

The Origins of British Whaling: Pre-1750 English and Scottish Involvement in the Northern Whale Fishery

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Introduction

The origins of large-scale commercial whaling can be traced to prehistoric times when the value of the oil, meat, and bone made each stranded whale a rich prize. Archaeological investigations of prehistoric British settlement sites (see figures 1 and 2) indicate that whale "findings" were sufficiently frequent to play a relatively important role in the development of local coastal economies.¹ In England, for example, a charter granted in 1148 by Pope Eugenius III to Hilary, Bishop of Chichester, confirmed that the latter was entitled to "any whale found on the land of the church of Chichester, except the tongue, which is the King's." Similarly, in 1315 Edward II reserved "to himself the right of all whales cast by chance upon the shore." Scottish monarchs claimed the same privileges.²

The Basques initiated commercial whaling during the Middle Ages, first in the Bay of Biscay and then overseas at Labrador.³ They were superseded as the principal suppliers of whale oil and bone in the seventeenth century by the Dutch, operating on the Spitsbergen (East Greenland) grounds. Although these new northern whaling grounds were discovered and exploited by the London-based Muscovy company in 1610, the Dutch had gained supremacy over the Spitsbergen fishery and indeed the whole industry by the late 1620s (see figure 3 and table 1). The most important factor preventing the English and Scots from resisting Holland's challenge at Spitsbergen was the Dutch adherence to free enterprise while the British depended, at least in this instance, upon less effective monopolistic franchises. The awarding of royal charters primarily to London-based companies seriously retarded English and Scottish "outport" initiatives in the expanding northern whale fishery. It also meant that rather than mounting a concerted resistance to Dutch encroachment, the Muscovy Company and its successors expended much effort and capital attempting to exclude competitors, both foreign and domestic. While the English and Scots would have found it difficult to compete with Noordsche Companie whalers at Spitsbergen under the best of circumstances, disunity within their ranks served only to ensure Dutch ascendancy.⁴

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Table 1
Nationality of Whaling Vessels at Spitsbergen: 1610-1619

Year	English Charter	English Interlopers	Dutch	Basques	Danes	Development
1610	1	-	-	-		Muscovy Company Initiative
1611	2	1	-	-		English competition
1612	2	2	1	1		International competition
1613	7	4	2	11		Conflict: English prevail
1614	13	?	18	1		Stand-off: Accord
1615	10	?	14		3	Stand-off: Accord
1616	10	?	4	-		No competition
1617	15	?	12		2	Conflict: English prevail
1618	15	?	23		4	Conflict: Dutch prevail
1619	9	?	23		2	Dutch dominance

Notes: English Charter, 1617; Dutch, 1619; Basques, 1613 and 1614; and Danes, 1617 and 1619 are minima. Largest proportion of Dutch fleet in 1616 at Jan Mayen and most subsequently visited both areas within same season. London companies with charter rights were Muscovy Company, East India Company, and Company of Joint Adventurers (different combinations over time). ? denotes uncertain.

Sources: S. Purchas, *Purchas: His Pilgrimes* (1625; reprint, 20 vols., Glasgow, 1906 (first published 1625), XIII and XIV).

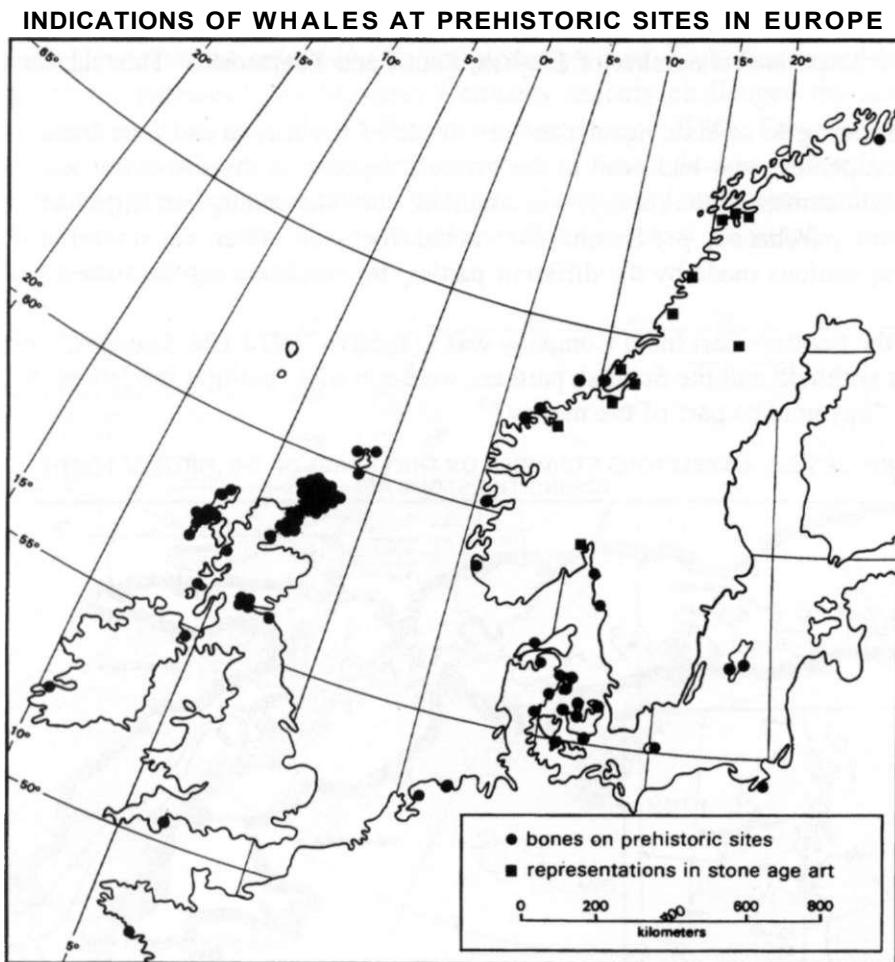


Figure 1: Indications of Whales at Prehistoric Sites in Europe.

Source: Courtesy of the author.

