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Acheson/Morrison's Haven

What Came and Went and How?

Julie Aitken



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FOREWORD

This series of books has been specifically developed to provide an authoritative briefing to all who seek to enjoy the Industrial Heritage Museum at the old Prestongrange Colliery site. They are complemented by learning guides for educational leaders. All are available on the Internet at <http://www.prestongrange.org> the Baron Court's website.

They have been sponsored by the Baron Court of Prestongrange which my family and I re-established when I was granted access to the feudal barony in 1998. But the credit for the scholarship involved and their timely appearance is entirely attributable to the skill with which Annette MacTavish and Jane Bonnar of the Industrial Heritage Museum service found the excellent authors involved and managed the series through from conception to benefit in use with educational groups.

The Baron Court is delighted to be able to work with the Industrial Heritage Museum in this way. We thank the authors one and all for a job well done. It is one more practical contribution to the Museum's role in helping its visitors to lead their lives today and tomorrow with a better understanding of the lives of those who went before us all. For better and for worse, we stand on their shoulders as we view and enjoy our lives today, and as we in turn craft the world of tomorrow for our children. As we are enabled through this series to learn about the first millennium of the barony of Prestongrange we can clearly see what sacrifices were made by those who worked, and how the fortunes of those who ruled rose and fell. Today's cast of characters may differ, and the specifics of working and ruling have surely changed, but the issues remain the same.

I mentioned above the benefit-in-use of this series. The Baron Court is adamant that it shall not be 'one more resource' that lies little used on the shelves. A comprehensive programme of onsite activities and feedback reports by users has been designed by Annette MacTavish and Jane Bonnar and is available at our website <http://www.prestongrange.org> – and be sure to note the archaic use of the 'u' in the baronial name.

But we do also confidently expect that this series will arouse the interest of many who are not directly involved in

educational or indeed museum services. Those who live locally and previously worked at Prestongrange, or had relatives and ancestors there (as I did in my maternal grandfather William Park who worked in the colliery), will surely find the information both fascinating and rewarding to read. It is very much for them also to benefit – and we hope they will.

Dr Gordon Prestoungrange
Baron of Prestoungrange
July 1st 2000

Julie Aitken

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Landward view of Morison's Haven Harbour featuring trading ships or 'bushes'

Courtesy of Mrs A. Allan

INTRODUCTION

The site of the harbour at Morrison's Haven lies between the towns of Musselburgh and Prestonpans at the western end of the county of East Lothian, Scotland. The harbour site and environs form part of an area of land reclamation by the South of Scotland Electricity Board (now ScottishPower). As part of the coastal walkway, the site is maintained by the county's Ranger Service and also links into the nearby Prestongrange Mining Museum which provides an interesting and informative diversion for walkers of the route. If you are unaware of its existence, the harbour is easy to overlook particularly in summer when the remains of its stone piers are clothed in a mantle of brambles and wild flowers. The wooden pillars, which supported the timber wharf, now protrude from the grass in what was the harbour basin. They are easy to mistake for an addition to the wooden barrier erected along the roadside by East Lothian Council in a bid to deter travelling folk from inhabiting the grassy expanse between the road and the seashore. Clearly visible down on the beach is the roundel which was at one time the base for the light at the harbour mouth, and what looks at first sight to be nothing more than a strip of rocks, proves on closer inspection to be the ruinous remnants of the pier. The beach around the harbour is also a testimony to the past industries of the immediate area – the sand abounds with pottery shards, oyster shells, fireclay bricks and shale (a by-product of coal mining), all of which were exported via Morrison's Haven. The harbour's life began and ended with coal and fishing. From the outset coal was loaded and shipped from its piers and fishermen sheltered their boats in its safe embrace. It is therefore fitting that its life should have ended with the demise of mining in the locality and with the ruined skeleton of a fishing vessel buried amidst the rubble that fills the basin.

Morrison's Haven was home to a harbour for almost five hundred years. Originally known as Newhaven, this name was used intermittently until the 18th century, along with the name Acheson's Haven after Alexander Atkinson of Salt-Prestoun (now Prestonpans). In 1700, William Morison,¹ then the

¹ When used in reference to the harbour, the name "Morrison" is spelt with two "r's". In reference to the family of that name it is spelt with one 'r' – "Morison".

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owner of Prestongrange Estates, applied to The Scottish Parliament for permission to build a Harbour at Morrison's² Haven and so we arrive at the name by which the area is still known today.

Prestonpans was an important industrial area in the 18th century and, as such, its port was equally significant. Its varying fortunes reflect events in Scotland, and the characters linked to the harbour were of importance in Scottish history. The significance of Morrison's Haven is difficult to appreciate when looking at the overgrown, grassy site that is all that remains of the harbour today.

FOREIGN TRADE IN MEDIEVAL SCOTLAND

The sea routes used by the Scottish merchant ships from the 12th century onwards were first navigated by the Vikings, a race of warrior seamen from Scandinavia. During the 8th to 10th centuries, the Vikings raided the coasts of Europe, conquering and settling all over the British Isles and colonising the shoreline of France. The seafaring skills of the Vikings were legendary. Viking folklore tells of the "Saga of Eric the Red" who made an epic voyage from Iceland to Greenland and of his son Leif's journey to the country today known as North America – 500 years before Columbus. The Vikings, through marriage and time, became integrated into the communities they had once invaded.³ The Viking influence in Scotland is far reaching, but their most important legacy, from the point of this discussion of foreign trade, are the sea routes they established for the purpose of invasion, which were later used by traders and craftsmen looking for overseas trade.

By the 12th century the Burghs of Berwick and Perth were Scotland's most important centres of foreign trade, exporting wool and woollen cloth produced by the Burgh's Scots, Fleming, Anglo-Norman and French inhabitants.⁴ Scotland's economy was firmly rural based and this was reflected in the export trade which largely consisted of products from the

² Ibid

³ Kenneth mac Alpin, King of the Scots, married one of his daughters to the Norwegian King Olaf III of Dublin.

⁴ The first Scottish towns to develop were based on the English burgh system, introduced by David I. The term "Burgh" granted legal entitlements to the town including the right to trade and to not have to pay tolls throughout kingdom.

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rural 'hinterlands', particularly wool and hides. This was a time when town and country were very much dependent upon one another for survival. The countryside produced goods and labour and the towns purchased both. Central to the whole system were the monasteries with their sheep farms in the country and their grain stores in the towns.⁵

This system continued largely intact for several centuries until the 16th century, and even then Scotland's economy remained predominantly pastoral, relying upon the export of its produce for revenue to import manufactured goods not available at home. However, by the 1580's the product range had expanded to include coal and salt, both of which were being exported to the Netherlands in increasing quantities. The 1590's saw Scots trade well established and the merchant vessels, in order to search out new markets for their trading purposes, ventured as far south as Spain and north into Sweden. The main export trade remained in wool, skins, hides and other animal products such as tallow, which was used in the production of candles, while manufactured goods and luxury foodstuffs continued to be imported. Scotland also exported 'hawkers', rogue traders better known in the Baltic ports they favoured as "Kramerwaren". They traded in cheap, coarse, woollen cloth made in Dundee for export from the majority of east coast ports.

Thus the state of late sixteenth Scottish international trade was becoming increasingly more sophisticated than when the Port of Newhaven, to the west of Prestonpans, began its life in 1526.⁶

FROM NEWHAVEN TO ACHESON'S HAVEN

The first official recording of a harbour at Prestongrange was made in April, 1526, when James V, whilst visiting Newbattle Abbey, granted the monks 'licentium spedialem unum portum in loco nuncupate Gilbertis-draucht infra dictas terras (i.e. de Prestoungrange) edificandi', or, permission to build a harbour at Prestongrange. This charter was ratified by Parliament in

⁵ Lynch M. *Scotland: A New History* (1984), p. 63

⁶ The trade of Morrison's Haven, both exports and imports are dealt with throughout this essay, complimented by a comprehensive list of imports and exports attached as Appendix II.

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October of that year. Although it is now recognised that the monks wanted a harbour to facilitate the shipping of their coal and salt, the stated purpose for building the harbour was to provide a 'safe haven' for local fishermen who, in the absence of one, had experienced loss of boats and lives. The harbour at this time was known as Newhaven and the presence of a fishing fleet may indicate that some sort of shelter already existed which the monks simply wanted to upgrade. The adversity faced by the fishermen and the need for a 'safe haven' was further confirmed in 1552, by a charter proclaiming a new burgh at nearby Preston which stated that "...the fishermen beyond the sea shore below the lands of Preston and Prestonpans have in past times sustained considerable losses".⁷

From 1540 onwards, Newbattle Abbey, in a bid to raise funds to meet its growing tax obligations to the crown, was forced to feu a large proportion of its lands.⁸ Therefore, in 1541 when James V confirmed the charter of 1526, a second charter was included, granted by the Abbey, in favour of one Alexander Atkinson (Acheson) giving him feu-ferme of the harbour.⁹ The charter stated that Acheson was permitted to build the harbour (approximate size being one Scots acre, or one and a quarter of today's acres), repair boats there and operate a tide mill. Acheson was also given a 'lie grene' [field], adjoining the harbour on which to erect buildings as required. Indeed, a map of 1850 includes a building named as 'Aitchieson's Lodge' lying just to the east of the harbour.¹⁰ Acheson is described in the second charter as a "servitor" of the Abbey, implying that aside from being the sitting tenant and feuar of the harbour, he was also in service to the Abbey. Assuming building work began around 1541, it was evidently completed quickly to allow its proprietor to begin trading – in 1542 Alexander Acheson, as 'custumar', was in a position to present accounts.¹¹ His accounts for 1544 show that the goods that passed through the port that year, were fish, hides, salt, tar and lead.¹² The fish, hides and salt would be exported, the tar (used to repair boats) and lead imported. Success did not

⁷ 720 Register of Great Seals of Scotland: 10th November 1552

⁸ Lynch, *op cit.*, p. 182

⁹ That is to say owner's rights over the harbour and its business for the term of his lease

¹⁰ See Appendix V – Fergusson's Map.

