



## OpenAIR@RGU

### The Open Access Institutional Repository at The Robert Gordon University

<http://openair.rgu.ac.uk>

This is an author produced version of a paper published in

International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research (ISSN 1355-2554)
---

This version may not include final proof corrections and does not include published layout or pagination.

#### Citation Details

##### Citation for the version of the work held in 'OpenAIR@RGU':

<b>SMITH, R., 2006. Narrating the decline of subsistence entrepreneurship in a Scottish fishing community: 1934-2004. Available from <i>OpenAIR@RGU</i>. [online]. Available from: <a href="http://openair.rgu.ac.uk">http://openair.rgu.ac.uk</a></b>
--

##### Citation for the publisher's version:

<b>SMITH, R., 2006. Narrating the decline of subsistence entrepreneurship in a Scottish fishing community: 1934-2004. <i>International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research</i>, 12 (1), pp. 40-62.</b>
--

#### Copyright

Items in 'OpenAIR@RGU', The Robert Gordon University Open Access Institutional Repository, are protected by copyright and intellectual property law. If you believe that any material held in 'OpenAIR@RGU' infringes copyright, please contact [openair-help@rgu.ac.uk](mailto:openair-help@rgu.ac.uk) with details. The item will be removed from the repository while the claim is investigated.

# **Narrating the decline of subsistence entrepreneurship in a Scottish fishing community: 1934–2004.**

*Robert Smith, Centre For Entrepreneurship, Aberdeen Business School, Robert Gordon University, Garthdee Road, Aberdeen, AB 10 7QE. E-Mail [robertnval@aol.com](mailto:robertnval@aol.com)*

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Purpose**

This research paper explores the decline of subsistence entrepreneurship in a ‘Scottish Fishing Community’, namely the village of Gourdon in Kincardineshire, Scotland over a sixty-year period. It presents the material in a historical perspective, as remembered by two persons who lived through the experience. The village, which once supported the livelihoods of a substantial part of the community, is now little more than a dormitory community. Where it once sustained in excess of sixty modest ‘business ventures’ it now struggles to sustain five. Entrepreneurship is often viewed as a discrete, abstract concept but it is also a spirit, which in this instance appears to have cruelly waned. Peasant and subsistence entrepreneurship are often associated with developing countries, but are nevertheless an integral part of the socio-economic developmental process, even in developed countries.

### **Methodological Approach**

Using two ethnographic accounts it reconstructs a vivid picture of a thriving form of subsistence type entrepreneurship, in a bygone era, when enterprise was more closely bonded to community activities, the work ethic and pride.

### **Findings**

This paper narrates a dramatic story relating to the economic decline visited upon a living community by the forces of market change affecting multiple income streams. In this tale, there are no heroes or villains, as is normal in narrative accounts, merely victims of changing circumstances and changing patterns of social action.

### **Research limitations**

The results of this research paper have obvious limitations, because of the methodology employed, and because of the limited number of respondents interviewed. However, socio-historical studies such as this have their place in developing an understanding of entrepreneurship as enacted in individual communities.

### **Originality**

This paper tackles an under researched area of rural entrepreneurship using narrative methods which bring the subject to life.

## **KEY WORDS**

Rural entrepreneurship, subsistence entrepreneurship, peasant entrepreneurship, work ethic.

## INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL ORIENTATION

This paper draws from entrepreneurship theory, economic history, economic geography and local history, but is primarily a study of rural entrepreneurship. It is an attempt to understand social practices in a bygone age as well as being an attempt to locate entrepreneurship within a fishing community, in which it is not a self-evident phenomenon. This paper was made possible by the narratives of the two respondents, Robert Gove and Nan Smith [1]. In recounting this introductory history of Gourdon, I am indebted to the painstaking historical research which has been conducted by Robert Gove. Another valuable source of material was from the booklet “*Johnshaven and Miltonhaven*” by Adams (1991).

