

P16 British Fisheries Society

RECORDS' IDENTITY STATEMENT

Reference number: GB1741/P16

Alternative reference number:

Title: British Fisheries Society

Dates of creation: 1819-1893

Level of description: Fonds

Extent: 2 files

Format: paper

RECORDS' CONTEXT

Name of creators: British Fisheries Society

Administrative history: 'The British Society for Extending the Fisheries and Improving the Sea Coasts of this Kingdom', known in short (only officially from 1857) as 'the British Fisheries Society', was incorporated by the British Fisheries Society Act 1786 (26 Geo. III, c.106) for the purpose of subscribing a joint stock and therewith to purchase lands and build thereon free towns, villages and fishing stations in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, in order to improve the fisheries, agriculture and manufactures there and to put a stop to emigration. Subscribers from all over the country bought shares in the Society. Its headquarters were in London, but its interests were in Scotland, although fishing in general was a concern in the UK in the late 18th century. The Society purchased land in Lochbay, Canna, Tobermory and Ullapool for the construction of villages whose economy was focused on fishing.

In Caithness the Society established a local station at Staxigoe, north east of Wick. In 1803 it purchased land south of Wick, and in 1808 began to construct a harbour on the south side of the river at Wick which was to lead to the growth of Pulteneytown, a model fishing village, much of which was purpose built by Thomas Telford. This and the creation of an outer harbour, commenced in 1824, consolidated the success of the herring industry in and around Wick. In 1833 two years after the outer harbour was completed Wick was second only to

Fraserburgh in importance as a Scottish Fishing Station.

From about 1810, the Society's interests were much less with fisheries than with their settlements. Other government-aided undertakings had fisheries duties: the Fishery Board for Scotland, constituted under the Herring Fishery (Scotland) Act 1808 (48 Geo. III, c.110), entailed the appointment of fishery officers to manage its concerns. In 1837 the Society sold Lochbay; in 1844 it sold Tobermory; and in 1847 it sold Ullapool. This left Pulteneytown as the sole object of its attention.

Further improvements to the harbour were needed but even after 41 boats were lost in a storm in 1848 the British Fisheries Society could not raise enough money. Finally a grant was secured for a less ambitious plan but storms damaged initial constructions and the building was abandoned in 1873. These setbacks were one reason for the eventual dissolution of the Society: in 1880 Pulteney Harbour Trust took responsibility for harbour affairs (under the Pulteney Harbour Trust Act 1879: 42 & 43 Vict., ch.cxlx), leaving only administration of the town of Pulteneytown for the Society's Directors to do.

The British Fisheries Society Act 1883 (46 & 47 Vict., ch.ix) gave the Directors power to bring the Society to an end by disposal of its residual property. Over the next few years shareholders received dividends, and the Directors prepared for the property sales, which were finally accomplished in 1892. The final AGM of the Society was held in March 1893 and in June the capital was distributed amongst the shareholders: the Society ceased to exist.

Custodial history:

Received from Wick Library, 15 Sep 1995

RECORDS' CONTENT

Description:

Appraisal:

Accruals:

RECORDS' CONDITION OF ACCESS AND USE

Access:

Open

Closed until:

Access conditions:

Copying: Copying permitted within standard Copyright Act parameters

Finding aids: Available in Caithness Archive Service searchroom

ALLIED MATERIALS

Related material: Wick Harbour Trust records and Customs and Excise collection

Publication:

Notes:

Date of catalogue: 7 Mar 2011

Ref.	Description	Dates
P16/1	Annual Reports	1879-1893
P16/1/1	Annual Report and Statement of Accounts including details of the Annual General Meeting, a brief statement of works for previous year, the financial position of the Society and accounts for Pultneytown Harbour until 1879. Also includes a report on the Harbour Works in Wick Bay and an Engineers report on the securing of the end of the breakwater in Pultneytown Harbour [1 sheet]	1873
P16/1/2	Annual Report and Statement of Accounts including details of the Annual General Meeting, a brief statement of works for previous year, the financial position of the Society and accounts for Pultneytown Harbour until 1879. Also includes a report on the removal of 6,000 tons of stones which were removed from Wick Bay [1 sheet]	1874
P16/1/3	Annual Report and Statement of Accounts including details of the Annual General Meeting, a brief statement of works for previous year, the financial position of the Society and accounts for Pultneytown Harbour until 1879. Also includes report on the reduction in the amount of Harbour Dues being received due to the impact of the Caithness and Sutherland Railway [1 sheet]	1875
P16/1/4	Annual Report and Statement of Accounts including details of the Annual General Meeting, a brief statement of works for previous year, the financial	1876