¹¹ Exchequer Roll, Vol. XVII (1537–42), p. 458

¹² Exchequer Roll, Vol. XVIII (1543–56), p. 68

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continue for Acheson, as foreign trade at the harbour was put on hold for a while in 1563 when the Scottish Parliament, concerned at “the derth and scantiness of fewell” prohibited the export of coal.¹³

During the Acheson's tenancy, ownership of the harbour passed by Royal Charter from the Monks of Newbattle into the hands of Mark Ker, Earl of Lothian, in 1587.¹⁴ What happened to the Acheson family does not seem to have been recorded but their link with the harbour that shared their name and appears to have been in their hands for at least 50 years seems to have ended around 1602 when they simply disappeared from the area. One local theory is that the two Acheson brothers who jointly ran the concern at the beginning of the 17th century, for some unknown reason sold their very profitable shipping business and emigrated with their respective families to America. It is even suggested that Dean Acheson, the USA's Secretary for Foreign Affairs in the 1950's, is a direct descendant of these very men!¹⁵ At any rate, while customs accounts for Acheson's Haven were produced regularly throughout the sixteenth century, by 1602 the harbour features in a report listing ports with no customar,¹⁶ indicating that the Acheson's had indeed moved on to pastures new. Parish records show that in 1602, two Acheson brothers were elders in the church and session records show that between them they had a number of children baptised there.¹⁷ Their memory lives on in the modern town of Prestonpans by virtue of a street bearing their name – Acheson Drive.

FROM ACHESON'S HAVEN TO MORRISON'S HAVEN

In 1609, John Morison of Edinburgh, a Bailie, purchased the Estates of Prestongrange from the executors of the 2nd Earl of Lothian, Robert, the son and heir of the aforementioned Mark Ker.¹⁸ It was under the stewardship of John Morison's grand-

¹³ Edinburgh Evening News 22nd May 1957

¹⁴ Balfour, P. J. (ed) *The Scots Peerage* 1907 p. 456

¹⁵ For this information I am grateful to Mr John Hogg, local historian and resident of Prestonpans

¹⁶ Register of the Privy Council of Scotland, Vol. VI (1599–1604), p. 373

¹⁷ McNeill, P. *Prestonpans & Vicinity* (1902) p. 253

¹⁸ Gray & Jamieson (Eds) *East Lothian Biographies* p. 99

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son, William that the harbour was to enjoy one of its busiest periods with vessels trading from as far afield as Maryland, North America. John Morison's son and heir, Alexander, purchased the lands and barony of Prestongrange in 1617,¹⁹ presumably when he inherited the estate from his father. Alexander Morison was an Edinburgh Advocate, academic and one time Rector of Edinburgh University. His friend Jupiter Carlyle of Inveresk wrote of Morison that he was,

“...so imaginary and credulous as to believe that close by his creek of Morison's Haven was the place where St John wrote the Apocalypse, because some old vaults had been discovered in digging a mill-race for a mill that went by sea-water.”^{20, 21}

Morison's belief was grounded in the fact that the Masons belonging to the “Ludg of Aitchison's heavine” met annually at the harbour on St John's Day. Minutes of a meeting of master tradesmen held at Falkland on the 31st October 1636 record a discussion on the Lodge at “Atcheson-Haven”. Their concern was to put an end to “certain abuses in the ‘airtis and craftis’ of masons, wrights, shipwrights, coopers, glaziers, painters, plumbers, slaters, plasterers, etc.” which gives an insight to the type of employment to be found around the harbour in the mid 17th century.²² There is still a Lodge of Aitchison's Haven, based in nearby Musselburgh, but it only shares the name of the original Lodge which ceased to exist in 1853.²³

Trade

In the 17th century, the majority of Scottish vessels trading on the continent were Dutch built, varying in size between 30 and 80 tons each. Commonly known as “bushes”, they made up two thirds of the shipping based in East Lothian's harbours.²⁴

¹⁹ For reference see Graham, A. *Morison's Haven* (1961–62), p. 300

²⁰ Alexander “Jupiter” Carlyle's father was minister for the parish of Prestonpans.

²¹ Gray & Jamieson., op cit., p. 99

²² R Gould, *Early British Freemasonry* (1926) p. 446

²³ This information comes from Brother Robert Guiney, a Mason from the fishing village of Port Seton who has seen sight of the Minute Book of the Lodge of Aitchison's Haven. This Minute Book, entitled “The Buik of the Actis and Ordinans of the Nobile Maisteris and fellows of Craft of the Ludg of Aitchison's heavine”, is now in the Hands of the Grand Lodge and is one of its most prized possessions. The dates of meetings contained therein, the earliest being the 9th January 1598, pre-date those of the Lodge of Edinburgh (Mary's Chapel) No 1.

²⁴ Trade of East Lothian at End of 17th Century by T C Smout (1963) *The Transactions of the East Lothian Antiquarians & Naturalists Society*. Vol IX (1963), p. 70

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The size of the boats, their relative frailty, and the unpredictable weather of the North Sea meant foreign trade was a summer affair. In the winter months, merchants were restricted to trade with England, hugging the coast as they sailed from port to port.

Dunbar Trade

In the 1680s, Customs Records show Morrison's Haven as home to the Customs House for all trade between Fisherrow Harbour and Aberlady (Dunbar covered Gullane down to the Berwickshire border). Records also indicate that an average of 58 boats per annum used Morrison's Haven while Dunbar's yearly average was 16 boats. Dunbar's main trade was in fish, which was not subject to duty, and boats carrying cargoes of fish would not therefore be entered in the records. Taking this into account, the shipping usage of Dunbar would most likely have been much heavier. A distinct shift in trade was occurring at this time. The traditional exports of the pre-industrial age were abandoned for the manufactured goods and raw materials of the industrial age; salt, coal, and so on were becoming more important and therefore attracted custom's duty. Dunbar's foreign exports consisted of uncured herring to Newcastle-upon-Tyne, cured red and white herring for the continent (particularly catholic Poland, France and on a smaller scale to Spain) and, in times of good harvests, grain.

Foreign exports for Morrison's Haven were primarily salt and coal, with a secondary trade going on in eggs for London (with little hope of a profit if rough seas were encountered!) a few pairs of stockings and a few ells of cloth.²⁵ Fifty per cent of the boats recorded by customs men at Morrison's Haven carried coal; between November 1684 and November 1685, 28 colliers berthed at Morrison's Haven to load up with coal. Seventeen of these boats were from the Netherlands: nine bound for Zierikzee in Zeeland, five for Rotterdam, one to Veere (which was the main Scot's trading port in the Netherlands) and one to an unspecified Dutch destination. Of the remainder, six were headed for France, three to London, one to Hamburg and a further ship to an unknown port of call. Although this would appear to imply that a substantial amount of coal was being exported, each collier could carry

²⁵ Smout, *op.cit.*, p. 73.

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on average a mere thirty tons which makes the total recorded coal export for the year in question less than one thousand tons. Presumably, most of the coal mined in the Prestonpans area went towards fuelling the domestic fires that earned Edinburgh its nickname of “Auld Reekie” or to feed the coal hungry salt industry. Another recorded market for the salt industry was the English fishing fleets heading for the Icelandic fishing grounds and calling into Morrison’s Haven to take on salt, presumably to use as a preservative for their catches until they were able to get it to market. Prior to the civil wars in England and Holland, both countries had provided important outlets for Prestonpans salt. However, the disruption caused by the wars resulted in the salt merchants having to look for markets further afield, and the focus of their trade shifted to the Baltics and Germany.²⁶

Exports

As mentioned earlier, the harbour was home to a fishing fleet so naturally Prestonpans traded in harvests from the sea, but of a more exotic nature than that of Dunbar. Indeed, an entry in the Report Book of Prestonpans for 1691 shows one William Ritchison, master of the *King’s Fisherman* of London entering Morrison’s Haven with an empty hold, and leaving with a cargo of Lobsters. The report book also shows an English ship picking up a cargo of some 12,000 oysters bound for Riga, Latvia. Shellfish were also sent to Norway, but the main trade was with London, Newcastle, Yorkshire and Yarmouth. Kelp, a useful fertiliser, was also harvested and exported for the English market. As mentioned, in times of glut grain was exported. When, in 1679 and 1685 the continental harvests failed and East Lothian produced more than local markets required, record amounts were sent overseas. Tallow was exported to Holland, and all sorts of animal skins (including dog), together with linen, woollen cloth and a small amount of gloves and stockings were sent abroad via Morrison’s Haven.^{27, 28}

²⁶ Smout, op.cit., p. 72

²⁷ Smout, op. cit., p. 73

²⁸ These last two items were most likely imported from England and then re-exported for the foreign markets.

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Imports

As well as indicating the growing industrialisation of the area, the export and import markets also point to the increasing sophistication of Scots society. The crews of the Dutch colliers coming in “empty”, in anticipation of their coal loads, would earn themselves some extra money by bringing luxury food-stuffs such as “currants, raisins, figs and prunes; oranges and lemons; sugar loaf and sugar candy”. These goods would have originally been exported from France and Spain, and then re-imported into Scotland by the collier crewmen. An import of absolute necessity for the industry of the area was timber. In the spring, boats carrying coal for Holland would set sail from Prestonpans and having off-loaded their coal would then head for Norway and a return cargo of timber. Norway is recorded as providing 40% of East Lothian's imports at this time.²⁹ East Lothian had exhausted its natural supply of wood but still required quantities of timber for the mining industry (shoring up the coal face), agricultural use (manufacture of carts and other implements), building of houses etc., and for barrel making as most fishing exports were salted and packed into barrels. Once the cargo was loaded, any remaining space was stuffed with “burnwood” for the domestic hearth – belief at this time was that coal burning was not conducive to good health and there was always an eager market for household firewood.

Morrison's Haven dealt with many other industrial imports including iron plate, which was used in the manufacture of the salt pans and which was imported from the Swedish ports of Gothenburg, Stockholm and Norkopping, with three boat loads required yearly to satisfy the local market. Flax, the raw material of the linen industry was imported from Danzig, together with hemp for the rope manufactories, with two or three Prestonpans ships making the trip annually to secure supplies. Dyestuffs were imported from Zierikzee in Holland. Pitch and tar (both required to repair ships and make them watertight) were vital imports from Holland for an area that relied so heavily on its merchant vessels. English hops were imported and used by the numerous breweries in Prestonpans and the surrounding area.

