



MANX SEA FISHING

B THE LORD OF THE ISLE'S HERRING CUSTOMS, 1687

That notwithstanding the several Orders formerly made & published at this Court requiring all masters & owners of boats to be diligent & careful to have their boats and netts in readiness to receive that great blessing which God Almighty hath been pleased to send among us of a Herring Fishing when there would be any appearance thereof in any parte about the Island, & that they should lay hould upon every oppertunitie that would offer that blessing unto us; Yet it is observed that the said orders have ben much slighted and contemned for some years past, which hath been a means of greatly impoverishing of the Tenants and Inhabitants of the said Isle; & that Some Boates (rather than they would attend the fishing about the Island to promote the good thereof) have gone over into Scotland & other places to fish for Herrings, & thereby have not only neglected the fishing at home, but also deprived our Rt. Honble. Lord of his Customs & other Dues arising out of the same; for redressing whereof, & that the said former Orders may be the better observed.

It is this day ordered & proclaimed that all masters and owners of Boates within this Isle shall before the first day of July next, put their Boats and netts in good order and readiness to look after and search for the sd fishing about all parts of the Island; And that when it shall please God

to send His said Blessing unto them that all and every the said Masters of Boates, shall attend with their Boates and netts at such place as the fish is found & discovered, when notice shall be given them thereof, either by the Coroner or Lockmen of the Sheading and use all possible means to further and keep up the fishing according as it pleaseth God to offer the same; And if it shall be found that any master or owner of Boates within any part of the Island shall neglect or refuse to give the attendance at the place where the said fishing is as aforesaid, they & every of them upon a presentment of disobedience given in against them by either the Coroner or Lockmen shall be fined in the sum of iijl. sterl., to be levied for the use of the Rt. Honble. Lord of this Isle without mitigation; or that if any person or persons whatsoever shall go over either into England, Ireland or Scotland to fish there with their Boates and netts, and neglect to attend the fishing of this Isle as aforesaid, such person or persons upon their returning to the Island shall be obliged to pay all such Customs & other duties unto the Lord out of what fish they shall kill abroad in as full & ample a manner, & according to the same rule that they are to pay in case they had fished about the island as aforesaid.

– *Manx Statute Book*, 1687

EXPLANATIONS

'Lockmen' were assistants to the Coroners
'Sheading' one of the six main divisions of the Island

QUESTIONS

1. When were the herring boats to be ready to start fishing?

How does this date compare with the beginning of the fishing season in later times?

2. What was the punishment for those who failed to keep this law?

3. Why would the Lord of the Isle be so concerned about herring fishing?

4. Manx fishermen fished from small open boats at this time. This document mentions a side of their activities which is a little surprising. What is it?