Scottish and English Whaling Activities in the Seventeenth Century

Scotland

There were periodic attempts to establish a Scottish presence on the northern whaling grounds prior to the foundation of the Edinburgh Whale-Fishing Company in 1749. Moreover, individual Scotsmen had served on the earliest Muscovy Company and foreign

whaling voyages to Spitsbergen. The first formal attempt to organize a Scottish-based whaling expedition, however, did not occur until 1618, when "King James (as king of Scotland) incorporated a number of English, Scots, and Zealanders." This charter,

appearing to militate against the privileges of the Russia and East India Companies, who had been at the greatest expense in the discovery and establishment of the fishery, was annulled, notwithstanding that ships had been purchased, provisions contracted for, and other considerable preparations made by the different parties, for commencing the fishery.

Although the Scottish East India Company was to receive "£924.10s. damages," compensation was withheld and the Scottish partners were forced to petition the House of Lords to receive "payment of part of the money."¹⁵

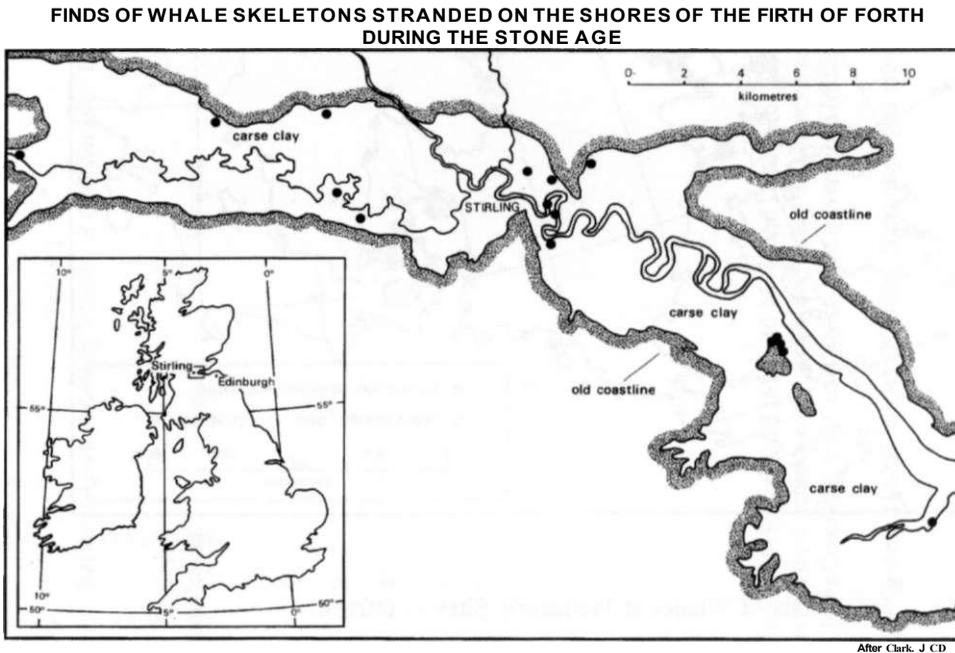


Figure 2: Whale skeletons stranded on the shores of the Firth of Forth during the Stone Age.

Source: See figure 1.

English suppliers thus continued to meet Scottish whale oil and bone requirements until 28 July 1625, when a royal license was granted to "Nathaniel Edwards [Udward] and his partners, to fish and trade in Greenland for twenty-one years, for the provision of Scotland, and the soap works of the said Nathaniel Edwards with oils." As with earlier

Scottish whaling at Spitsbergen, this attempt also encountered strong resistance from the London whalers. Despite the King's charge "to all the subjects not to impede the said Mr. Nathaniell Udward in the enjoyment hereof, under peril of disobedience and liability in damages to the patentee," the Muscovy Company quickly challenged the license as a direct infringement of its exclusive British whaling patent. While Edwards' grant was honoured, it remained a point of contention for more than a decade. Edwards, however, had neither the ships nor the capital to take full advantage of his patent, and had to turn for assistance to Yarmouth merchants, who willingly agreed to supply both whaling vessels and experienced personnel.⁶

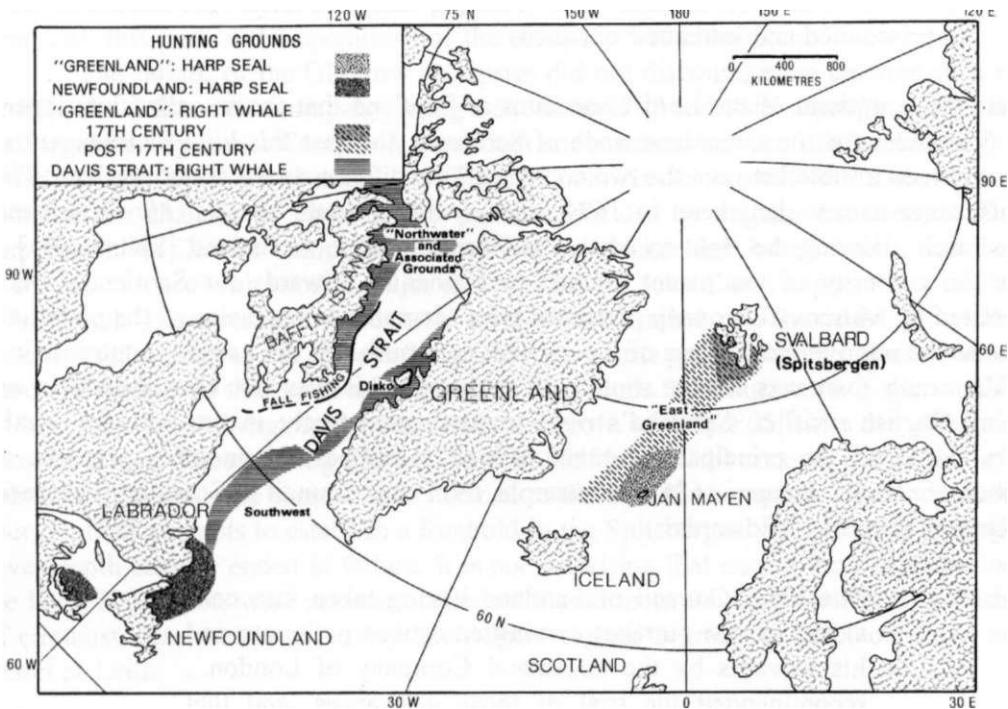


Figure 3: Hunting Grounds.