Peasant and subsistence entrepreneurship are often associated with third world or developing countries, but both have always been an integral part of the socio-economic developmental process, even in developed countries. This study explores and narrates the decline of subsistence entrepreneurship in a Scottish Fishing Community over a sixty-year period. Using two ethnographic accounts it reconstructs a vivid picture of a thriving form of subsistence type entrepreneurship, in a bygone era, when enterprise was more closely bonded to community activities, a work ethic, pride and hubris. It is perhaps necessary to explain the usage of terms such as ‘work ethic’, ‘hubris’, and ‘pride’, all of which are central to the analysis. It must be stressed that whilst these are all complex and dense notions, imbued with formal academic meanings embedded in specific academic discourses, they nevertheless possess everyday connotations. Their usage in this paper is grounded in the everyday sense, in that both respondents Robert and Nan, being steeped in a rural Protestant upbringing are deeply familiar with them. Indeed, the words were theirs, not mine. The respondents have lived and enacted these concepts, experiencing them first hand. Moreover, Robert Gove is an academic and local historian who has read Max Weber’s seminal work on the Protestant Work Ethic, but Nan, a non academic reader, is equally comfortable with these notions. Robert and Nan appreciate the significance of the work ethic on their lives and can identify hubris and pride when they encounter it.

Also, the juxtaposition of the words subsistence and thriving may appear bizarre but the system was a thriving one, albeit that it held those engaged in it in thralldom, because it made virtual slaves of them. Those held in its grip were trapped by the necessity to work. It provided a living, but not a serious opportunity to make good. This paper tells a dramatic story of the economic decline visited upon a living community by the forces of market change and changing patterns of social action. In this tale, there are no heroes or villains, as is normal in narrative accounts, merely perhaps victims of changing circumstances. In using the phrase ‘victims of changing circumstances’, I do not seek to imply passive reaction on the part of the local people to the market, ideology, structures and so forth. This would not be empirically or theoretically tenable. However, this paper presents the historical material in a narrative form, as remembered by two persons who lived through the experience. The system of subsistence entrepreneurship (in the

developed world) has passed into history and the village is a shadow of its former glory and is now little more than a dormitory community. It is difficult to envisage how it once sustained in excess of sixty modest 'business ventures'. It now struggles to sustain five. The spirit of entrepreneurship like the village itself appears to have cruelly waned.

The now quiet fishing 'toun' [2] of Gourdon, by Montrose, which nestles in the lea of the North Sea, in the Scottish County of Kincardineshire, once proudly supported itself both socially and economically because of an intricate subsistence type economy. Fathers and sons, husbands and wives, brothers and uncles, fishermen and boys, all eked out a hard, precarious living from the once bountiful sea and surrounding dour farmlands. Poignantly, but also inevitably, those halcyon days are gone. In their place, the village is now a commuter dormitory, dependent upon the economic prosperity of other areas. It is a scene, repeated and enacted in numerous rural enclaves, across the rural landscape of Britain [3].

This study examines the interdependent socio-economic structures, which sustained the community. Ironically, despite the high levels of enterprise discernable in the narratives in this paper, the word entrepreneur is not one, which naturally rolls off the Gourdon tongue. Indeed, like many rural communities in Scotland, it is seldom spoken nor heard in conversation. Notwithstanding this, its influence is traceable in the shifting macroeconomics of the business community. This mini-ethnographic study articulates the 'rise and fall' of these influences over three decades, charting the near collapse of a system of subsistence type entrepreneurship – which may be viewed as a peculiar Scottish strain of peasant entrepreneurship. Sadly, but of necessity it concentrates upon the process of decline which differentiates it from most other studies of entrepreneurship. Change is part and parcel of the entrepreneurial process and is perhaps inevitable. It can be sudden and dramatic even Schumpeterian (Schumpeter, 1934), or it can be slow, and incremental as in this case, a gradual, lingering decline. Yet, we can learn from the changes and from the lessons learned by others throughout history. After all, entrepreneurship is a vital element in the socio-economic well being of communities.

