.

The Scottish Census Results Online site is very accessible and comparatively easy to understand without having a higher degree in statistics. From this source we learn that:

Comparative Population Profile: Eyemouth Locality Scotland

Interesting Facts	Eyemouth	Scotland	Marital Status 	Eyemouth	Scotland
Median Age - Male	40.00	37.00	Total resident population aged 16+	2,718	4,089,946
Median Age - Female	43.00	39.00	- % Single (never married)	24.14	30.55
Number of males per female - under 25	0.98	1.04	- % Married (first marriage)	47.13	44.27
Number of males per female - 25 or over	0.88	0.88	- % Re-married	7.47	5.52
Percentage of households where not all persons are in the same religion category	27.24	23.76	- % Separated (but still legally married)	2.94	3.57
Percentage of households where not all persons are in the same ethnic category	0.47	0.97	- % Divorced	7.73	7.02
Percentage of households where not all persons are in the same country of birth category	31.56	13.49	- % Widowed	10.60	9.06
Sex 	Eyemouth	Scotland	Resident Type 	Eyemouth	Scotland
Total resident population	3,383	5,062,011	Total resident population	3,383	5,062,011
			- % People resident in households	99.02	98.30
			- % People resident in communal establishments	0.98	1.70

- % Males	47.56	48.05	Country of Birth	Eyemouth	Scotland
- % Females	52.44	51.95	Total resident population	3,383	5,062,011
Age	Eyemouth	Scotland	- % Scotland (inc UK part not specified)	70.50	87.15
Total resident population	3,383	5,062,011	- % England	26.90	8.08
- % 0-4 years old	5.08	5.47	- % Wales	0.21	0.33
- % 5-15 years old	14.57	13.73	- % Northern Ireland	0.38	0.66
- % 16-29 years old	14.25	17.46	- % Ireland (inc. part not specified)	0.33	0.43
- % 30-44 years old	20.54	22.97	- % Rest of Europe	0.68	1.10
- % 45-59 years old	21.25	19.29	- % Elsewhere	1.01	2.25
- % 60-74 years old	15.19	13.98	Gaelic	Eyemouth	Scotland
- % 75 and over	9.10	7.09	Total resident population	3,383	5,062,011
Total resident population	3,383	5,062,011	- % Speaking Gaelic	0.35	1.16
- % under 16	19.66	19.20	- Of those speaking Gaelic % born outside Scotland	8.33	8.27
- % 16-pensionable age	58.71	62.19			
- % pensionable age and over	21.64	18.61			

From this same source we learn that at the time of the 2001 Census:

The percentage of households where no-one aged 16-74 has any educational qualifications is 42.56% compared with the Scottish national average of 33.23%

The percentage of people who are economically active full-time is 34.23% compared with the Scottish national average of 40.25%.

1,384 out of the total 3,383 resident in Eyemouth in 2001 were employed either full-time or part time. The highest percentage of those employed, 20.16% were employed in manufacturing; 14.96% in wholesale and retail trade and repairs; 12.57% in health and social work and just 3.32% in the fishing industry which might surprise some people.

In health terms, Eyemouth is slightly below the national average with 65.98% in good health compared with the national figure of 67.91%.

House ownership was lower than the Scottish average of 62.59%, being 51.85%, with 41.34% living in social rented accommodation, most of the remainder living in private rented accommodation.