Source: See figure 1.

Rather than supporting a bona fide Scottish northern whaling operation, Edwards' license simply permitted Yarmouth investors to break the Muscovy monopoly. Although the English Privy Council on 4 April 1627 ordered "Edwards and the others," who were going "to use English ships and subjects" under their Scottish patent, "to be stayed" and to sell their provisions at market rates to "the Muscovia Company," pseudo-Scottish whaling expeditions continued to sail from Yarmouth.⁷ The right of Yarmouth merchants to fit out vessels for the Spitsbergen whale fishery was bitterly contested by the London-

based Greenland Company. In 1629 Edwards appealed to the Scottish Privy Council for compensation in order that "the wrongs and losses susteanned by me and my pairtners may be cognosced and repaired." He also requested that his representatives be permitted to hunt whales in peace because:

it is of truthe that after manie wrongs, insolenceis and oppressiouns committed upon us by the Greinland Companie of Londoun...they have this same yeere, in contempt of his Majesteis letters royall, debarred us forcible from fishing in these waters, seized upon our challops, meddled with all our provisioun being thairintill, and have takin, imprissouned and intreated our men.

Despite the complaint of the Lord Chancellor of Scotland that the so-called interlopers were "patentees for the Greenland trade of Scotland, and that this kind of treatment is likely to breed trouble between the two countries," the differences were not resolved. The dispute came to a violent head in 1634 when two Yarmouth vessels, *Mayflower* and *James*, each claiming the right to whale "at Horneslound in Greenland [Spitsbergen]... under the authority of the patent granted to Nathaniel Edwards for Scotland," were confronted by Muscovy Company personnel who "demanded possession of the place and proceeded to remove the coppers of the men of Yarmouth." In the ensuing confrontation one Yarmouth man was fatally wounded.⁸ Although this was but one episode in an ongoing English conflict, Scotland's right to participate freely in the northern whale fishery remained the principal argument offered to support Yarmouth's presence at Spitsbergen. On 12 January 1635, for example, the Privy Council of Scotland petitioned the King in support of Edwards:

The Privy Council of Scotland having taken into consideration the outrages committed against petitioner and his servants by the Greenland Company of London... recommended the trial of those grievances, and that recompense be made to petitioner, and that he and his servants for the time to come may peacefully continue their trade in Greenland. Since the question now stands between the two nations, petitioners conceive that it is not convenient for their good to be judged by the Council of England only, wherefore they pray a reference to an indifferent committee to be nominated by both nations.

It was eventually concluded that the Scots, or at least Yarmouth on behalf of Edwards, would have the right to fit out a proportion of total British tonnage in the northern whale fishery. Yet this compromise, as Jackson notes, "came too late to save the trade. While

the British had done their best to limit involvement, the Dutch had done everything to attract capital and shipping 'promiscuously' into the trade."

The first "true" Scottish northern whaling venture occurred in 1667 with the establishment of the "Glasgow Soaperie" (1667-1785) in response to legislation imposing a substantial tax on foreign soap while permitting the import of whale oil, the principal ingredient, duty free. Although primarily interested in soap manufacturing, the company tried to procure its own whale oil at Spitsbergen. While details are scanty, several expeditions were fitted out and returned with blubber to be rendered into oil at Greenock. But as Scott explained, the company "soon found that whale-fishing was a disappointing speculation, and the voyages became gradually less frequent. After some of the ships had been lost, this part of the operations of the company was abandoned."

The failure of the Glasgow enterprise did not discourage the creation of a rival venture. In 1682 a Leith company, using a Scottish vessel and local capital and personnel, was organized by James Campbell, "merchant and soapmaker," and others. Although the initial voyage failed, the shareholders financed a two-vessel expedition the next year. To enhance the chances of success, the partners decided to engage experienced Dutch harpooners. As George Campbell, also a Leith soapmaker and James' brother, indicated in correspondence with another major shareholder, Sir John Clerk, expectations ran high: "Our Dutch Harpooners arrived here on Monday...sailed on Thursday last with an excellent gale...[one of the ships called the *Dragon*]...the going of both vessels makes me have good hopes of this years adventure and with Gods Blessing I trust it shall make up on last years loss." *Dragon*, however, earned a profit of only £65 while the other vessel incurred a loss, thus requiring Clerk to send an additional £120 to cover his portion of the debt. Disenchanted, the shareholders decided to dissolve the company." Indeed, since all four Scottish attempts to establish a foothold in the Spitsbergen whale fishery during the seventeenth century ended in failure, it is not surprising that except for a brief period in the late 1720s, Scots were reluctant to renew the northern whaling trade until a fresh set of circumstances, nearly a century later, again enticed a group of investors to fit out a vessel at Leith.

England

The Muscovy Company's attempts to exclude Yarmouth from the Spitsbergen whaling grounds were characteristic of the arguments and disputes which hindered English efforts to develop a substantial northern whaling industry during the seventeenth century. The ongoing conflict between the London-based Greenland Company and the Hull, York, Yarmouth and Leith "interlopers," combined with the disruption caused by the Civil War, abetted the Dutch in gaining control of the Spitsbergen whale fishery. Although a small number of London and Hull whalers continued to prosecute the bay (shore) fishery, by the time declining stocks made it necessary to pursue the Greenland Right whale offshore at the ice-edge the English were unable to make the difficult transition. Between 1660 and

1670, "four or five hundred sail of Dutch and Hamburg ships were yearly visitants to the coast of Spitsbergen, while the English sometimes did not send a single ship."¹²

The virtual cessation of English whaling during the third quarter of the seventeenth century, especially when contrasted with substantial increases in the scale of the Hamburg and Dutch fisheries, became a matter of considerable concern at Westminster. The government recognized the importance of the northern whale fishery as a nursery for hardy seamen, an industry offering employment for a large number of vessels, and a means of increasing trade. But as Scoresby noted,

above all, they saw its importance in a national point of view, where valuable cargoes might be procured without *first cost*, excepting the expenses of the voyage, while, on the contrary, great sums of money were annually sent out of the country and paid to foreign nations, for the purchase of those very articles which might be had out of the sea.