The village of Gourdon is and was a typical Scottish fishing village and as such was just one of many across the Scottish seaboard. In the short stretch of coast between Aberdeen and Montrose there were many others including Cove, Muchalls, Stonehaven, Catterline, Inverbervie, Johnshaven, and Ferryden. Each has and had its own distinct culture and local identity. As villages they were proudly self sufficient, despite forming part of a wider socio-economic system. Gourdon exists on the periphery of the North East of Scotland and is by tradition a fishing village. In Old Scots it means 'Goat Hill'. It is situated approximately one mile from the market town of Inverbervie, which was granted the status of a Royal Burgh by King David. It stands under the shadow of the hill known locally as 'David's Mount' in commemoration of this honour. The first recorded reference to the village was in 1315 when it was spelled "Gurden", which is how its inhabitants still pronounce it. By the 15<sup>th</sup> century it was a thriving fishing port and by the 17<sup>th</sup> century the population had risen to 200 people. In 1819 the Laird of nearby Hallgreen Castle who owned the harbour commissioned the building of the west harbour,

which was built by Thomas Telford. By 1830 Gourdon harbour was being used for the export of locally grown grain and the importing of coal from Newcastle. During this period the industrial and agricultural revolutions were in full bloom. The railway came to Gourdon in 1865 and immediately made an impact upon the fishing industry and to the economic viability of the village. The fish were loaded onto the steam trains at the 'loading bank' and were transported quickly to the fish markets in Glasgow, Birmingham, Manchester and Billingsgate in London. This created new opportunities and encouraged a healthy competition. Prior to then, the fishermen of Gourdon and other nearby villages such as Johnshaven had to transport the fish in horse drawn carriages or handcarts to the nearest railway siding at the inland hamlet of Fourdon. The railway had arrived at Fourdon in 1847. Prior to then the fish had to be transported by 'horse drawn gigs' to a more localised market, for example to inland villages such as Fettercairn, Auchenblae and Drumlithie. The coming of the railway thus allowed innovation, which expanded the market. What is striking about this account is the interconnectedness of things. This makes a telling theoretical point about entrepreneurship, in that it does not, and cannot stand in isolation from the wider scheme of things.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century a 'tied fishing' system was in operation, financed by landowners such as the Laird of Hallgreen who derived income from it by charging landing dues, loaning money, financing boats. Fishermen were thus tied to the laird by economic necessity. The laird owned the harbour, the houses, the drying greens and the boats. No free movement was permitted thus fishing traditions developed within families located in the village. There was very little cross fertilisation with other fishing communities such as Johnshaven. This tied system was anti-entrepreneurial in that there was very little incentive for anyone to improve their lot. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the tied system died out and gave way to a new breed of "*Free Fishermen*". This paved the way for change towards a freedom of sorts, and with change comes entrepreneurial opportunity. Adams (1991) describes the decline of smaller fishing hamlets such as Miltonhaven, Seagreens and Tangleha around this time. This demonstrates that changes had already to the fishing industry prior to the period under study. In a similar manner, contemporary changes are now affecting once thriving, larger fishing towns such as Aberdeen, Fraserburgh and Peterhead.

I am familiar with the village, but not of it. My mother Nan was born and lived there and my uncle Robert still does. Being a country loon [4] I am not drawn by the call of the sea. My fondest memories of it are of childhood visitations, invariably of a Saturday afternoon. I remember walks along the pier, playing on the beach until darkness, swans gracefully swimming in the harbour, Gala days with the obligatory bunting, trips on a fishing boat, jumble sales, lucky dips, fish and chips, ginger beer and sweeties from Miggie Lownies shop - then back to my grannies to catch the football scores or watch 'Doctor Who' on the black and white telly. Oh, and being truthful -hours of intermittent boredom when one spoke, only when spoken to. In my mind's eye, I see the harbour full of fishing boats, tied bow to bow and in my childhood reminiscences they reminded me of Viking Longships. I also recall a bustle of activity, of groups of fisherman and old men standing at the Market Cross, huddled on the pier. Then it had an air of purpose and