In order to raise money for the royal coffers, double customs duty was levied against foreign registered ships

²⁹ Smout, *op.cit.*, p. 73

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bringing cargoes into Scotland from the end of the 17th century. Competition from foreign ships was an ongoing concern for local merchant seaman and this extra tax on their rivals must have been very welcome.³⁰ However, the double duty could be avoided. Custom records for 1702 report that two Dutch ships bound for Berwick and driven into Morrison's Haven to shelter from a storm were willing;

“...to sell cargo, being onions, to Scotsmen, provideing the same be entered for a single duty”

The Leith Customs office were apparently aware of this loophole, when they replied;

“...Wee doe suspect that there may be some Trick in the matter, and therefore desires you to expixet the same to the bottom. But rather than part with [the onions], If you find their Designs to be honest, we allow you to enter them at Single Duty.”³¹

The importance of the harbour at this time should not be underestimated. From the 1680's onwards, English and continental trade at the port flourished, with customs records for 1680 and 1686 suggesting that as much as 10% of Scotland's trade with foreign ships passed through Morrison's Haven.³² While this growth can be attributed to the fact that the industries in the vicinity of the harbour were producing goods that were much in demand in foreign markets, the industries themselves prospered because of their very proximity to a thriving port. Even the local fishermen were astute enough to alter their traditional catches from herring, etc., and diversify into the luxury food market by providing lobsters and oysters for Europe's finest dinner tables. The system for levying customs duty became more sophisticated with the introduction of increased taxes and double duties for foreign cargoes, but then so too did the trader become more sophisticated in his methods of avoiding having to pay them.

³⁰ In 1620, Parliament dealt with a complaint the foreign ships were given preferential treatment over local boats at various harbours along the east coast. The Parliament found the complaint to be justified and ruled local trade be served first. (Edinburgh Evening News, 22nd May 1957)

³¹ University of Edinburgh Library, Laing Manuscripts Vol. II, 490/2 Prestonpans

³² Smout, *op.cit.*, p. 69

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WILLIAM MORISON'S GLASS MANUFACTORY

While accounts show that his father was more at home in Edinburgh's intellectual circles, William Morison appears to have been very much involved with the harbour he inherited in 1684. With the blessing of the Scottish Parliament he had established a glass manufactory "...within his own Bounds at Achesons Haven, Alias Morisons Haven" by April 1697 which was ratified, by Act of Parliament, in Edinburgh on the 5th August 1698

"...whereby the Countrey about is not only furnished with bottles, which are sold at very modest and easie rates: But likewyses there are made several other Sorts and Species of Glasses, which were never heretofore Manufactured within this Kingdom, such as Mirror or Looking Glass Plates, Coach-Glasses, Spectacle Glasses, Watch Glasses, Moulded Glasses, and Window Glasses".³³

The 1698 Act also indicates that Morison had gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of the glass he was producing as he went to the trouble of "...bringing home from abroad expert Workmen for the said Work".³⁴ Morison was granted a monopoly within Scotland for the manufacture of such products so long as he kept up the quality and affordable prices. Suitable punishments were threatened for anyone who attempted to manufacture, or even import, goods similar to those produced at the glasswork. Despite these measures protecting Morison's enterprise, the glassworks was only in operation for a few short years, before it failed. Perhaps he could not maintain a suitably high quality for the "easie" prices he was obliged to charge.

LATE 17TH CENTURY TO THE MID 18TH CENTURY

Edinburgh's port of Leith held an almost complete monopoly on the import of wine and commanded 80% of the wool and

³³ Act of Scottish Parliament (and Ratification), Edinburgh August 5, 1698

³⁴ Ibid

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hides market. Even the coal trade did not escape the clutches of the capital city, with 65% of outward trade passing through Leith. Morrison's Haven, like other small ports, had to diversify in order to survive. Therefore, a huge miscellany of goods passed through its entrance accompanied by an equally diverse range of traders, from the fishermen and their fish, to colliers and coal, to members of the upper classes importing necessities for their own households. The following account from the Bye-book of Prestonpans for 1692, offers a small window on the world of a 17th century Scottish Lord

“...In the Ship called the Ann of Prestonpans, William Melville, Master from London...for the use of the Earle of Levin: an collace with furniture value 300 po:Scotts, a box with a hat wch my Lord wore at London, a box with nyn pounds Jaculat value 27 po: Scotts, two lanthorns, six pound cannary seed for birds, two barrells apples, a box with twentie pound wax candles, a bundle of trees”.

35, 36

The Earl of Levin's imports show just how varied and personal a ship's cargo could be.

Such was the importance of the harbour in the 17th century, that in 1698 an Act of Parliament was passed which permitted the resident's of Acheson's Haven to hold a weekly market and an Annual Fair. At this time, the Mercat Cross in the nearby Burgh of Preston provided the annual meeting place of the Chapmen of the Three Lothians, the largest group of Chapmen in Scotland.^{37, 38} The Chapmen of the Three Lothians were an extremely wealthy guild and boasted business interests all over the globe, from gold and diamond mines in India to yearly shipments of huge quantities of fur from Hudson Bay, some of which must surely be included amongst the “skins” recorded as trade at the Haven.³⁹ It can be easily assumed that the weekly market at Acheson's Haven, with its assortment of goods from all over Europe, would have proved

³⁵ Smout, op.cit., p. 75

³⁶ The Dictionary of the Older Scots Tongue was able to give the translation for “Jaculat” as being “chocolate”. However, they could not come up with a translation for “collace”.

³⁷ Traders who travelled the length and breadth of the countryside with their laden pack horses – the prototype of today's door to door salesmen! They held an account with the Bank of England, and at one time, were in credit to the tune of over “1,000,000 pounds sterling!! (Martine *Reminiscences of Ten Parishes* (1894) p. 166)

³⁸ Statistical Account of Scotland, Vol 17, p. 79

³⁹ Martine, op.cit., p. 167

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an irresistible draw for the Chapman wishing to add variety to the wares he had to offer his customers.

Although the majority of wines and spirits came through Leith, Edinburgh did not command every such cargo. In 1705, two Norwegian ships from the port of Bergen sailed into Morrison's Haven with a cargo of "...brandie, claret and cherrie sack among their deals and timber baulks".⁴⁰ Occasionally, a Dutch boat would enter the harbour carrying German wines and beers. English ships brought tobacco, along with soap, bricks, paper and ropes, all industries which were to become established in the area in the future, but which for the present had to be imported. At the absolute luxury end of the market were imported English hats and gloves, along with Dutch silk and whalebone, de rigueur items for the fashionable ladies and gentlemen of the day. Delft china from Holland and *Russia Leather* from Danzig also made welcome cargoes and each autumn saw the arrival of cargoes of apples and onions, surplus to the Dutch harvests and imported in ships from Zierikzee making a last trading run before the winter weather set in.

In 1700, William Morison petitioned for an 'imposition' 'for building an harbour at Morrison's Haven';⁴¹ the first recorded improvements at the harbour since Acheson's work around 1541. The fact that Morison's petition uses the word "build" implies that at this time major rebuilding works took place as opposed to improvements or repairs.

Smuggling

By 1707 there was considerable activity at Morrison's Haven, particularly with Dutch and French ships. In fact, together with the port at Queensferry, Morrison's Haven was the focus for the Dutch trade.⁴² Imported goods were for the Scots market and were also smuggled – at great profit for those prepared to take the risk – into Berwick in the North of England along with tobacco and salt. The boats smuggling goods into England would return laden with cargoes of wool which were then re-exported via Morrison's Haven into France, along with legitimate exports of malt, salt and coal.

⁴⁰ University of Edinburgh Library, Laing Manuscripts II, p491 Prestonpans Bullion Book 1705

⁴¹ Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, Vol. X, p. 231a

⁴² SAOS, op cit., p. 73

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Anglo-French relations at this time were not good, and as a result the two countries did not officially trade.⁴³

Prestonpans was notorious for smuggling. In 1656 Thomas Tucker, Cromwell's agent in Scotland, lamented the fact Morrison's Haven provided the population of Prestonpans with "...a very opportune place for the carreying out and bringing in of goods unto or from any shippe that shal be lying in the roade, if not looked after".⁴⁴ Indeed, the Prestonpans' smugglers in 1686 had a friend in the customs officer of that time, Mr James Nimmo, a man who had the ability to run with the hares and hunt with the hounds. He was famed amongst merchants for leaving his records blank for them to complete at their own discretion. This almost backfired on him when he received a visit from his superior, the itinerant surveyor from the port of Leith. However, having been forewarned of the call, Nimmo was able to climb into his office via the window, amend his record book and nip back out, just in time to usher his boss in through the office door. God was on his side that day – as he states in his journal, "...the Lord wonderfully and mercifully guided me in this hurrie of surprise, praise, praise to Him!"⁴⁵

Nimmo also comments on the local attitude to men in his position, stating that he believed "...we were taken as enemies to the most part of the paroch, and they for the most part traders and many of them endeavouring to run their Goods privatlie ashoar without entering and payeing the King's Customs".⁴⁶ Indeed, local hatred and mistrust of the King's men was highlighted in a case presented to the Privy Council in 1699. Robert Mitchell, a ship's master, was believed to be using his house as a store for illicit goods and two customs waiters who were despatched from Leith to investigate the matter duly discovered "...several anchors of Sack and Brandy and Matts of Tobacco".⁴⁷ Upon the removal of these items from their hiding place in the Mitchell home, the two men were confronted by a crowd of two hundred men and women. The angry throng proceeded to attack them "... and fell desperately upon these waiters and did Beat, Bruise

⁴³ This was at the time when the French monarchy/government supported the Stuart cause and were regarded as enemies of the British throne

⁴⁴ Hume Brown, P. *Early Travellers* p. 166

⁴⁵ Scott-Moncrieff, G. (Ed), *The Narrative of Mr James Nimmo, 1654–1709*, Scottish History Society 1889 pp. 96–97

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Records of the Privy Council, July 1699–May 1703 P7

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and Bleed them to an admirable hight and robbed them of ffourteen pound Scots money and Took their papers and wold actually have murdered them, hade not the Collector and some others come up to divert them”.⁴⁸

There is still a widely held belief in Prestonpens that several of the older houses of the town, most notably Walford on the High Street, and Hamilton House in Preston Village, have secret doorways hidden within their walls which open into smugglers tunnels leading down to the beach. A lookout point, built into the sea wall opposite Prestongrange Kirk stands testimony to the problem smuggling in Prestonpens once posed for the state. This vantage point would have afforded the customs man a bird's eye view of any ship approaching the harbour, while giving him plenty time to reach quayside before she berthed. Harry Galloway, a miner at Prestongrange, had some interesting information on the smuggler's tunnels;⁴⁹

“Old houses had to be knocked down to build the block of flats you see next to the Dragon's Lair, across the High Street from the [Safeway] supermarket. Well, when they got down to the founds, the men got a shock, because they went right through the roof of an old smuggler's tunnel leading down to the beach. They couldn't trace it back because it was blocked with all the rubble, but those flats are built with a pillar holding up the one corner that stands in the tunnel.”⁵⁰

It stands to reason that a town inhabited by men who tunnelled underground to earn a living, would also be able to turn those skills to underhand activities if they were so inclined.