Consequently, an Act was passed in 1672 (25 Charles II cap. 7) permitting English-built vessels, with the master and at least one-half the crew English subjects, to "carry natives of Holland or other expert fishers, to the amount of the other half." As a further encouragement, whale produce thus procured was exempt from all duties, but each ton of oil imported in foreign ships was to be assessed £9 "and the ton of fins £18."¹³

Although these incentives produced "some few private attempts...to revive the trade," English involvement in the northern whale fishery "in seven years after, fell to nothing again." Not until the early 1690s, when Dutch whaling efforts, due to internal instability and military adventures, could not supply whale products (see figure 4) did English entrepreneurs again participate. As Jackson points out:

With prices responding to such a huge cut-back in supply, circumstances were more favourable for import substitution in England than at any time since the Dutch seized control of the trade, while the disruption of normal trade patterns through war encouraged merchants to think that they might be able to invade markets previously dominated by their rivals.¹⁴

The decline of Dutch whaling and the extension of parliamentary concessions in 1690 for an additional four years (2 William and Mary. cap. 4) led to the formation of another joint-stock company "as promising the most probable prospect of the renewal of the trade, and its prosecution with vigour and success." As Scoresby explained, "in the year 1693, Sir William Scaven, and forty-one persons more, having subscribed a joint capital of £40,000 were incorporated by act of Parliament for a term of fourteen years, under the name of 'The Company of Merchants of London Trading to Greenland'." The same problems that had reduced the Dutch trade now hindered operations of the new London-based Greenland Company; the subscription had to be raised to £82,000, "though only £45,000 was actually paid."¹⁵

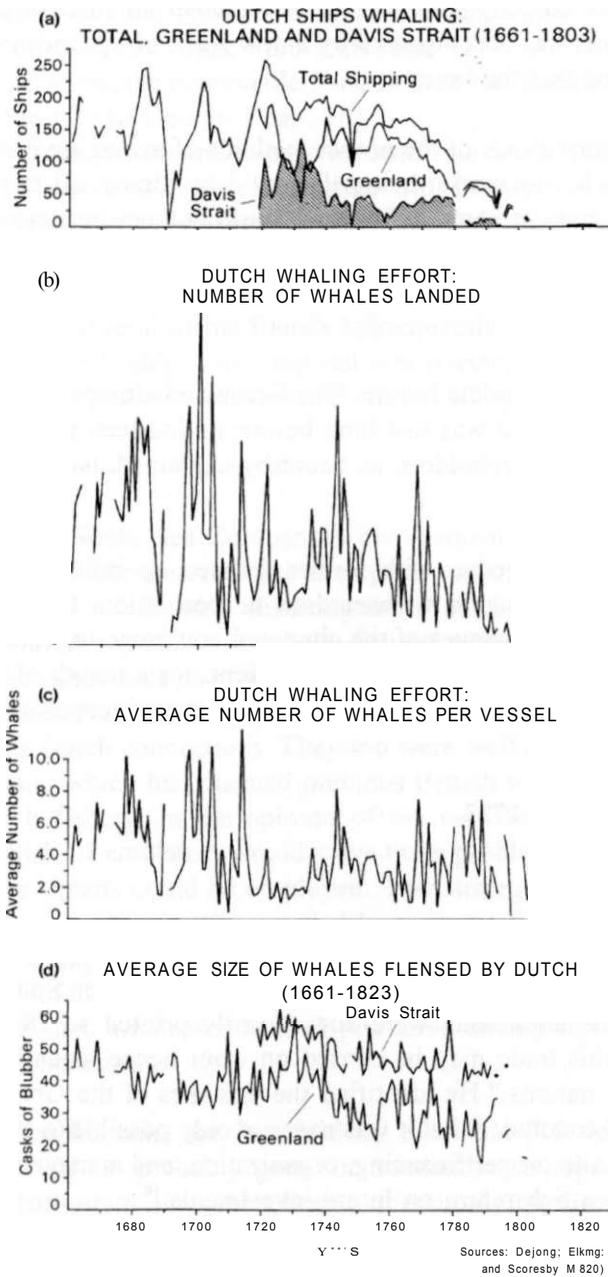


Figure 4: Dutch Whaling.

Sources: See figure 1.

The Greenland Company's attempt to re-establish an English presence on the northern whaling grounds was accompanied by a new spirit of optimism. But these were short-lived. Elking noted that the investors,

wanting due informations of the proper methods of managing that whole affair; and which was worse, being ill serv'd by almost all the people they employed, both at home and abroad, pushing them into extravagant and unnecessary expenses, and irregular measures in everything...were obliged to give over the undertaking, their stock being wasted and embezzel'd.¹⁶

The venture was a complete failure. The Greenland Company did not make one "saving" voyage and "its capital was lost long before its fourteen-year charter was up." The losses sustained by the shareholders, as Scoresby explained, had a lasting impact on British whaling efforts:

This amazing loss, together with former failures, so intimidated other persons from embarking in so hazardous a speculation, that even the extension of all the privileges of the chartered company, together with a free trade to all adventurers, were not sufficient, for a length of time, to encourage the subjects of Great Britain to make any vigorous attempt to renew the fishery.¹⁷

British Whaling Activity to 1733

England

The next concerted English thrust did not begin until the early 1720s, when Henry Elking successfully persuaded the South Sea Company to support another Spitsbergen whaling expedition. Many of his arguments were subsequently printed so "that the nation in general may see, that this trade may be carried on from hence, equally at least, if not better, than from other nations." He identified the mistakes of the Greenland Company two decades earlier and concluded that it was now not only possible to benefit from these past mistakes but also, with proper financing, organization, and management, to avoid the pitfalls and thus ensure a rich return on future investments.¹⁸

Elking's proposals were based upon premises which were, as Jackson contends, "unrealistic, over-optimistic, and misleading, if not exactly dishonest." Yet, he was so persuasive that the company, "after much debate, having before their eyes the former unsuccessful attempts on the part of several companies to engage in the Greenland whale fisheries," finally decided in May 1724 to become active in the northern trade. Parliament, "mortified that this trade, which was enriching the neighbouring nations, should prove so fruitless in the hands of Britons," provided incentives similar to those offered to previous