prosperity. In visiting it now, there are only five small boats in the harbour and if one is lucky they will see a fleeting glimpse of a person on the pier. Alas, there is no chip shop, nor Miggie Lownie's shop now. As demonstrated by this paragraph, when dealing with remembrances of time and place there is a danger of lapsing into nostalgia and romanticism. Nevertheless, location provides a definite sense of belonging.

The genesis of this study began several years ago in my mind. My peripatetic travels bring me into close contact with many rural villages in the North east of Scotland. During such visits, I am always struck by the obvious and palpable commercial decline of such communities. It is visible in the architecture of the buildings, which once served another purpose, in the decaying signage of forgotten shop fronts and in the oral histories of the elderly if one takes the time to speak to them. These cruelly advertise the waning of once prosperous business ventures. When a rural business venture fails and passes from being it leaves a visible scar on the face of the community. Thus twenty years after a venture has ceased it is often still possible to look at a building and imagine it in its former glory. In towns and cities such businesses are quickly forgotten and the visible signs expunged because the premises are usually reoccupied or converted into dwellings. Not so in rural communities.

This paper has four sections. The first introduces and discusses the concepts of peasant and subsistence entrepreneurship. The second deals with the methodology and explains the nature of the research carried out. The third deals with the narrative accounts of the respondents. The fourth and final section consists of an analysis of pertinent data extracted from the interviews and explains what meaning we can draw from the study. We now turn to consider the concepts of peasant and subsistence entrepreneurship and how these relate to this study.

## LOCATING SUBSISTANCE ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN A SCOTTISH FISHING COMMUNITY

There are few academic studies of the fishing industry which deal specifically with entrepreneurship. General studies include those of Pollock (1988) and Miller (1999). The study of Pollock was a PhD thesis into the fishing industry in County Down in Ireland between 1860 and 1939, whilst the study by Miller relates specifically to the history of the fishing industry in Scotland. Two exceptions to the general rule are the works of Mumby-Croft & Hackley (1997) and Pennewiss (2004) which are of interest because they deal directly with abstractions of entrepreneurial knowledge as set in the fishing industry. The work of Mumby-Croft & Hackley related to a case study of a fish processing business. It is an insightful account of the former fish processing venture of one of its authors, viewed from the perspective of that author (in later life) as an entrepreneurship scholar. What is exciting about it is that it looks back upon a lived experience with the benefit of a knowledge set gained from another life experience. The work of Pennewiss relates to the decline of the traditional fishing industry on a Greek Island. It is a tale of persistence and determination by an older generation to eke out a

living in frugal changing times. In this respect, it gels nicely with the general theme of this paper. Of interest is the fact that Pennewiss obtained her insight by conducting ethnographic interviews with fishermen. The gulf between the two types of studies discussed above is vast and it is apparent that entrepreneurship must be read out of (or into) such accounts. In essence, it is necessary to deliberately construct a space in narrative in which entrepreneurship can be brought to life.

This section provides a review of the literature and main themes of peasant and subsistence entrepreneurship. The literature on peasant entrepreneurship owes much to a number of anthropological studies such as Barth (1963) and (1967) but also to criminology. The notions of peasant and subsistence entrepreneurship are well established and as an entity they both exist at the lower spectrum of the entrepreneurial opportunity scale. As such, they have perhaps escaped scrutiny. Indeed, much of my existing knowledge is gleaned from sociological or anthropological studies grounded in a criminological endeavour – for example in such texts as Blok (1974) and Arlacchi (1983). These studies, being located in the literature of criminology tend to focus upon issues of marginality and deviance, perhaps over magnifying their importance. Other studies into peasant entrepreneurship include those of Thomas & Znaniecki (1984), Pipes (1974), and Long & Roberts (1984). In Britain, much of the literature on peasant entrepreneurship is located in the literature of class and in particular studies relating to the working class.