The Effect of the Union and the end of the Morison Era

The Union of Parliaments between England and Scotland in 1707 proved to be the beginning of the end of foreign trade at Morrison's Haven at this time. The Westminster Parliament imposed duties and taxes which meant that the illicit trade

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ See appendix I for full transcript of oral histories.

⁵⁰ The Dragon's Lair is an old house which borders the green commemorating the poet and song writer, Rabbe Burns, on the High Street. The amusing thing about this tale is that the aforementioned look out point is situated on the sea wall of the Burn's memorial, meaning that the smuggler's would have been passing right under the noses of the customs men!

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which had been going on with the North of England was no longer profitable although it still occurred to a lesser extent. The pre-Union smuggler, in fact, became the post-Union merchant. He had already established contacts in various previously illicit markets and had experience of the established routes for bringing cargoes in. In reality all he had to do was carry on as normal, except now he was an honest citizen where once he had been a black marketeer. A prime example of this is the Glasgow Tobacco Lords of the 1750's – pre-Union enemy of the state turned post-Union success story.

In what is recorded as one of the last great trading years of this period, 1719 saw 41 cargoes delivered at Morrison's Haven, amongst which;

“...19 were imported in ships belonging to the town. Of these cargoes 21 were wholly from Norway, 6 from Sweden, 1 from Dantzic, 2 from Dantzic & Norway, 2 from Bremen, 5 from Rotterdam, 2 from Havre de Grace and St Martin, 1 from Oporto, and 1 from Maryland in North America”.⁵¹

The vessel from North America came into port carrying “102 hogsheads” of tobacco, and then sailed onto the Port of Leith with the remainder of her cargo after having off-loaded 59 hogsheads at Prestonpans. The duties imposed after the Union of 1707 caused a slow but sure decline in the foreign trade of the Port, and then when several of the town's ships were lost at sea, the harbour suffered a setback from which it never truly recovered.⁵²

In 1734, the Prestongrange Estates were sequestrated and William Morison died abroad in 1739. Towards the end of his life, he apparently lost interest in his affairs, most notably from the time of his wife's death in 1716 and during this period the lease of the colliery at Prestongrange was offered for sale in the Caledonian Mercury in 1729. The advert read, “...The coal of Prestongrange is fit for the sea as well as land sale, there being a good harbour at Morison's Haven not far distant from the said coal.”⁵³ Whether the lease was taken up is a matter of doubt as by 1746 the mines had stopped producing due to ongoing problems with flooding. The year 1745 saw Prestongrange come into the ownership of the Grant

⁵¹ SAOS, op cit., p. 73

⁵² Ibid., p. 73

⁵³ Ann-Marie's ref 38

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(later Grant-Suttie) family, who were to be its last private owners, and who saw the resuscitation of the mining industry at Prestongrange – to greater heights than ever before – and oversaw the final days of the harbour.

Production problems at the mine and the resulting lack of coal for sale, led to the foreign colliers moving to pastures new in search of their cargoes. This, added to the post-Union duties and loss of vessels, would have further contributed to the fact that trade had ground to a complete halt by 1743, and the port's clientele were forced to go elsewhere in pursuit of foreign goods. According to the records 'No person of enterprise, or capacity, or possessed of sufficient stock, made any persevering efforts to re-establish it [foreign trade at Morrison's Haven].'⁵⁴

LATE 18TH CENTURY

By 1796, foreign trade at Morrison's Haven had apparently picked up again.⁵⁵ It was noted that trade in "brownware" pottery from Prestonpans was in demand in such far off market places as North America, the West Indies and most of the European sea-ports. The various local potteries also depended upon the accessibility of the harbour for importing clay from Devonshire, flint from Gravesend and lead from London, Hull and Newcastle. The Prestonpans Vitriol Company (formerly the chemical works of Messrs Roebuck and Garbet), were producing and exporting their products at an incredible rate.⁵⁶ In excess of fifty men were employed, working round the clock, to produce Oil of Vitriol, White Ashes, Aquafortis, Spirit of Salt, Sulphuric Acid, Glauber Salts, and also Powdered Manganese for use in the bleaching process. These products were much in demand by Scottish bleachers for bleaching linen cloth and by the printing industry, and were also exported around Europe. As well as exporting via Morrison's Haven, the chemical works also

⁵⁴ SAOS, *op.cit.*, p. 73

⁵⁵ SAOS, *op.cit.*, p. 67

⁵⁶ Roebuck and Garbet worked in partnership in Birmingham as consultant chemists. They founded a sulphuric acid work in Birmingham in 1746 and came to Prestonpans in 1749 to establish another. Here they met up with William Cadell, a merchant of Cockenzie. The trio were responsible for various enterprises including several potteries (some at Prestonpans) and mills as well as their chemical works, but most famously for establishing the Carron Ironworks in 1759.

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imported their raw materials; these being brimstone from Leghorn and saltpetre from the East India Company of London, required in the production of Oil of Vitriol, and also sulphur shipped from Italy.⁵⁷

One unexpected import of which evidence is still found today at Morrison's Haven is the several species of flora not native to Scotland. Soil was at one time used to weight vessels sailing "empty" to collect a cargo and was jettisoned on arrival in port to make room for cargo. Today's plants are the descendants of those seeds collected along with the soil to be used as ballast.

MILLS AT MORRISON'S HAVEN

Tide Mills

The 1526 Charter granted permission to operate a tide-mill at Prestongrange, and by 1587, the Register of the Great Seal mentions two tide mills working at Acheson's Haven, both of which were employed in milling grain.⁵⁸ Tide mills were peculiar to the East Coast of Scotland, but still remained rare mainly due to the ready accessibility of conventional water-power. At least four sites existed in the Firth of Forth at Crail, Burntisland, Blackness and Acheson's Haven.⁵⁹

By the mid-17th century, Prestonpans and its port were at the heart of an area of rapid industrialisation; its two tide mills, together with several other water-mills driven by the mine adits⁶⁰ and at least one windmill were required to satisfy the area's need for power. By the late 1700's, the tide mills were grinding flint for the Prestonpans pottery industry. The entrepreneurs, Garbett and Cadell jointly founded a pottery in 1751, one of several in the area, which combined the ground flint with lead to produce lead silicate for glazing their white stoneware and china pottery.⁶¹ According to the Statistical Account, only one of the harbour mills was involved in the flint industry, complimented by a second flint mill to the east of the harbour area which was powered by a mine adit.⁶²

⁵⁷ McAuley, J.D., *A Short History of Prestonpans* (1981) p. 12

⁵⁸ Shaw, J.P. *Water power in Scotland*, (1984) p. 14-16

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15

⁶⁰ The mine adits were used as outlets for water being pumped from the mine workings. In a mine such as Prestongrange where flooding was a constant problem, the level of water being pumped would, and did, provide for a mill.

⁶¹ Shaw *op.cit.*, p. 471

⁶² SAOS, *op.cit.*, p. 74

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That the harbour was known by the names Port au Moulin, in 1553, and Milhaven, as an alias in 1607, would indicate that tide mills did in fact exist and were an important feature of the harbour.⁶³ However, money making venture apart, a tide mill at the Haven was a necessity for another reason – the harbour was notorious for silting up. The position of the mill and reservoir was such that the pond filled up with each incoming tide, and then the stored water, as well as driving the mill machinery, was used to flush out the silt from the harbour mouth.⁶⁴ The entrance to the harbour was extremely narrow and without the existence of the mill, would have quickly become impassable.

Sawmills and Bleachingfields

A map dated 1854 showing the Prestongrange coastline features a sawmill operating at Morrison's Haven.⁶⁵ Despite no other evidence for the existence of a sawmill, a case can readily be made for one. Of the two tide mills to be found at Burntisland, one was apparently used as a saw mill as early as the late 16th century, although the first documentary evidence is a map dated 1843.⁶⁶ It is reasonable to assume that a sawmill would have operated at Prestongrange, based on the amount of timber being imported. Timber imported from Morrison's Haven, perhaps cut at the sawmill, was purchased for Lord Milton's new project, a Bleachingfield at Saltoun.⁶⁷ The advances made in the chemistry of bleaching, and especially John Roebuck's experiments with oil of vitriol and powder of manganese at the Prestonpans works, resulted in the bleaching of linen becoming one of the earliest "factory" type operations.⁶⁸ During August and September of 1747, 123 cart loads of timber from Prestonpans were sent to Saltoun, along with iron and tiles purchased from the Cockenzie merchant, Cadell, which would have been, in all probability, imported at Morrison's Haven. The creation of the

⁶³ Graham, Angus, *Morrison's Haven* (1961–62) p. 300

⁶⁴ See Appendix V – List of Maps. Forrest's Map of 1799 shows how, when the tide was out, the stored water, upon release, would flood through the harbour mouth, removing any debris.

⁶⁵ See Appendix V – List of Maps, 1853 6" County Series.

⁶⁶ Shaw, *op.cit.*, p. 14

⁶⁷ Shaw, *op.cit.*, p. 242

⁶⁸ Where it had previously taken place outdoors, over a period of months and involved all-natural products, linen bleaching now became an industrialised process taking place indoors in a relatively short space of time, using chemicals.

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Bleachingfield took four years to complete, required in excess of 400 cartloads of materials and cost £2,123 13s 6d.