Greenland ventures: "all the produce of the Greenland Seas was exempted from the existing duties during seven years, from Christmas 1724, on the condition of its being imported in British ships; the commander, and at least one-third of each ship's company, being British subjects" (10 George 1 cap. 16).¹⁹

With Elking as "Agent and Superintendent," the South Sea Company commenced whaling in 1725. Twelve new vessels returned with twenty-five and one-half whales at the end of the first season, an encouraging beginning. All seven subsequent expeditions, however, yielded no profits, and the company, finding that in eight years it had expended an immense sum without any prospect of repayment, decided to withdraw after 1732. Although Elking and several of his friends subsequently requested permission to fit out sixteen of the company's ships, the proposal was rejected; by 17 January 1733, all the South Sea Company's northern whalers and stores had been sold.²⁰

Scotland

At the height of the South Sea Company's involvement in the northern whale fishery there was also a brief but unsuccessful attempt to resurrect the trade in Scotland. The Bogle family, Glasgow merchants with strong family and business connections in Holland, were the principal investors in a whale fishing company on the Firth of Clyde. Encouraged by the initial success of the South Sea Company and the British government's liberal whaling incentives, the Bogles founded a company which they hoped could take advantage of their Dutch connections. They too were well aware of the many problems, identified by Elking which had plagued previous British whaling endeavours.²¹

The Dutch fishery, in the opinion of the new Scottish subscribers, offered a proven model which, if emulated, would solve these problems, especially if experienced "foreign" whaling experts could be employed. This strategy, it was felt, would not only improve their chances of procuring profitable cargoes of whale oil and bone but also provide a valuable opportunity for Scottish seamen to become skilled in the trade. In correspondence with his father in Glasgow, George Bogle, writing from Leiden, recommended that the Dutch whalers he had just hired should have full control over the Scottish whaling operation:

The Captains are Ingadg'd by this time [16 February 1727] are probably gone for Scotland, it is reported in Rotterdam that they both understand the Greenland fishing perfectly weel, and I suppose that if the Company give them the necessary Encouragement, their Characters seem to Deserve they may find it for their advantage, otherways they Can Expect to make nothing by it, for allowing that the Greenland Fishery, is but a very precarious Trade, yet there is more probabil[it]y of the Companys Succeeding in it when they use Right means

than if they should not allow the Captains, (who are Certainly the best Judges of their own abilities) all the Requisites for the Carrying on the Trade for which the Company Cal'd them from their native Company [Country?], in short the Encouraging of Forreigners to settle in Scotland, and to Learn us many Arts and Mysterys we are still ignorant of would tend Much to our Temporal Happiness...! need not say any more upon this subject only, by Mismanadgement or other ways it plainly appears that Scotland, (tho' the most ancient of most Kingdom[s] in Europe,) is at Least a Hundred years behind many of them in their Improvements.²²

But despite substantial capital investment, detailed planning, elaborate organization, the use of skilled Dutch whalers, and official encouragement, the Glasgow Greenland Company shared the same fate as the South Sea Company. The loss of one of its two vessels "in the Ice" during the initial 1727 season severely crippled the venture. While subsequent references to the company are sparse, it appears, as Whyte noted, "that by 1731, at the latest, the Company was no longer active in the Greenland trade to the extent of sending out whaling ships, but contented itself by selling off its equipment and stores — a transaction which was probably more profitable than whaling itself." Almost two decades were to pass before Scottish investors would again be prepared to make a sustained commitment to the development of a locally-based northern whale fishery.²³

The Early Bounty Period, 1733-1749

The failure of the powerful South Sea Company had one positive effect in that politicians were at last motivated to take a more active interest in establishing a viable British whale fishery. In 1732 the company petitioned government for a subsidy. This request was finally granted the next year when Parliament, in response to the company's determination to abandon whaling, granted a bounty "to incite the merchants to speculate in the trade."²⁴

The failure of British companies to challenge Dutch control of whale oil and bone markets made it painfully obvious that the nation would have to "relearn" the trade and that the process would require the full and active support of government. Jackson, in commenting on these issues, explains:

The time was propitious. Walpole's mercantilist government was eager to achieve national self-sufficiency and especially to reduce the trade deficit with Holland. In a century of recurring war, it also craved the strategic advantage of a large naval reserve to be obtained by augmenting the number of ships and seamen during

peacetime. An attempt was made to kill two birds with one stone in 1733 when a bounty was offered to the whaling trade.

The first bounty (6 George II cap. 33) provided an annual bounty of twenty shillings per ton for all whaling ships of two hundred tons and over, fitted out in Great Britain and navigated according to law. Although this subsidy came too late to save the South Sea Company's Greenland venture, it did act as an incentive for a few small-scale, privately-sponsored expeditions, principally by merchants directly involved in the oil trade.²⁵

Unfortunately, neither duty-free imports nor the twenty-shilling bounty offered sufficient inducements to attract a significant number of British investors. In 1740 another Parliamentary Act (13 George II cap. 28) extended the existing privileges to 25 December 1750 and increased the bounty by a further ten shillings per ton. Whaling officers were also protected from the naval press. Yet the British northern whale fishery continued to languish. Custom House returns indicate that the average number of British whaling vessels fitting out annually for the Greenland Sea between 1734/39 and 1740/49 declined from 4.5 to 3.7 – and none were Scottish. The establishment of successful whaling industries in England and Scotland quite clearly required far greater public subsidization, which the British government finally provided in 1749.²⁶

Conclusion

A commitment to monopolies, combined with internal dissent, foreign competition, and lack of government support, prevented the British from retaining control of the northern whale fishery. Large-scale, joint-stock ventures with limited official backing during the last quarter of the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth were unable to mount a serious challenge to Dutch supremacy.

By the mid-eighteenth century, demand was stimulated by the early effects of industrialization, increasing demand for whalebone in women's fashions, and a growing market for oil in soap manufacturing, textiles and domestic, industrial and public lighting. These factors, combined with the rapid decline of Dutch whaling during the second quarter of the century, had a profound influence on oil and bone prices. The importance of the northern whale fishery in national perspective became even more evident to Parliament which, by way of further encouragement, raised the bounty to forty shillings per ton in 1749. This confluence of incentives finally enabled British whaling to enter a period of rapid expansion and eventually to bring first England and then Scotland to the fore as principal suppliers of Arctic whale produce.