Both peasant and working class entrepreneurship have perhaps escaped the glare of serious research scrutiny because existing research has concentrated upon the more heroic elements of the enterprise culture and the link with big business. In the latter there is both money and kudos to be gained from researching the phenomenon. Also, historically derived research seldom engenders much interest from politicians and policy makers. Furthermore, the current system in relation to research grants favour the research of technical aspects of e-commerce, corporate entrepreneurship and other high profile topics associated with new venture creation. This is paradoxical because it could be argued that peasant entrepreneurship is a breeding ground of and arguably even the font for the entrepreneurial spirit of individual ethnic groupings. This study was influenced by the style of the work carried out by the anthropologist Anton Blok (1971) in his seminal study “*Violent Peasant Entrepreneurs: The Mafioso of a Sicilian Village –1860-1960*”. Anthropological approaches still have much to add to developing our understanding of entrepreneurship, as do other studies such as this one which examine entrepreneurship as enacted in different socio-economic contexts. A classic example of such a work is the study by Hobbs (1988) “*Doing the Business*” which examined entrepreneurship as enacted in the working class communities of East End London. This paper draws upon similar methods, style, and broad subject area.

Peasant entrepreneurship is a story of familial enterprise, expressed as a life theme. The eminent criminologist Pino Arlacchi (1983:10/24) discusses peasant enterprises and peasant entrepreneurial families. For Arlacchi (1983:16) the Southern Italian peasant wore “*the mask of the entrepreneur, constantly on the look out for a way to turn the odd penny, but it was a grotesque mockery of the genuine entrepreneur*”.....an entrepreneur

*without an enterprise*". Despite the inability of such persons to influence the market the basis of the family enterprise lay in its integration of economic production within family relationship whereby non-economic influences provided the essence of economic activity (ibid.:24). Indeed, Thomas & Znaniecki (1984) refer to this phenomenon as "*familial solidarity*". Marginality conditions those exposed to it to become hardened, cynical and taciturn and to accept their lot. In this case, family life lay at the basis of social success. In keeping with the times, families tended to be larger than at present and displayed a great deal of familial solidarity. In times of social harmony peasant communities bind their inhabitants closely together by accentuating the ties of communal work and shared life experiences. The repetitive, cyclic nature of everyday work provides a cohesive pattern to communal existences. In this case, time and the tides governed the pace of village life and crime was almost non-existent. Arlacchi (1983:130) makes reference to a "*peasant pole of social order*" whereby social mobility was dependent upon subservience to the aristocracy. In this case, the village was bound together by a system of intense sociality. Furthermore, the phenomenon of peasant entrepreneurship is essential to the entrepreneurial construct because the plight of the peasant is a universally understood story. Escaping from a peasant lifestyle provides one with a motive to spur one into action. It fits well with the notion of hubris inherent in the entrepreneurial narrative. For instance, Alongi (1894, as cited by Hess, 1998:38) makes reference to small landowners as being "*perverted by smug pride at having risen from the mass of the peasantry*". The factors discussed by Arlacchi can collectively be referred to as marginality and indeed overcoming marginality is a main theme in entrepreneurial narratives. The historian Pipes (1974:87), discusses the Russian peasant class of people referred to as the "*Muzhik*" (little man). The Russian peasant was tied to his village and his allegiance was subordinated to the communal aims of the village. There was thus no social ladder for the entrepreneurial peasant to climb. In this case there was also no peasant pole of order either. Often, to achieve social mobility entailed leaving the village.