Fisherfolk and Oysters

Oysters

The first industry mentioned in connection with the harbour at Morrison's Haven was that of fishing, and although various kinds of fish, including herring and skate were caught in the waters off Prestonpans, the main harvest of the fishermen was Oysters. A 1896 report on the profitability of the Prestongrange estate contains a map showing the extent of "Sir George Grant Suttie's Oyster Fishing Grounds circa 1870". They stretched from the Eskmouth at Musselburgh at the Western edge to Prestongrange Kirk at the Eastern edge, and reached six miles out into the Firth of Forth.⁶⁹

The golden age for the oyster fisher was between 1773–1786 when the "scalps" (the Scots name for an oyster bed) were providing in excess of 6,000 oysters per boat per day, and ten boats operated out of Morrison's Haven.⁷⁰ Each of the ten local boats required a crew of five men, at a time when the Statistical Accounts show that Prestonpans had only 23 regular fishermen.⁷¹ The remaining twenty-seven men would have been made up of "onca's"; men on call to some other trade, but who turned their hand to fishing in season to supplement their income.⁷² During the 1770's the oysters went by land to Glasgow and Edinburgh as well as by sea to London and Hull. The oysters sent for the London market at Billingsgate were packed in barrels, each containing 1200 of the shellfish. Arriving in London around mid-May, the oysters were deposited in the Thames estuary to be fattened up, before being dredged once more the following September, for sale and consumption. The best Prestonpans oysters were known as Pandores, so called because they were to be found bordering the salt pans, or at the "pan doors".⁷³ If Pandores were considered a delicacy by those outwith Prestonpans, some locals considered them a special treat too. Mary Morgan born

⁶⁹ Report by Dr Fulton 1896, East Lothian District Council Local History Centre.

⁷⁰ SAOS, op.cit., p. 69

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 85

⁷² Gibson, W., *Fishing in Old East Lothian* (1994), p. 15

⁷³ A street situated approximately halfway between the site of the Saltworks and that of the Harbour is still known as Pandores Walk.

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1905 off the High Street, Prestonpans, remembers the fishing community in Prestonpans, especially the oysters;

“...My uncle went to the fishing..... he had his own wee boat. He used to get maybe half a dozen oysters in his [bait] nets, and he would keep them for grandfather Thomson. He loved oysters. He would just open up the shells, scoop them out and swallow them down”⁷⁴

The oyster season traditionally ran during those months with an “R” in their names – September to April – and at least three times during this period a boat would set sail for Newcastle carrying a cargo of between thirty and forty thousand oysters. Boats used for exporting fish were traditionally open decked and as such came home empty as, without a deck, there was nothing to protect a valuable cargo from sea spray. The type of boat used for the Newcastle run would have been 38’ from stem to stern with no deck, a 33’ keel, a depth of 4’8” and a beam of 12’9”. The oyster fishing boats themselves were much the same design although smaller, being only 26ft stem to stern. One story, much retold, is of the night the trade boat left Morrison’s Haven at 3am, loaded with her cargo of oysters, and reached Newcastle at 4pm that same day – a record time of thirteen hours. Fishing is, and always has been, a dangerous occupation. There are two accounts of violent storms causing loss of life and vessel, one on the 6th December 1847,⁷⁵ and another on the 13th January 1908 at which time emergency loans were offered to the fishermen to replace their lost boats.⁷⁶ There can be no reference to the oyster fishermen of Morrison’s Haven without mentioning their dredging song, described both as “curious”, and “not unpleasant”. The men sang the plaintive, haunting air from the commencement of dredging until the catch was hauled onto the boat. In the early morning, with a mist lying over a calm, still sea, they must have provided an eerie sound indeed.

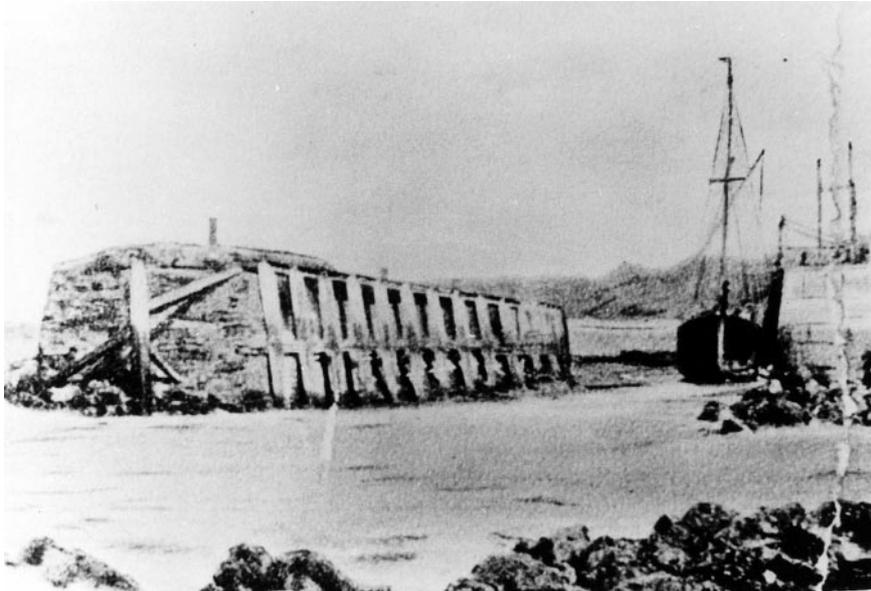
In 1786, trade in Prestonpans oysters ceased because their scarcity, due to overfishing, meant high prices. The Preston-grange grounds were also fished by Dutch and English boats whose catch was in demand all over Europe. Local fishermen used a method of dragging the oysters which was very labour intensive and oysters unsuitable for sale were returned to the

⁷⁴ See Appendix I – Oral History Transcriptions, Mary Morgan

⁷⁵ Hislop, J.F. *Notes on Relief paid to Fishermen at Prestonpans* (1847)

⁷⁶ Gibson., op cit., p. 53

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Landward view of Morison's Haven Pier
East Lothian Council, David Spence Collection



Landward view of Morison's Haven Harbour with Prestongrange Colliery
in the distance
East Lothian Council, David Spence Collection

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sea till the next time. The foreign boats used an entirely different method whereby everything on the sea bed was dredged and taken, large or small, edible or not. This was considered the main cause for the scalps decline. Indeed, by 1796, catches were down to around 500 oysters per boat per day, and oysters earned the fishermen 15d (old pennies) for 100 but by the time the catch reached the markets of Newcastle, the price per 100 had jumped to two shillings.

Oyster spat, (eggs), were also exported to replenish the English oyster beds in Kent and Essex, and this coupled with over-fishing and increasing pollution from the mines, led to the industry dying out. The English and Dutch boats stopped coming around 1871, and while local fishermen continued to dredge, the main purpose of the exercise was now to obtain bait for their lines.

COAL MINING AND EXPORTS – EARLY 19TH CENTURY TO THE END OF THE HARBOUR'S TRADING LIFE

When Prestongrange came into the ownership of William Grant in 1745, the coal mine was flooded and, as a result, foreign trade at the harbour was almost non-existent. Yet another Advocate, Grant was also one time Lord Advocate and Member of Parliament, and with such a busy life, employed a Factor and Manager to oversee his estates and interests at Prestongrange.⁷⁷ The harbour would appear once more to be a free port by 1753, with no one person required to take responsibility for necessary repair works as was demonstrated when the heritors and some of the feuars “...applied to Parliament and obtained an act for imposing a duty of two pennies Scotch on each Scotch pint of ale brewed, brought into, and vended in the parish; the money arising from which was to be applied for repayment of a sum to be advancedand for repairing Morison's Haven.”⁷⁸ The harbour is shown on a contemporary map as being open mouthed to the east and west ends with a barrier of natural rock embellished with dressed stone providing a pier which could only be reached during high tide by boat, or on foot

⁷⁷ National Library of Scotland, Manuscript 3720 p. 1 1745.

⁷⁸ SAOS op.cit., p. 76

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when the tide was out.⁷⁹ Fishing would appear, once again, to be the main industry of the harbour. The mining community of Prestonpans, with the mine out of production, no money coming in and hungry families to feed, must all have looked seawards. It was not until Sir James Grant Suttie inherited the estate in 1818 that the fortunes of the miners, and therefore those of Morrison's Haven, revived.

That Sir James Grant Suttie was able to consider reopening the mine at Prestongrange, was due to the development of new machinery allowing easier removal of water from the coal face. That it was worthwhile investing thus in the mines at Prestongrange was indicated in a report commissioned from a Civil Engineer named John Buchanan whose recommendations were also taken into account when the harbour was rebuilt in 1876. Sir James' heir, Sir George Grant Suttie inherited Prestongrange in 1828 and by 1830, had leased the mining operations to the English Company owned by one Mathias Dunn. However, Dunn's expenditure on the necessary machinery to get the mines working again, was not recompensed by the profit raised by the price of the coal he produced and by 1840 the pit was once more flooded with no tenant. Things finally began to look up in 1850 when the Prestongrange Coal and Iron Company took up the lease. Based in Cornwall, the Prestongrange Company was responsible for shipping via Morrison's Haven, the giant beam engine that now forms the focal point of the present day mining museum.⁸⁰ They were also responsible for the construction of; "...a large no. of commodious cottages, two storeys in height for their [workforce] accommodation at a short distance eastwards from the Harbour".⁸¹ Increased output at the modernised and extended colliery meant that Morrison's Haven was unable to cope with the higher level of exports and re-building works were undertaken in 1875 when the Haven is recorded as receiving a major facelift for the third time in its existence. These works were completed in 1877 and were described as "...improvements and increase in harbour size, to coincide with the opening of Prestonfield coalfield, at a cost of £10,000".⁸² The works included the installation of a railway

⁷⁹ See Appendix V – List of Maps, Peck & Co., 1753

⁸⁰ The Engine was dismantled from its original place in the Cornish tin mines and shipped in pieces to be reassembled at Prestongrange

⁸¹ Haddingtonshire Courier, 24th December 1875

⁸² Ibid.

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line to allow an engine hauling hutches [barrows] to transport coal from the pit-head to the colliers waiting in the harbour. Also included on the wharf was a piece of lifting equipment to allow ease of transfer of the coal from hutch to hold, known universally by the men who used it as the "side cowper" [side tipper]. A further rail line connected the Firebrick Works to the harbour and sewage pipes, chimney pots, firebricks and bricks were also shipped overseas. As previously mentioned, the works carried out were planned by John Buchanan a Civil Engineer. He had recommended that as well as deepening the harbour basin, "...a concrete pier 80 ft in diameter and 4 ft above the high water mark.....be erected at the extreme west point."⁸³ Once the works were completed, the harbour could still not be considered large, and was able to accommodate colliers no larger than 600 tons, with no more than one boat at a time in the harbour basin. The boats arriving to take out the coal also brought in timber props for use in mines.