NOTES

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Newfoundland Seal Fishery, Arctic/Scottish whaling, and Newfoundland and Labrador Shore-based whaling. He would like to thank A. Small, W.G. Handcock, B. Kinnes, and Lewis R. Fischer for their advice and assistance. C. Conway and G. McManus of the Memorial University Cartography Laboratory drew the figures and S. Wall typed the manuscript. The research was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

1. See, for example, O. Magnus, *Historia De Gentibus Septentrionalibus* (1555: reprint, Copenhagen, 1972) 750-751, 754. Although the economic importance of these strandings declined over time, they continued to represent a welcome addition to often meagre incomes until quite recently. J.G.D. Clark, *Prehistoric Europe: The Economic Basis* (London, 1952), 63, has pointed out that "so long as the productivity of farming remained at a low level the accession of meat and fat represented even by a single whale might materially increase the well-being of the whole countryside." Although the use of whales by early Europeans was paralleled by similar developments in virtually all populated coastal regions frequented by large numbers of cetacean species, the evolution of global commercial whaling was a European refinement. See, for example, F.C. Fraser, "Early Japanese Whaling," *Proceedings of the Linnean Society of London* (11 November 1937), 19-21.

2. For the 1148 charter see Clark, *Prehistoric Europe*, 63. The 1315 decree is discussed in W. Scoresby, Jr., *An Account of the Arctic Regions with a History and Description of the Northern Whale-fishery* (2 vols., 1820; reprint, Newton Abbot, 1969), II, 15-16, who also cites other examples of stranded whales as sufficiently important to warrant different English monarchs claiming rights to oil, bone, and meat. On Scottish monarchs, see G.W.S. Barrow (ed.), *Regesta Regum Scottorum: The Acts of Malcolm IV King of Scots, 1153-1165* (Edinburgh, 1960), 243. For a full discussion of the development of commercial European-based whaling, see C.W. Sanger, "The Origins of the Scottish Northern Whale Fishery" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Dundee, 1986), 47-122.

3. Contemporary Basque sources include M. Ciriquiain-Gaiztarro, *Los Vascoesen la Pescade la Ballena* (San Sebastian, 1961); J.A. Garcia De Cortazar, *Vizcaya en el Siglo-XV* (Bilbao, 1966); and J. Agirreazkuenaga Zigorraga, *et al.*, *Historia de Euskal Herria* (San Sebastian, 1980). In English, the best treatments of the early Basque whale fishery in the Bay of Biscay are W.A. Douglass and J. Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World* (Reno, 1975), 51-57; C. Markham, "On the Whale-Fishery of the Basque Provinces of Spain," *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London*, (13 December 1881), 969-976; and S.F. Harmer, "History of Whaling," *Proceedings of the Linnean Society of London* (Presidential Address, 24 May 1928, 140th session, November 1927 - May 1928), 51-95. For a full discussion of the transfer of the Basque whaling operation to coastal Labrador during the sixteenth century, see Sanger, "Origins," 59-72. The recent attention given to Basque whaling in the Strait of Belle Isle is due almost exclusively to the research of Selma Barkham: see, for example, "The Basques: Filling a Gap in our History between Jacques Cartier and Champlain," *Canadian Geographical Journal*, XCVI (1978), 8-19; "First Will and Testament on the Labrador Coast," *Geographical Magazine*, XLIX (1977), 574-581; and "The Identification of Labrador Ports in Spanish 16th Century Documents," *Canadian Cartographer*, XIV (1977), 1-9.

4. The environmental factors which affected whaling at Davis Strait and East Greenland, as well as the biological underpinnings of the northern whale fishery, have been examined in a series of articles by C.W. Sanger: "'Dodging in the Bight, A Good Place for a Whale:' Environmental Factors Affecting Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Whaling in Davis Strait," *The Northern Mariner/Le Marin du nord*, IV, No. 1 (January 1994), 17-33; "'We Are Now in a Splendid Position for Whales:' Environmental Factors Affecting 19th-century Whaling in Baffin Bay," *Mariner's Mirror*, LXXX, No. 2 (May 1994), 159-177; "'On Good Fishing Ground but Too Early for Whales I Think:' The Impact of Greenland Right Whale (Bowhead) Migration Patterns on Hunting Strategies Employed in the Whale Fishery," *American Neptune*, LI (1991), 221-240; "Changing Resources and Hunt-

ing Locations of Scottish Whaling-Sealing Vessels in the Second Half of the 19th Century," *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, CVII (1991), 187-197; "Environmental Factors Affecting 17th-19th Century Whaling in the Greenland Sea," *Polar Record*, XXVII (1991), 77-86; and "'Saw Several Finners but No Whales:' The Greenland Right Whale (Bowhead) — An Assessment of the Biological Basis of the Northern Whale Fishery during the Seventeenth, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *International Journal of Maritime History*, III, No. 1 (June 1991), 127-154. For full details concerning the struggle for control of the Spitsbergen whale fishery see, C. de Jong, *A Short History of Old Dutch Whaling* (Pretoria, 1978), 1-9; and Scoresby, *Account*, II, 19-55, 98-103, and *passim*. For an excellent description of commercial activity in Holland during the seventeenth century and an examination of the various factors that made Amsterdam the trading centre of Europe, see V. Barbour, *Capitalism in Amsterdam in the 17th Century* (Ann Arbor, 1963), especially chapters 2, 4 and 6.

5. Scoresby, *Account*, II, 116, contends that there were no Scottish attempts to establish a whale fishery prior to 1749. Details of the beginning of continuous Scottish northern whaling are in Sanger, "Origins," 380-437. For full and detailed analysis of the entire range of British involvement in the Arctic and Southern whale fisheries, see G. Jackson, *The British Whaling Trade* (Hamden, CT, 1978); and B. Lubbock, *The Arctic Whalers* (Glasgow, 1937). On the 1618 attempt to organize a Scottish whaling expedition, see, H. Elking, "A View of the Greenland Trade and Whale Fishery, with the National and Private Advantages Thereof," in J.R. McCulloch (ed.), *A Select Collection of Scarce and Valuable Tracts on Commerce* (London, 1859) 93; and S. Purchas, *Purchas: His Pilgrimes* (1625; reprint, London, 1906), XIV, 49. The quote on King James' role is from D. Macpherson, *Annals of Commerce. Manufactures, Fisheries, and Navigation, with Brief Notices of the Arts and Sciences Connected with Them* (3 vols., Edinburgh, 1805), II, 287. The quote on the annulment of the charter is from Scoresby, *Account*, II, 33-34. Damages owed the Scottish East Indian Company, and the withholding of compensation.

are discussed in *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic (CSPD), Reign of James I, 1619-1623* (London, 1858), CXXXII, 434. For additional information concerning the Scottish East India Company's attempt to participate in the northern whale fishery, see W. Scott, *The Constitution and Finance of English, Scottish and Irish Joint Stock Companies to 1720* (1912; 3 vols., reprint, New York, 1951), II, 104.