Although the above account is interesting in its own right, one may well ask what it has to do with the dynamics of a fishing community in a bygone era. Fishing villages such as Gourdon and neighbouring Johnshaven were cohesive (almost to the extent of being hermetically sealed) peasant communities whose inhabitants did not mix much with others. Gourdon was one of those places where everybody is related to a greater or lesser degree and everyone knew everyone else's business. Poverty, low income generation capabilities, poor housing conditions, over crowding, class, a lack of educational opportunity and the rural demography of early 19<sup>th</sup> century Scotland, such as the poor state of roads in the rural infrastructure conspired against the people of the village who became products of their time as if raised to work. Indeed, it was as if the proverbial Scots saying of "*work or want*" rang in their ears.

Peasant entrepreneurship is more commonly associated with the poorer underdeveloped Catholic Countries such as Italy, Spain, France, South America and the third world. In these countries the word peasant is one which induces an intense pride, whereas in Protestant countries the term does not have the same social cache. Indeed it is a derogatory term and particularly in Scotland is one we would refrain from using. Referring to the working classes as peasants is a step too far. In Scotland the egalitarian



writings of Robbie Burns with his now famous words “*A mans a man for o that*” and the colloquial phrase “*We’re all Jock Thompson’s bairns*” demonstrate a Scots cultural solidarity towards the working class and the common working man. Perhaps this goes some way towards explaining why so little has been written about the subject of peasant entrepreneurship in a Scottish context. It is surprising that this is so because poverty and marginality are part and parcel of societal problems wherever one is in the world. Thus little has been written about collective forms of subsistence entrepreneurship, of “*making do*” as opposed to “*making good*”. Subsistence entrepreneurship, particularly in a rural setting is about surviving and making the best of opportunities. It is about tapping into multiple income streams (Carter, 2004), engaging in pluriactivity (Carter, *et al* 1996), and extracting value from the Arcadian environment (Anderson, 1995).

How does one locate and research a social phenomenon that was not understood to be entrepreneurship at the time and occurred over in the past? We now turn to consider the methodology used in this study.

## METHODOLOGY

This study is a study of subsistence entrepreneurship across a defined timeline and spans historical as well as sentimental dimensions. The methodologies used are of a qualitative variety but the main methods used are those of narrative, storytelling and ethnography. The use of ethnography, or to be more precise auto-ethnography, in relation to exploring the fishing industry from an entrepreneurial perspective has been done before by Mumby-Croft & Hackley (1997) in their Sea King Case Study in which they discuss one of the author’s fish merchants business as an entrepreneurial venture. This study uses ethnographically based in-depth interviews with two elderly inhabitants of the village Robert and Nan to collect their recollections and reminiscences of village life and to gather research data from their stories – remembrances of village life and also of what they remember about the business community. These stories contain insights into an enterprise discourse that tells a collective story of change. As these respondents were not directly involved in the business communities the resultant case study constructed is one that spans the case study typologies of Objective Milieu and Multiple Story posited by Perren & Ram (2004:86). This makes them unusual in terms of entrepreneurship research, which normally focuses upon the heroic personal stories of entrepreneurs. The objective and multiple story models both offer differing explanation than one would normally expect to encounter because the former focuses upon the creation and extraction of value from an environment, whilst the multiple stories format acknowledges the involvement of many social actors Both permit the weaving of causal connections into the narrative logic thereby silencing the questing hero’s voice Both also permit us to avoid the anthropomorphizing of the case study by focusing upon the history of the village instead of treating the village as if it were a person capable of displaying entrepreneurial traits or actions (Perren & Ram, 2004:88-89).