Sir James Grant Suttie's accounts for the year 1877-78 show that the Prestongrange Coal and Iron Company Limited were obliged to find the following sums for the rental of their premises. The yearly fixed rent for Prestongrange Colliery and Minerals was £2,000.00. For the miner's houses at various sites around Prestonpans, including Morrison's Haven, £148.00. The rental for the harbour itself was the princely sum of £20.00 with a further £180.00 for the five acres of land at Morrisons Haven "on a long lease". Morrison's Haven Park and Pipe Park rental came to £110 2s 6d with the land for the railway and housing at Cuthill costing a further £22 18s 8d.⁸⁴

The Summerlee Coal and Firebrick Company, from Coatbridge in the West of Scotland, acquired the mine in 1895 and remained the proprietors until nationalisation in 1947. The Summerlee Company brought in many Irish immigrant workers, the majority of whom inhabited the houses at Morrison's Haven.⁸⁵ The Brickworks remained in operation until the mid 1970's, when even political intervention could not save them from closure. Tommy Thomson, who began his working life as an apprentice brickmaker from age 14 can remember; "...a local petition to the MP to keep the

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ The National Archives of Scotland, Ref GD357/39/1, 1877-78.

⁸⁵ See appendix I. Oral History Transcriptions, Ann-Marie Allan.

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View of Morison's Haven Harbour towards the end of its life, featuring the trapped 'Topaz'

East Lothian Council, David Spence Collection



Eastward view of Morison's Haven, Prestonpans showing land reclamation process

East Lothian Council, David Spence Collection

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brickworks going, but they were doomed for closure and nothing could save them.”⁸⁶ Of course, by this time, Morrison's Haven was long gone and trade was conducted by road and by rail. The export market, pre 1939, is shown to be “Holland, Denmark, Germany and other European countries”.⁸⁷ The salt industry also made use of the harbour until the end. Although no longer producing salt on site, rock salt was imported from Cheshire, which was then processed at the Prestonpans works.⁸⁸ This produced a source of great delight for local children, as John Wilson recalls;

“...I used to go along to Morrison's Haven when I was wee and I can mind of the boats bringing in salt rock. They used to put it in sea-water to get the salt out. It was amber coloured and we used to pinch it and sook it like a sweetie.”⁸⁹

By the mid 1930's the harbour was used solely by “pleasure craft” and the odd fishing boat and even these were forced to move on once the silt began to reclaim the basin. The ‘Topaz’, the last vessel ever to enter the harbour mouth, was unable to get back out and was abandoned to her fate as a diving board for local children. Johnny Berg recollects;

We used to swim in the harbour. If you could not swim that was alright because you could just jump in off the old wreck, and hold onto a trunk – there were always trunks (10ft pit props!) floating in the water and you just grabbed one. The water was aye warm because the water pumped out of the pit went into the harbour. It was great.

The Haven's end was as inglorious as its history had been glorious. Concern for the safety of the children who used the decaying harbour as a swimming pool prompted the decision, in the mid 1950's, to fill it in. Rubbish from the mine was used as infill and the engine and hutches that were once used to carry coal to the waiting ships, now brought rubble to be “side cowped” into the harbour basin itself. A County Council Scheme involving Prestonpans, Tranent and Port Seton was set

⁸⁶ See appendix I. Oral History Transcriptions, Tommy Thomson

⁸⁷ Third Statistical Account of Scotland, (1953), p. 213

⁸⁸ Snodgrass, C. P., *The Third Statistical Account of Scotland, The County of East Lothian* p. 216

⁸⁹ See Appendix I. Oral History Transcriptions, John Wilson

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up whereby domestic refuse was collected and “used in a reclamation project at Morrison’s Haven.”⁹⁰

On Wednesday May 22nd 1957, the Edinburgh Evening News carried the headline:

–MORISON’S HAVEN–
One-Time Customs Port with Flourishing Export-Import Trade
–IS NOW NO MORE–

The article goes on to tell that the “...The ubiquitous bulldozer and tipping truck, snarling symbols of an age of rapidly changing values, have completed yet another victory over the laboriously wrought achievements of the past.” The ancient port that had withstood the test of five centuries, times of war and peace, and a constant battering from the elements, had outlived its use for twentieth century man. The once prosperous industries of Prestonpans, the saltworks, the potteries, the breweries, the collieries, were either no longer in existence, or coming to the same end as the harbour which had served them so well and so long. Modern day Prestonpans has, on the surface, little to distinguish it from similar towns which like itself now serve simply as an extension to Edinburgh’s commuter belt. However, a look at the history of the town might just leave you nostalgic for the days when our ancestors mingled and traded daily with people of all nationalities and were adventurous enough to sail the seven seas in a tiny wooden boat, in search of their cargoes. Which begs the question; of the periods covered, which was the more cosmopolitan and worldly wise? Certainly not 21st century man, although he would believe himself to be so.

WHO OR WHAT WAS JOHNNIE MOAT?

When the section of the coastal walkway, which covers Prestonpans was being formed, the contractors undertook to retrieve Johnnie Moat from his watery grave and reinstall him on his perch on the Girdle Rocks from which he was toppled during a violent storm in the 1950’s. He can be found just below the tide line, directly behind the new East Lothian

⁹⁰ Snodgrass, op.cit., p. 205

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Council Offices on the High Street at Aldhammer. So who, what, is Johnnie Moat? As he exists now, Johnnie Moat is a huge whinstone boulder over six feet tall, nine feet long and six feet wide. Local legend has it that he was brought to Prestonpans during the ice age by a glacier, or even blown out of Arthur's Seat, Edinburgh when that volcano was active and erupting. Another piece of local lore claims that so long as Johnnie sits on the Girdle Rocks, Prestonpans will enjoy prosperity. If he falls, dark days are to come. The original Johnnie Moat, was either harbour master or customs man at Acheson's haven during the 16th century.⁹¹ The girth of the man and that of the great boulder were considered to be so similar, that the stone was given his name.

THE FORT

The rebuilding works of 1875 uncovered the remains of a 16th century fort, described as a "three cornered building with gun-holes in it."⁹² The Rev. Dr. John Struthers, Minister of Prestonpans, had in 1853 furnished the Ordnance Survey officers with information about the fort. He claimed it was constructed circa 1547 by one John Acheson of the Scot's Guard in Paris who came to Scotland on the business of the French King with a recommendation for Mary of Guise.⁹³ Although this claim cannot be supported by written evidence, a case can be made for it being grounded in fact, over and above the obvious connection of the Officer's name [Acheson] with that of the Haven. The date, 1547, is the time of the so-called "Rough Wooing" of Mary, Queen of Scots. Both the English and French royal houses wanted links through marriage to Scotland; the French with an eventual eye on the English throne, and the English to secure themselves from the French threat, and also to put an end to the financially draining wars with Scotland. To this end, the English built a chain of at least twenty fortresses along the east coast from Berwickshire to Dundee, and the French counterattacked by building an opposing chain at sites including "Eyemouth,

⁹¹ McNeill, *op cit.*, p. 157

⁹² *Ibid*, p. 254

⁹³ Graham, *op.cit.*, p. 303

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Dunbar and Inchkeith".⁹⁴ It is more than possible that the remains uncovered at the harbour belonged to this era.

THE LAST WORD

The last word on the harbour at Morrison's Haven should go to the people who knew it best – those who lived, worked and played there. The majority of written histories about the ancient port give the end of its commercial life as the year 1914 (with the exception of Angus Graham who opts for the end of the First World War). However, Harry Galloway, who was employed at Prestongrange and vividly remembers the colliers in the harbour, did not come to work in the area as a miner until 1925. Likewise, Tommy Thomson, a brickmaker with the Summerlee Company, did not begin work until 1923 but he, too, recalls the boats calling in for loads of bricks and pipes.⁹⁵ Surely the collective memory of the people whose lives and workplaces revolved around Morrison's Haven cannot be wrong and, therefore we can confidently state that the harbour was in commercial operation until the late 1920's at the very least.

In concluding this discussion of the Harbour of Acheson/Morrison's Haven it is important to consider several points. Firstly, the exports and imports of the harbour and the places they were shipped to and from, serve as an indication of the changing times. We can see how the harbour at the beginning of its life dealt in the trade of the day, mainly rural produce, but was able to adapt to the advent of industrialisation. How its very proximity and accessibility allowed the industries, which grew up around it and the coal mining at Prestongrange, to prosper and how they in turn supported the harbour. Throughout the life of the harbour, fishing and the fishermen are a recurrent theme. That the harbour was the base for a customs house indicates official recognition that the business transacted there was of high significance. Further, the manner in which the activities conducted at the harbour were restricted (or went underground as demonstrated by the operations of the smugglers) by the legislation they attracted; for example, customs duties levied, Acts of Parliament prohibiting coal

⁹⁴ Lynch, *op.cit.*, p. 206-7

⁹⁵ See Appendix I, Oral Histories Transcriptions, Harry Galloway and Tommy Thomson

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exports and so on. Waterpower was an important feature at the Haven and thought should be given to the ingenious manner in which the tide mills at the harbour were put to good use by the industries in its vicinity. Finally, the ironic manner in which things have apparently come full circle. Gone are the coal, salt, chemicals and pottery for export and we once more import manufactured goods not available at home. And what of Scotland's exports? Once again we hark back to the 16th century and export fish [salmon and shellfish], woollen cloth [tartan and cashmere] and foreign visitors still visit us as traders, but now in the guise of the tourist. Smuggling is also making a comeback and Customs and Excise reports seem to feature increasingly in the news, lamenting the black-market in alcohol and tobacco. So the imports and exports and clandestine activities of 21st century Scotland mirror those of the 16th century and it is as if the industries that evolved from the 16th century onwards, like the harbour itself, never existed.

APPENDIX 1 ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPTIONS

THE FISHER FAMILY

Mary Morgan, born 1905 off the High Street, Prestonpans

“There used to be a right fishing community in Prestonpans. The men all wore the Guernseys, and their own style of hat, and they held a walk once a year through the town when they did all their business. My Grandfather Thomson was a fisherman, and he and my grannie, Peepie Mag, she was born in Cockenny, [Cockenzie] lived off the High Street on the seaside. You went doon a wee brae and up a stair to get to their house but they’re [the houses] all away now. My granny mended the nets in the summer. She hung them up on the window snib and I can mind her needle flying out and in at a fair speed. On a Saturday night it was aye salt herring for supper. My grandfather Thomson brought it back in a barrel from the winter fishing and I used to like to see into the barrel when the lid came off. The fishes were laid out right bonny, round and round in layers of salt. My granny would lift a fish out of the barrel and lie it on top of a pan of tatties and that was Saturday night’s supper. She didn’t salt the water, the fish did it for her.