6. *CSPD, Reign of Charles I, 1625-1626* (London, 1858), XXXII, 386. Edwards' attempt to establish a Scottish presence at Spitsbergen has been investigated fully by M. Conway, *No Man's Land: A History of Spitsbergen from Its Discovery in 1596 to the Beginning of the Scientific Exploration of the Country* (Cambridge, 1906), 144-145, 175-178 and *passim*. G. Jackson, using the same sources, also provides brief accounts: "Government Bounties and the Establishment of the Scottish Whaling Trade," in J. Butt and J.T. Ward (eds.), *Scottish Themes: Essays in Honour of Professor S.G.E. Lythe* (Edinburgh, 1976), 47-48; and *The British Whaling Trade*, 19-20. The quote about Edwards is in *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland, 1625-1627*, Second Series (Edinburgh, 1899), I, 376. As S.G.E. Lythe explained, "the existence of this Company was a plain threat to the English East India and Muscovy Companies, which immediately drew together in opposition to the patent." Lythe, *The Economy of Scotland in its European Setting, 1550-1625* (Edinburgh, 1960), 60.

7. *CSPD, Reign of Charles I, 1627-1628* (London, 1858), LIX, 125. As Lythe, *Economy*, 61, commented, "no project was ever dead so long as Nathaniel Udward lived. Seven years after the cancellation of Cunningham's patent [the 1618 attempt to establish a Scottish whaling partnership with English and Dutch investors: see note 5], Udward petitioned the Scottish Council for leave to fish in Greenland waters."

8. For Edwards' petition, see *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland, 1629-1630*, Second Series (Edinburgh, 1899), III, 355-356. On the Lord Chancellor's complaint, see Conway, *No Man's Land*, 145. For a full report on the dispute

between Yarmouth and Muscovy Company vessels at Spitsbergen in 1634, see M. Conway (ed.), *Early Dutch and English Voyages to Spitsbergen in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1904) 176-179. The quotes about the dispute are from *CSPD, Reign of Chariest, 1634-1635*, (London, 1864), CCLXXV, 231. Other accounts state that more than one Yarmouth man died in the confrontation. See, for example, Conway (ed.), *Early Dutch and English Voyages*, 176-79; and Conway, *No Man's Land*, 175-178.

9. The Privy Council petition is in *CSPD, Reign of Charles I, 1634-1635*, CCLXXXI, 461. On the tonnage compromise, see Conway, *No Man's Land*, 177. Edwards' soapmaking patent was "with the close of the old," granted to "Patrick Mauld of Panmure," along with the "licence to fish and trade in the country and seas of Greenland...for provision of the said soap-works with oils and other materials necessary thereto." R. Chambers, *Domestic Annals of Scotland: From the Reformation to the Revolution* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1859), II, 80-81. On Anglo-Dutch competition, see Jackson, "Government Bounties," 48.

10. According to Scott, *Constitution and Finance*, III, 131, there originally were nine partners who subscribed a total capital of £11,700. Much of the information available on the Glasgow Soaperie's involvement in northern whaling, including Scott's account, is derived from J. M'Ure, *Glasghu Fades: A View of the City of Glasgow* (1736; reprint, 2 vols., Glasgow, 1872), especially II, 873-874.

11. Scottish Record Office (SRO), GD 18/2568, Clerk Papers (CP), Sir John Clerk to James Campbell, 6 October 1682, authorized the payment of "six hundred Pounds Scots" towards the expenses of a Greenland voyage. Various letters, receipts, and other papers also identify George Campbell and Robert Douglas as shareholders. Jackson, *The British Whaling Trade*, 23, calculates that twelve partners invested approximately £1700 sterling in fitting the initial vessel, which brought back oil worth only £525. John Campbell provided Clerk with a receipt for an advance on one-twelfth of a Greenland voyage in two instalments on 23

July 1682; this share amounted to "£760 total." See also SRO, CP, Campbell to Clerk, 30 April 1683; Campbell to Clerk, 1 September 1683; Campbell to Clerk, 17 April 1684.

12. Elking, "A View," 88. For additional information on the Muscovy Company's attempts to prevent interlopers from infringing upon its whaling monopoly at Spitsbergen during the seventeenth century, see, Conway, *No Man's Land*; Scoresby, *Account*, II; and Scott, *Constitution and Finance*, II, 69-75. On the move to offshore whaling, see Sanger, "Origins," 42-357. An indication of the nature of English whaling at Spitsbergen during the 1650s is provided in the accounts of two Hull whalers. Although the Dutch had by that date abandoned the land operation in favour of the offshore pursuit of the Greenland Right whale, Anderson and Gray's descriptions clearly indicate that the English still restricted most of their efforts to the less productive inshore waters. M. Conway, "Some Unpublished Spitsbergen Mss," *Geographical Journal*, VI (1900), 628-636. For specific analysis of the reluctance of the English to make the transition from bay to offshore whaling, see Conway, *No Man's Land*, 200-202. On the 1660s, see Scoresby, *Account*, II, 56; Macpherson, *Annals*, II, 544; and T. Sheppard and J. Suddaby, *Hull Whaling Relics and Arctic or Historical Records of 250 Years* (Hull, 1906), 4.

13. Scoresby, *Account*, II, 57 and 491-505. On duties, see Macpherson, *Annals*, II, 563. For summaries of legislation affecting British northern whaling, see J.T. Jenkins, *A History of the Whale Fisheries: From the Basque Fisheries of the Tenth Century to the Hunting of the Finner Whale at the Present Date* (1921; reprint, London, 1971), 177-206.