	position of the Society and accounts for Pultneytown Harbour until 1879. Also includes a preliminary report on a breach to the North Pier of the Old Harbour of Pultneytown caused by bad weather [1 sheet]	
P16/1/5	Annual Report and Statement of Accounts including details of the Annual General Meeting, a brief statement of works for previous year, the financial position of the Society and accounts for Pultneytown Harbour until 1879. Also includes a proposal for transferring the management of the Pultneytown harbour to a local trust and a Statement of Accounts ... <i>as between the British Fisheries Society and its Harbours and Breakwaters in the Bay of Wick, from 1809 to the end of 1878</i> [2 sheets]	1878
P16/1/6	Annual Report and Statement of Accounts including details of the Annual General Meeting, a brief statement of works for previous year, the financial position of the Society and accounts for Pultneytown Harbour until 1879. Also includes brief details of the Act of Parliament, passed on 21 July 1879 which transferred the management of Pultneytown Harbour to local trustees [1 sheet]	1879
P16/1/7	Annual Report and Statement of Accounts including details of the Annual General Meeting, a brief statement of works for previous year and the financial position of the Society [1 sheet]	1880
P16/1/8	Annual Report and Statement of Accounts including details of the Annual General Meeting, a brief statement of works for previous year and the financial position of the Society [1 sheet]	1881
P16/1/9	Annual Report and Statement of Accounts including details of the Annual General Meeting, a brief statement of works for previous year and the financial position of the Society [1 booklet, 1 sheet]	1884
P16/1/10	Annual Report and Statement of Accounts including details of the Annual General Meeting, a brief statement of works for previous year and the financial position of the Society. Also includes mention that complaints have been made due to the inconvenience caused by the use of public thoroughfares for herring curing in Pulteneytown [1 booklet]	1885
P16/1/11	Annual Report and Statement of Accounts including details of the Annual General Meeting, a brief statement of works for previous year and the financial position of the Society [1 booklet]	1886

P16/1/12	Annual Report and Statement of Accounts including details of the Annual General Meeting, a brief statement of works for previous year and the financial position of the Society. Also includes decision by the Society to sell property and divide the proceeds among shareholders [1 booklet]	1887
P16/1/13	Annual Report and Statement of Accounts including details of the Annual General Meeting, a brief statement of works for previous year and the financial position of the Society. Also includes the comment that <i>The year 1888 has been more favourable to the fishing industry on which the welfare of the Pultney Town estate so largely depends, than immediately preceding seasons</i> [1 booklet]	1888
P16/1/14	Annual Report and Statement of Accounts including details of the Annual General Meeting, a brief statement of works for previous year and the financial position of the Society [1 booklet]	1889
P16/1/15	Annual Report and Statement of Accounts including details of the Annual General Meeting, a brief statement of works for previous year and the financial position of the Society [1 paper]	1890
P16/1/16	Annual Report and Statement of Accounts including details of the Annual General Meeting, a brief statement of works for previous year and the financial position of the Society [1 paper]	1891
P16/1/17	Annual Report and Statement of Accounts including details of the Annual General Meeting, a brief statement of works for previous year and the financial position of the Society. Also includes detail of the sale of the Society's whole estates and property to Mr John Usher of Norton for the sum of £20,000 [1 sheet]	1892
P16/1/18	Annual Report and Statement of Accounts including details of the Annual General Meeting, a brief statement of works for previous year and the financial position of the Society. Also includes the final report of the Directors as the Society was dissolved in this year [1 sheet]	1893
P16/2	Membership lists	1819-1874
P16/2/1	Booklet alphabetically listing members of the Society denoting county of reference for each individual and including the number of shares held by each individual, with annotations [1 booklet]	1819

P16/2/2	Booklet alphabetically listing members of the Society denoting county of reference for each individual and including the number of shares held by each individual, with annotations (2 copies) [2 booklets]	1874
P16/3	Correspondence	1879
P16/3/1	Draft unsigned letter regarding an article in the John O Groats Journal where a Mr Reid has <i>...publicly declared you to be the holder of more shares of the B[ritish] F[isheries] Society than an[y] held in Caithness...</i> [1 sheet]	27 Feb 1879