The interviews were not tape-recorded. This was specifically at the request of Robert and Nan. Whilst it could be argued to be a methodological flaw, it actually made the writing up of the study easier. This is because the relevant information was literally embedded within a dense mass of reminiscences containing local bynames or relating to places or the names of numerous colourful characters that populate the narratives. To an ethnographer, local historian, anthropologist, or a sociologist the raw data may be of immense interest, but to an entrepreneurologist the narratives may be of marginal interest. As an entrepreneurship scholar the entrepreneurial content had to be visualised and then extracted from the data. Indeed, one had to read it between the lines as a silent dialogue. From these ethnographic narrative accounts a rich 'living' portrait is crafted of an era, as it was lived and experienced by them from childhood to old age. From the data a picture of the local business community and its surrounding environs is constructed, which documents the prolific enterprising nature of the inhabitants in a sociological - anthropological style. The data thus extrapolated allows us to conduct a sociological style analysis of aspects such as class, gender and demography that are embedded deep within. It is thus a collective remembrance of an enterprise discourse that tells a story of change. As such it is a methodology, which is deeply subjective and interpretative in nature.

To triangulate the emerging data and to bring the study to life, I initially envisaged that historical research from newspapers and local archives would provide a harder, more empirical approach to counter balance the subjectivity of the narrative element. I believed that this semi-reliance upon archival materials would act as a balancing mechanism and that a trawl of archives would permit the introduction of a semiotic element to the study via the insertion of visual data in the form of photographs to add depth, dimension, character, potency and vibrancy to the study allowing readers to enter a bygone golden age in rural affairs. Yet, after careful consideration I changed my mind because after all, is it possible to locate entrepreneurship from an ageing photograph? I say this because entrepreneurship is an abstract concept that is best identified in narrative and often has to be read out of a text, in the best tradition of hermeneutics (Outhwaite, 1986). Having said this when I wrote this paper I had photographs and postcards with scenes of the village life at hand to capture the mood of the times. As the title of this paper indicates, narrative was the principal method chosen. This is fitting because, as will be discussed, this paper began its life as a result of two afternoons spent in conversation and storytelling with the respondents, narrating their past.

## NARRATING THE PAST

This section attempts to build up a picture of a local business community from the remembrances of two now elderly respondents. This ethnographic approach is a common methodology used in researching economic history. See for example Jamieson and Toyne (2000) "*Country Bairns: Growing Up 1900-1930*".

Robert's story.....

In narrating the past, Robert became very animated and revelled in the telling and retelling of his stories. Storytelling comes easily to Robert. Indeed, it was Robert who

indirectly initiated this research by instigating the conversation. Robert was staying at my house and over a cup of tea asked how my studies were progressing. After a less than concise explanation from me, Robert then remarked “*Not many people in Gourdon would even know what the word entrepreneur meant*”. Robert then remarked that the only true entrepreneurial class of people in Gourdon were the Fish Merchants, because they were the only ones with sufficient capital in the village to exploit opportunities. According to Robert everyone else had to ‘*Make do*’. Robert stressed “*People had great pride and took pains to hide their poverty*”. Robert narrated a heroic story of men who started their working lives as boy fishermen and saved enough capital to start a meagre business. Robert described them as being full of hubris despite having had little formal education. They came from poor families on the breadline. Some of them were brought up on the Parish relief system and moved from house to house because they could not pay the rent. According to Robert as their local legend grew and they become reckoned as ‘Big, big men’ they told little fibs about their roots and become swollen with pride. They were often prone to exaggeration and in many instances it was the economic necessity of supporting a family which made them into what they became, but they were dependent upon the hard work of their family as a source of cheap labour. The Fish merchants were amongst the first in the village to buy new cars, take holidays and wear fashionable clothing. Thus began a conversation that was to last several hours.

The normal method in such ethnographies is to quote large chunks of text verbatim, allowing the respondent their own voice. However, as this is a study relating to entrepreneurship and not local history it is not productive to do this. Robert told stories within stories and linked these together, dissolved into fits of laughter and tears, later returning time and time again to the same point. Laughter punctuated childhood reminiscences of – “*The Band of Hope – That hopeless band*”, or of being chased away from shop doors as a child. The Band of Hope operated from the Mission Hall and Robert vividly remembers a mantric song they had to learn – “*There are three things I must not do, I must not gamble, drink or chew gum. I must not stand in a Cinema Queue. I ain’t going to grieve the Lord no more*” – all to the accompaniment of a piano organ and clapping hands. Robert relived his stories. Whilst this may have little relevance to entrepreneurship *per se* it clearly demonstrates that moral values were important in the community. To locate the vivid world of subsistence entrepreneurship he alluded to, I had to constantly interrupt, direct and clarify. It became a mild but extremely productive form of interrogation.