14. Scoresby, *Account*, II, 58. Scott, *Constitution and Finance*, I, 302, records that about 1680 "a small company was attempting to revive whaling, though indications were not wanting that this venture was not likely to succeed." See also Macpherson, *Annals*, II, 563. For additional details on the decline of Dutch whaling during the late 1680s

and early 1690s, see de Jong, *Short History*, 9-14; and Jackson, *The British Whaling Trade*, 35.

15. Scoresby, *Account*, II, 58-59; Scott, *Constitution and Finance*, II, 379; Macpherson, *Annals*, II, 684; J. Leslie, *et al*, *Narrative of Discovery and Adventure in the Polar Seas and Regions: with Illustrations of their Climate, Geology, and Natural History; and an Account of the Whale-fishery* (2nd ed., Edinburgh, 1831), 369.

16. Elking, "A View," 89. Elking also provides a more detailed explanation for the failure of the Greenland Company on 89-91.

17. Jackson, *The British Whaling Trade*, 36; see, also Macpherson, *Annals*, II, 684; Scoresby, *Account*, II, 60-61.

18. Elking first made representation to Sir John Eyles, Sub-Governor of the South Sea Company, at the beginning of 1721. In a letter to Elking dated 13 July 1722, Eyles recorded: "It is now seventeen months since you first discours'd me upon the subject of the whale-fishing." Elking, "A View," 67. The South Sea Company, which received its royal charter on 8 September 1711, was established to restore public credit and to help eliminate the national debt, which at the time amounted to almost ten million pounds. The company was awarded a monopoly of trade to the southern seas. For more details, see Macpherson, *Annals*, III, 18-22. Eyles, convinced by Elking's representation, approached the Court of Directors of the South Sea Company, which accepted the proposal because of "the advantage this trade might be to the South-Sea Company, [and] the national service they would do by carrying it on." Elking, "A View," 68. Certain reservations were expressed by several directors, "without whose concurrence it is impossible to proceed." *Ibid.*, 69. Eyles, therefore, requested Elking to "lay before the Court of Directors, in writing, the substance of what you from time to time have said to me, upon my examining into the nature of this trade." This document, which Elking also had published to gain public support for his proposal, provides, along with Scoresby's work, the best account of early

British attempts to prosecute the northern whale fishery. See also *ibid.*, 64 and 88-98.

19. Jackson, *The British Whaling Trade*, 41; Jenkins, *History*, 180; British Museum (BM), Add. Ms. 25,502, "Court Minutes, South Sea Company: 4 February 1724-26 June 1726," Meeting of Directors, 14 May 1724; Leslie, *et al*, *Narrative*, 370; Scoresby, *Account*, II, 67-68.

20. BM, Add. Ms. 25,502, "Court Minutes, South Sea Company: 4 February 1724-26 June 1726," Meetings of Directors, 18 June and 30 July 1724; BM, Add Ms 25,505, "Court Minutes, South Sea Company: 25 February 1731-30 January 1733," Meetings of Directors, 25 July and 14 November 1732 and 17 January 1733; Macpherson, *Annals*, III, 130-131; Jackson, *The British Whaling Trade*, 40-47; Jenkins, *History*, 180-184; Leslie, *et al*, *Narrative*, 370-371; and Scoresby, *Account*, II, 66-72. An example of how the company's northern fleet fared in this period is provided in an excerpt from a letter Elking sent to Sir H. Slone towards the end of the 1726 whaling season. At the beginning of August he wrote that "17 of our Greenland ships are arrived as yet: brought 12 verry [sic] good and large whales, of the others we have no certain news yett [sic]." BM, Slone Papers, Ms. 4048, f. 183, Henry Elking to Sir H. Slone, 6 August 1726.

21. For information on this brief Scottish excursion into the northern whale fishery, see Glasgow, Mitchell Library (ML), Bogle Papers (BP), George Bogle Letter Book (1701-1784), George Bogle to Carstairs and Konink, merchants, Rotterdam, 13 November 1726. H.B. Whyte, who has investigated the role of the Bogle family in the Greenland trade, offers an excellent assessment of this venture in "Whaling" (Unpublished ms., ML, n.d.). See also, Jackson, *The British Whaling Trade*, 43-44. Four of the original twenty-two subscribers (listed in the Burgh Court Register, March 1728) in the new whaling company were members of the Bogle family. Whyte, "Whaling," 5. George Bogle was one of the important new Glasgow "tobacco merchants;" see T.M. Devine, "Colonial Profits and Industrial Investment in Scotland, c. 1700-1815" (Unpublished ms., ML, n.d.), 12. Elking, "A

View," 96, specifically states that there were many Scottish sailors serving on Dutch vessels and that Scotland was highly dependent on the import of whale oil.

22. ML, BP, George Bogle Letter Book, George Bogle to Robert Bogle, 16 February 1727.

23. *Ibid.*, George Bogle to Robert Bogle, 18 July 1727; Whyte, "Whaling," 7. Scoresby, *Account*, II, 116, unaware of these Scottish attempts to enter the northern trade during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, stated that it did "not appear, that any attempt was made by the inhabitants of *SCOTLAND* in the whale-fishery of Greenland or Davis' Straits, until the bounty system was established. Some merchants of Edinburgh, who had formed themselves into a company in September 1749, for the purpose of trying this fishery, sent out a ship from Leith, being the first from Scotland, in the following spring."

24. BM, Add. Ms. 25,505, "Court Minutes, South Sea Company: 25 February 1731-30 January 1733," Meeting of Directors, 10 March 1732; Scoresby, *Account*, II, 109.

25. Macpherson, *Annals*, III, 198-199; Jackson, "Government Bounties," 49; Scoresby, *Account*, II, 72-73, *passim*.

26. Scoresby, *Account*, II, 73; Macpherson, *Annals*, III, 224; Jenkins, *History*, 306. A 1767 report indicated that "from the breaking up of the South Sea Company, till the Year 1749, when the 40s. Ton Bounty was granted, only Three Ships on a Medium were fitted out yearly." BM, Liverpool Papers, Add. Ms. 38,440, vol. 151, f. 189.