

## **P172 Wick Herring Queen Festival RECORDS' IDENTITY STATEMENT**

Reference number: GB1741/P172

Alternative reference number:

Title: Wick Herring Queen Festival

Dates of creation: 1937-1949

Level of description: Fonds

Extent: 7 items

Format: Paper, photograph

### **RECORDS' CONTEXT**

Name of creators: The Wick Riverside and Town Improvements Committee

Administrative history: The very first Wick Herring Queen Pageant was held on July the 17<sup>th</sup>, 1937. It was a particularly bad year for the fishing. Wick Riverside and Town Improvements Committee organised the pageant and the object was to put on an entertaining show, advertise the town, and fundraise for local charities. Profits went to the Wick Riverside and Town Improvements Committee and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

The first thing the committee did was choose a Queen and her court. The Queen was a pupil at Wick High and was chosen by her fellow pupils. The Queen was Reta Shearer, the daughter of a fisherman from Rose Street. Her attendants were Mary More from Willowbank, and Cathie Miller from Cairndhuna Terrace. The rest of the court came from the 3 Wick Primary Schools. Because it was the height of summer, there were lots of visitors in the town, and special trains and buses were put on to convey hundreds of people from all over the county and further afield to the pageant.

The Queen arrived by sea, and people gathered on the Braehead and at the harbour to see her arrive on herring boat 'Drift Fisher'. They cheered as she was

welcomed to shore by Provost John Harper. The Queen wore a silver gown with a silver train of herring net. She passed through a guard of honour of fisher girls.

A specially designed carriage shaped like a seashell was made for the Queen. It was drawn by six grey horses. The colours green, blue and silver had been chosen for the costumes to represent the sea. The Queen's gown was made of silver lamé with bands of green and blue velvet at the neck and foot. Her train was a herring net that had been silverised and laid over an under-train of green silk with herring painted on.

The ladies in waiting were dressed in green and blue with silver accessories and fish net gloves.

Riders from Westerseat Riding School accompanied the Queen on the procession. They wore green tunics and cloaks with silver boots and silver herring in their green caps.

Following the Queen's carriage was the Provost and Magistrates, then a long procession of horse drawn and motor vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians. The route took in Grant St, to the east end of Pulteneytown, then Kinnaird St, Macrae St, Northcote St and Francis St. The procession continued along Bridge Street and High St then went along Henrietta St, Girnigoe St, Louisburgh St and Kirkhill, back to High St before heading to Smith Terrace for the crowning ceremony. A platform was erected at the Pilot House. Reta was crowned by Mrs Sutherland, wife of Captain George Sutherland, the Harbourmaster.

The crown itself was made of tinned copper with Ensign Armorial of Wick surrounded by symbols of the town's connection with the sea and the fishing industry. The Herring Queen crown, cup and cloak are on display at Wick Heritage Museum.

There were no festivals from 1940 to 1948 but by then the herring fishing in Wick was in terminal decline. The last

Herring Queen was elected in 1953.

Custodial history: Wick Players, Wick Library

## RECORDS' CONTENT

Description: Wick Herring Queen Festival programmes and photographs

Appraisal:

Accruals:

## RECORDS' CONDITION OF ACCESS AND USE

Access: Open

Closed until: -

Access conditions: Available within the Archive searchroom

Copying: Copying permitted within standard Copyright Act parameters

Finding aids: Available in Archive searchroom

## ALLIED MATERIALS

Related material: P874 Ray Richards Collection  
WS/15 Wick Herring Queen and Gala  
SUTH/6/3/10 Herring Queen and Court photographs  
P1046 Wick Gala Queens

Publication:

Notes:

Date of catalogue: Sep 2025

Ref.	Description	Dates
<b>P172</b>	<b>Wick Herring Queen</b>	<b>1937-1949</b>
P172/1	Photograph of the first Herring Queen, Reta Shearer, arriving at Wick Harbour with attendants Mary More and Cathie Miller (1 item)	17 Jul 1937
P172/2	Photograph of Wick Herring Queen, Reta Shearer, with attendants Mary More and Cathie Miller in a specially designed carriage shaped like a seashell (1	17 Jul 1937

	item)	
P172/3	Photograph of Wick Herring Queen Alice Taylor being helped onto Wick Harbour quay by Provost Harper (1 item)	Jul 1938
P172/4	Photograph of the crowning ceremony of Herring Queen Alice Taylor (1 item)	Jul 1938
P172/5	Wick Herring Queen Souvenir Programme (2 volumes)	1939
P172/6	Wick Herring Queen Souvenir Programme (1 volume)	1949