My uncle went to the fishing as well and he had his own wee boat. He used to get maybe half a dozen oysters in his nets and he would keep them for grandfather Thomson. He loved oysters. He would just open up the shells, scoop them oot and swallow them doon.

The other thing I can mind of Morrison’s Haven is the boats coming in with the rock salt. It used to get loaded off the boats onto a horse drawn cart and taken along to the ‘Pans to get refined.

THE MINER

Harry Galloway, b1900 Hamilton and moved to Prestonpans to work in the pits in 1925

“...I worked in the Links and Grange pits as a miner. Morrison’s Haven as I mind was not that big, and I only ever

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saw the one boat in it at a time. Mind you, these were the big coal boats that came in for the coal out the pit. The coal wagons came right across the road from the pit in single file and went alongside the boat and side cowped the coal into it. The coal was shipped foreign with the bricks and that from the brickworks, but I'm not sure where it all went to. I remember the last coal boat that ever came into the harbour. It came from Copenhagen and the reason it has stayed in my mind is the harbour was getting right bad for silting up and the boat could not get out by itself. A tug was called down from Leith but could not come till the next day and we all went down to the harbour to see the wee tug pull the coal boat out into the deep water. Looking back now, it was fitting that the last boat should have got such a send off. If I mind right it would have been about 1929 or maybe even 1930.

I'll tell you another thing about Morrison's Haven. There was more coal came up that siding in the hutches and got shipped than came up the pit. Do you know how that was? The weightman checked the weight of the hutches coming up the pit and one of the miners noticed that every hutch was going down as weighing eight and a half. So this miner, he went into the second weight box and shoved the second weightman out the road and jumped on top of the hutch, and still it only showed eight and a half. So now all the men knew something was not right. One of the men got two facemen to go and check with him and they saw that the weights were tied with a length of rope, and even if you had ten hundredweight in your hutch it would only go out at eight and a half. It was the mine owners that did it so the men never knew how much coal they were digging and the wages could get kept down."

The 'Pans is built on old mine workings and smuggler's tunnels. When they were building the new Preston Lodge High School [circa 1967] the ground collapse underneath the workers and they found they had caved in an old tunnel. Folk said it was the old mine shaft of the monks. Another thing, some old houses had to be knocked down to build the block of flats next to the Dragon's Lair [an old house], across the High Street from the [Safeway] supermarket. Well, when they got down to the founds, the men got a shock, because they went right through the roof of an old smuggler's tunnel leading down to the beach. They couldn't trace it back because it was blocked with all the rubble, but those flats are built with a pillar holding up the one corner that stands on the

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tunnel. It used to be called the tramp's tunnel, for a tramp sometimes slept in it".

THE BRICKWORKER

Tommy Thomson b1909 East Seaside, Prestonpans (next to site of Fowler's Brewery, now both demolished)

"...I got a job in the kilns when I was fourteen years old, making the bricks. The kilns were hot all day for firing the clay, and at night tramps would sleep inside them because it was aye warm, they never really cooled down. I mind of Morrison's Haven. Boats used to come in with trees for the pit and they took away coal and the clay pipes from the brick works. We put the pipes into bogeys at the brick works, and run them over the road to the harbour to get loaded onto the boats for shipping abroad.

The clay for the bricks came out a pit next to the Grange pit. It was right good for the brickmaking."

THE RESIDENT

(Unknown lady) b1912. Came to live with aunt at Morrison's Haven 1920–1943. Memories related by her daughter Ann-Marie.

"...My mother and her sister were left orphaned after her mother died in the flu epidemic and her father was killed in the war. Her aunt, Mrs Clark, took both girls to live with her family at Morrison's Haven.

My mother told us about the ships that came into the harbour. The children would all race down to the pier whenever they saw a ship approaching, all desperate to get there first and be "the winner". My mother told us about the time she put all her effort and concentration into racing the other children, so that she forgot to stop running and went right off the end of the pier and into the harbour itself. She had on a blue dress and when she was fished out, all the dye had come off her frock, and her skin was dyed blue! She also told us about the occasion when one of the sailors taught her to shoot a rifle. She was only about twelve years old at the time and could not really talk with the man, as he was Scandinavian and his English was poor. Anyhow, she went home and astonished everyone with the information that she had learned to fire a rifle that day!

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My mother's two uncles were drowned in the harbour. She remembered it happening but I can't recall the date – around the mid-1920's I would think. They had both been drinking, it was a Saturday night, and they decided to take a rowing boat out. They just got outside the harbour entrance when the boat capsized. No-one was able to save them and they both drowned. It is ironic because they both survived working in dangerous conditions down a mine but died in their leisure time in the harbour they had known all their lives.

Many of the families at Morrison's Haven were Irish and came with the Summerlee Company from Coatbridge. The family names my mother remembered from Morrison's Haven are:

TRACY CLARK GUNN McAULEY

These names can all still be found in the area today. When the Passionist Fathers took over Drumohr [a large mansion house in grounds about a mile to the south west of Morrison's Haven], all the Morrison's Haven girls took to religion in a big way. The fathers wore long black cloaks and looked very dashing and romantic and all of a sudden everyone was desperate to say Novenas and go to confession!

My mother also used to tell us that during the Second World War, the aeroplane carrying Rudolf Hess on his escape bid, flew over the Haven!!

MORRISON'S HAVEN REMEMBERED

John Wilson b1926 Crown Square, Prestonpans

"...I worked in Prestonlinks Colliery which was owned by the Edinburgh Coal Company. Prestongrange miners lived at the other end of the 'Pans in the Cuttle (Cuthill) and their pit was owned by the Summerlee Coal Company. There was some rivalry went on with the miners, I can tell you. I used to go along to Morrison's Haven when I was wee and I can mind of the boats bringing in salt rock. They used to put it in sea-water to get the salt out. It was amber coloured and we used to pinch it and sook it like a sweetie.

During the war even the buses were blacked out, and when I used to get the bus home from Edinburgh, there was a stop at Morrison's Haven. There was a level crossing to let the pug cross the road to the harbour from the pit, and that's where

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the bus stopped. The conductor was called "Lugs" (Andrew "Lugs" Hamilton of Prestonpans) and he had to shout every stop because it was so dark and you could not see where you were. I can mind him shouting "Morrison's Haven!"

John Berg b 1924 in Summerlee Street, Prestonpans

"...I worked in the Grange pit as a miner and so did my dad. My mother used to tell me that before I was born she worked down the mine as well. She did not cut the coal, but she used to push the hutches filled with coal from the pit across the road to the harbour, and then load it onto the boats. Boats came in from Germany and Holland. They brought in trees – timber to use as props in the pit. They took away with them the coal that was dug out of the pit. When the women stopped pushing the hutches, they used wee ponies to pull them, and then it was the pug that did the job. When the boats came in, all the fast women from round about used to hang around the harbour with their handbags – I'll not tell you what for, you can use your imagination!

We used to swim in the harbour. If you could not swim that was alright because you could just jump in off the old wreck and hold onto a trunk – there were always trunks (10ft pit props!) floating in the water and you just grabbed one. The water was aye warm because the water pumped out of the pit went into the harbour. It was great.

Anne Tough (nee Potter, 1931–2000) Came to Prestonpans in 1940 from Lanarkshire.

"...My family moved to Prestonpans in 1940 as my father got a job at Prestongrange pit as an Underground Oversman. We first lived at Summerlee Street, then No 1 Front Street. The harbour was still there at the time but I don't think it was used for boats. Apart from the old wreck, I don't remember seeing any other boats. We used to dive off the wreck and swim in the harbour. I'm surprised no-one was ever killed.

There were houses at Morrison's Haven then. Tam Paton lived in the bottom one and used to sell fruit and vegetables from his house. During the war when everything was rationed and scarce, you would hear that he had got bananas or oranges delivered and everyone would rush up to Morrison's Haven and there would be a huge queue.

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THE END OF AN ERA

John McNeill b1914 Musselburgh. Moved to Prestonpans in 1929

“...I never worked down a mine, but I spent thirty-six years of my working life as a surface worker, first at the Links Pit and then at the Grange from about 1943 till 1960. I worked mainly as a labourer and worked as part of the gang that filled in the harbour at Morrison's Haven when it was reckoned to be getting too dangerous. The wooden pier and supports were all rotting away and it was an accident just waiting to happen. We used stones and rubbish that dam up from the pit, it was brought over by the pug and normally dumped on the foreshore for the tide to wash away. We barrowed it from the bogeys and tipped it in the harbour. We used cement to seal it all, mixing it on site and as quick as we got it made, we tipped it in. I do not know how many barrows we used but we were weeks at it. It was a sad end. We buried the old boat that lay in the harbour and if folk dug about they would probably still find it and bottles and all sorts of other rubbish we put in there.

The labouring squad kept their tools, the picks and spades and pinchers, in a building the colliery put up, just beside the harbour. They kept good stones that came up the pit and built this sort of igloo shaped building. Two brothers, the McGinns, used to live in it for a house. It had a fireplace and everything in it. The colliery did not mind them being there because they were like unofficial nightwatchmen for the place and kept the bairns away from the harbour. The McGinns used to gather sea coal and sell it to make some money. The pug used to come over to the foreshore every day from the Grange, the same pug that used to bring the coal over to the coal boats for shipping, but by this time the coal was going up to Edinburgh for selling. Anyway, the bogey's would be full of rubbish from the pit and the pug would bring them over, and would side cowp the rubbish from the pit onto the foreshore and the tide would come in and out and wash it all away. There was not supposed to be any rubbish but, of course there was and that's what folk used to call sea coal. It really came up from the pit and the tide brought it in after it was dumped.

