

Port Isaac fisherman Julian Brown shares some of his fishing memories

I remember ...

Cutting withies in the withy garden in Port Isaac valley with my father, Harold Brown, Raymond Provis and Nibs.

Watching my father making withy pots.

Selling small plaice and dabs around the village for 3d each which my father had caught by trawling.

Helping to gut whiting in the fish cellars also caught by trawl.

In my teens working a few pots and catching mackerel.

Making skivvers.

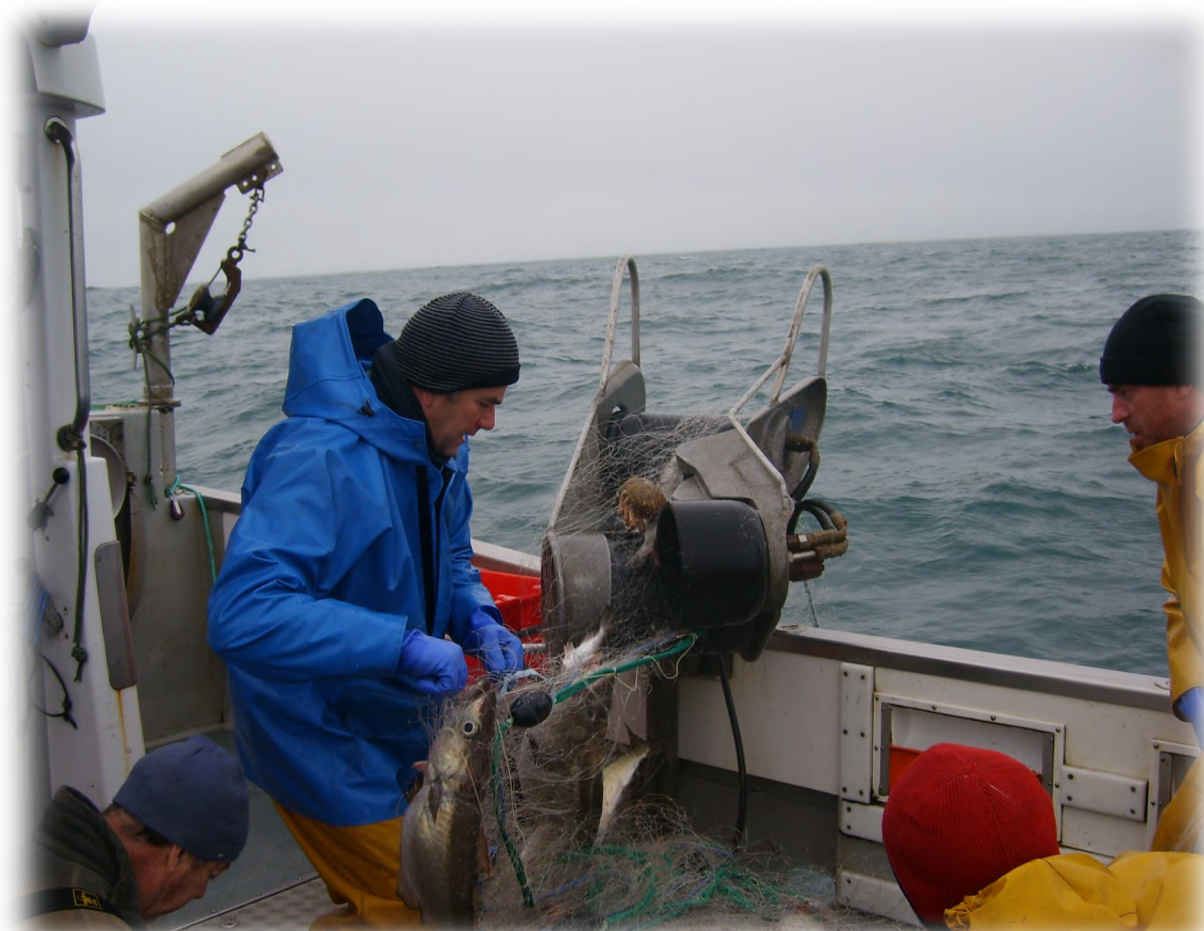
Going to sea on the WINIFRED with my father and Nibs and working pots made from telegraph pole stay wire. Pots were hauled using a winch made from a back axle and a gear box.



Father, Harold Brown



Brother, John lends a hand



Changes ...

I can't say that I have noticed any marked change in the seasons, some years fish are caught earlier than others, some later.

Since the decline of the herring fishery around the middle of the 20th century, the main catch has been lobster.

The types of fish caught have not changed since then, Port Isaac being primarily a shellfish port. The continental market opened up in the early 80s which led to better prices and a seasonal spider crab fishery.

There is a bit of netting for Pollack and Bass these days in the winter which I don't remember as a child but no trawling

Methods of fishing have changed hugely over the years.

For a while in the 80s there was a lucrative dogfish season in November. Spurdogs were caught on longlines where up to 2000 hooks were spaced at intervals on short "teases" and baited with mackerel. Catches of 300stone in a day were not uncommon. It is now illegal to land spurdogs

A few mackerel are still caught but nothing like the numbers of 40 years ago. No one really tries these days.



Son, Sam Brown

Equipment in the wheel house has become very sophisticated with equipment that tells you exactly where you are and whether the bottom is hard or soft. We have radar, vhf radios, echo sounders, chart plotters and gps sets. A far cry from my father's early days when he went to sea with a watch and a compass to navigate with!



that's fishing!



The gear we use now has changed in my time from withy pots, through home made wire pots to plastic and steel pots. Today we use almost exclusively, parlour pots. These have the advantage over the old inkwell types as they are able to hold the fish for longer which means that the season for potting now is now year round. This has been a factor in other fishing methods being dropped.

The old cotton herring nets have been replaced with nets made from nylon monofilament with mesh sizes reflecting the type of fish you're after.

All ropes now used are of man made fibres such as nylon or polypropalene.

The boats have become bigger and have more powerful engines. The corresponding increase in speed has made it possible to fish a much bigger area.



Julian Brown

Hydraulics and self hauling winches have made hauling pots much quicker. Self shooting (where the pots are pulled off the deck either through the transom or from a shelf) has also made the job quicker and has added to the safety since no one has to be too close to the ropes or pots as they are going over the side.