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George Berrick b1933. Moved to Prestonpans in 1966

"...Although I did not come to live here until 1966, I have known Prestonpans most of my working life, first as a lorry driver with the council and then as a meter reader for the South of Scotland Electricity Board. The first time I saw Morrison's Haven was in 1956/7 and it was in a ruinous state then, sort of filled in but you could still make out that it had been a harbour. The pier supports were still there and the wreck of an old wooden boat. The houses there were ruinous also, two blocks of them, and at that time, Tommy Gunn, a councillor owned them. One had been used as a grain drier and had split practically in two with the weight of the grain. In the 1960's, the council contracted me out as a driver to the SSEB when Cockenzie Power Station was being built on the site of the old Links pit and we filled in what was left of the harbour with waste ash. I don't know what happened, but somehow or another, the old harbour was recognised as being a historical feature. I think it was about 1965, when the SSEB were made to take all the ash out of the harbour basin and reinstate it to the condition it was in when they put the ash into it.

APPENDIX II IMPORTS AND EXPORTS

Morrison's Haven – Exports by date

1543	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coal. • Salt. • Hides. 	
Pre 1660	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salt. 	England, Holland & Sweden.
Post 1660	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salt. 	The Baltics, England, Germany & Holland.
1684-1685	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coal. 	France, Hamburg, London & Netherlands.
1686	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oysters. 	Riga, Latvia.
Late 1600's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eggs, Stockings & Cloth. • Kelp. • Tallow • Skins (Wool, Lamb, Hair even Dog Skins), Malt, Salt & Coals. • Salt, Tobacco, French and Dutch goods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • London. • Newcastle. • Holland. • France. • England.
Post 1698	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glass. • Stoneware & Brownware. • Oil of Vitriol, Aquafortis, Spirit of Salt, Glauber Salts & White Ashes, Sulphuric Acid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Europe, North America & West Indies. • Europe.
1777-1786	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oysters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hull, London & Newcastle.
1788-1796	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stockholm.
1790-1800	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grain, Coal & Salt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
1845	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oysters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hartlepool, Newcastle & Shields.
1887-1930's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coal, Bricks & Claypipes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Baltics, Germany.

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Morrison's Haven - Imports by date

1544	• Pitch, Lead	• Netherlands
1620–1645	• Iron Plate.	• Sweden
Pre 1707	• Wool.	• England
1705	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brandy, Claret & Cherrie Sack • Beer. • Tobacco. • Soap, Bricks, Glass, Paper & Rope. • Wrought Copper & Brass, Wrought Iron & Steel, Swedish Copper Kettles, Iron Cooking Pots. • Hats and Gloves. • Russia Leather • Dutch Silk, Whalebone & Delft. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Norway • Germany • America via England • England & Holland • Rotterdam • England • Danzig • Holland
1719	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety of Goods. • Tobacco • Timber. • Bar-iron. • Flax & Hemp. • Currants, Raisins, Figs, Prunes, Oranges, Lemons, Sugar Loaf & Sugar Candy. • Hops. • Apples and Onions. • Wine. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Norway, Sweden, Dantzig, Bremen, Rotterdam, Harve de Grace, St. Martin & Oporto • Maryland • Norway • Sweden • The Baltics • England & Holland (countries of origin, Spain and France) • England (Newcastle) • Holland • Europe
Late 1700's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clay • Flint. • White & Red Lead. • Saltpetre. • Brimstone. • Timber. • Grain, Raw Materials for acid works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devonshire, England • Gravesend, England • Hull, London & Newcastle • East India Company, London • Leghorn • Norway
Pre 1812	• Sulphur	• Italy
Pre 1843	• Tallow	• Australia
1887-1930's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timber for Pit Props • Rock Salt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Baltics • Cheshire, England

APPENDIX III
MORRISON'S HAVEN MISCELLANIA FROM
THE *HADDINGTONSHIRE COURIER*

8th June 1860

The fishing reports for this date showed that the majority of Prestonpans' boats had left for the summer fishing grounds, found along the north coast of Scotland, or down in Yarmouth, England. Prior to setting sail, the fishermen indulged themselves in a nip of The Glenlivet, following "...a time-honoured custom." All told, a combined fleet of approximately one hundred boats from Morrison's Haven and Cockenzie harbours departed.

8th August 1862

Four new cases of infectious diseases in the Western District of East Lothian are confirmed – all occurring at Morrison's Haven. The illnesses in question were; 3 cases of crysipelas and one case of scarlatina.

24th December 1875

The extensive alterations to the haven, undertaken by the Prestongrange Coal and Iron Company Limited are reported at this time as being finally completed after the said Company had become lessees of the site a mere two years prior. The paper reports that during this two year period, "...a great enterprise has been exhibited", with the building of a large brick and tile works and branch railway lines laid down. It also comments on the elaborate arrangements made for the pumping out of a "drowned-out pit known as the Low Pit". It is noted that present coal production at the site is almost 1000 tons per week and once the Low Pit is again workable, a futher 500 tons can be expected to be added to this output. A large trade in the manufacture of firebricks and pipes is also noted.

23rd March 1893

A report on the annual Fisherman's Walk informs that upon conclusion of official business, Office Bearers elected and so on, a collection was made which raised £3.00, described as a

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“handsome sum” in aid of the Royal Infirmary. The assembly then marched through the town accompanied by the Newtongrange Brass Band, and ended up at Prestongrange House where a dance had been laid on by Lady Susan Grant-Suttie for the Fisherfolk and her own servants and estate workers. The report concludes that the streets of Prestonpans were full of dancing fisher families until a very late hour.

30th June 1893

A successful fishing expedition to the Irish grounds with crews averaging a very profitable £120 each is reported on this date. Apparently, the Irish fishermen and their families were falling over one another to offer hospitality to their Scottish peers and a great deal of friendly socialising occurred. The Prestonpans men left, vowing to return.

14th July 1893

A rendezvous of an unpleasant nature, with a foreign fishing boat, is reported. At the Lowestoft fishing grounds, a Belgian vessel armed with a “razor-sharp prow”, drove through the nets of a Prestonpans boat with the result that six new nets were lost. That the crime was a deliberate one can be deduced from the fact that the Skipper of the offending, Ostend registered, boat had taken the care to cover the registration number of his ship with a rag. Reports indicate that the Scottish fisherman’s experience in the English grounds were not nearly so positive as that in Ireland, described above. It was even claimed to be almost impossible to get an English fisherman standing quayside to catch a rope thrown from another [Scots] ship coming in to berth. The Scottish fisherman’s motto in English waters was always “Safety in Numbers”.

24th November 1893

Violent storms out in the Firth of Forth resulted in a 600 ton German steamer called the Alsen of Hamburg, to come aground on the reefs west of Morrison’s Haven. The ship had been heading for Methil in Fife when the storm forced her to put down her anchor in a bid to ride out the gales. Despite the best efforts of her crew, the winds proved too forceful and, firing off distress flares and sending out “Mayday” signals, she was washed aground. A tug came out from Leith in an attempt to get her off the rocks but it was not until almost 24

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hours after their ordeal began, that the 16 strong crew were able to get off their stricken ship. The rescue took four trips to complete and once ashore the Harbourmaster at Morrison's Haven took charge of finding beds and a warm meal for the grateful men. When the storm had blown itself out, the next high tide floated their ship with surprising ease from the rocks that had appeared to hold her so fast, and astonishingly she was relatively undamaged and able to continue with her voyage. These same storms also washed a life boat bearing the name "Lark, Sunderland" ashore at the Haven, but as no boat of that name was in the vicinity of the Forth at the time, no lives were considered lost or in danger.

APPENDIX IV IMPORTANT DATES

- 1526 Existence of harbour established which is known as Newhaven. At this time it measured 1.5 Scots acres, including “lie greene” (area for paddock/garden/buildings) with permission to build a tide mill.
- 1541 Harbour improved by “feuar” Alexander Acheson, and takes new name, Acheson’s Haven.
- 1700 Harbour extensively remodelled by William Morison, owner of Prestongrange Estates (from this date increasingly known as Morrison’s Haven).
- 1753 Repairs to Harbour undertaken after monies raised by tax levied on ale consumed, manufactured or vended in Parish of Prestonpans. Plan shows depth of harbour at 13 ft with the pier having natural rock to the seaward side, and dressed stone to the interior. At this time the harbour appears to be open mouthed to the East and West. Presumably the pier could only be reached by boat when the tides were in or on foot when they were out. (1753 map, Peck & Co. See Appendix V – List of Maps)
- 1796 Tide mill in operation grinding flint for potteries.
- 1799 Map shows the harbour in its familiar form, with the east end enclosed. (1799 map, Forrest. See Appendix V – List of Maps.
- 1853 A survey at this time produced a map showing Morrison’s Haven with a school and the tide mill operating as a saw mill. (1853 map, 6” County Series. See Appendix V – List of Maps)
- 1875–7 Major improvements carried out by Prestongrange Coal and Iron Company Limited. Increase in depth of harbour basin and new pier built to accommodate increased mining and fireclay operations in area. Rail lines from pit head and brick works leading to harbour wharf, installed. 1930’s Harbour area

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shown as being almost 2 acres in size, internal area = 720 ft by 160 ft with entrance width of 70 ft. (1907 map, 25" County Series. See Appendix V – List of Maps)

- 1930's Harbour used by pleasure boats and fishing craft, until silt prohibits boats entering or leaving. One ship named the "Topaz" left to rot in harbour basin. She was later blown up and buried when the harbour was in-filled.
- 1957 Harbour filled in using refuse and debris from the mine.

APPENDIX V MAPS

- 1753 *A plan of Morison's Haven as it now stands, 6th August 1753* Peck & Co., George Street, Edinburgh
- 1799 Forrest's map of 1799 one of earliest OS maps of area.
- 1825 Prestongrange Estate Upon a Reduced Scale from the Plans or Surveys of J Ainslie and William Forrest, 1812, with improvements since to 1825. Scottish Records Office Ref: RHP 41333/2
- 1849 Plan of Prestongrange Policy, the property of Sir George Grant Suttie, Bart., 1849. Scottish Records Office Ref: RHP 10006
- 1850 Plan of Morrison's Haven ascribed to J Fergusson and dated 1850
- 1853 6" County Series Surveyed 1853. Sheet 8, Haddingtonshire.
- 1870 Report by Dr Fulton 1896 showing Sir George Grant Suttie's Oyster Fishing Grounds. East Lothian District Council Local History Centre.
- 1907 25" County Series Surveyed 1893, Revision of 1906, Published 1907. Sheet IV.8 Edinburghshire. Sheet VIII.8 Haddingtonshire.

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