From the conversations and stories told by Robert, a vivid picture of subsistence entrepreneurship emerged, clearly at variance with his assertion that the only entrepreneurs in Gourdon were the fish merchants. Robert brought various businesses back to life in story time. Adams (1991) quoting a respondent remarked that in the 1890’s Johnshaven had a vibrant business community, whereas Gourdon did not. Robert told a different story. For the purposes of clarity it is helpful to tabulate the business ventures discussed. See table 1 below. The gaps in the table denote a lack of remembrance. Nan later confirmed the veracity of the information.

**Please insert table 1 here**

Of interest is the remembrance that there were no joiners, electricians, plumbers, painters or undertakers operating from the village. All of these tradesmen were situated in nearby Inverbervie. Robert believes that this was because traditionally the sons of Gourdon fishermen either became fishermen themselves or joined the Merchant Navy. There were far too many shops to make a living. Robert also remembered former shops, which were already closed when he was a boy and in particular two in the Long Close, one of which was a Bake House and the other operated by a Katherine Milne. Another such remembrance was Jessie Blackies shop in Arbuthnott Street. In the narratives Robert was often unintentionally disparaging referring to some of the ventures as “*miserable concerns*”. One exception was that of Bannerman’s shop, which was part of an entrepreneurial chain started by a reputedly ruthless Aberdeen Businessman Watt Hepburn in the 1890’s. According to Robert, Hepburn started his business delivering groceries to boats in Aberdeen on his pedal cycle. He apparently developed an empire of over 80 bakeries and village shops by supplying goods to the previous owners and extending them unlimited credit. When the debt rose to over £100 he would foreclose on the debt and obtain the shop at a reduced price. He then placed an Agent in charge of each shop. Nan also spoke of this and remembered that Hepburn owned nearly every Country shop in Kincardineshire.

#### Nan’s Story.....

Nan’s story differs significantly from Roberts in both tone and style. Nan remembers a proud village with men of great independence and character. She is at pains to stress that it was a self financing economy and that there was little or no mixing between the surrounding villages or even nearby Inverbervie. Indeed, there was intense rivalry. For her, Gourdon could have survived without Inverbervie but not vice versa. She recalls with glee the saying from her childhood that “*The folk of Bervie look down their noses at Gurdeners but don’t look down their noses at their money*”. Nan also remembers the Mission Hall and the Band of Hope. She recalls regular Soiree’s where the children were handed bags of buns. This benevolence was courtesy of local shop keepers or members of the business community (Philanthropy on a small scale, or merely the milk of human kindness)? Indeed, Nan remembers a system of selfless reciprocity, where old men helped unravel the fishing lines or mend the creels for a free meal or the price of a pouch of tobacco, a world where some people fed other people’s bairns when times were poor.

Nan remembers that it was all about “*Giving and getting a hand up*”. She remembers a definite work ethic, often for its own sake. Everyone, from the youngest to the oldest worked. Often it was a combined family effort, helping cousins and relatives, and being helped by them in return. Those that did not work were ostracised with the rhyme “*On the broo and the Parish too*”. It was a case of work or want because short of an inheritance prosperity was never guaranteed. There was little chance of escape, unless you were eccentric. Nan remembers her father’s uncle made a fortune on the stocks and shares but that it was seldom spoken of. The general theme was of reciprocity. People scratched each others backs, in the vernacular of the village. There was a tremendous

sense of unity and pride. In the 1940's to 1960's no one had to leave the village to work. The jobs were there if you wanted them.

Nan remembers her childhood as a time of gainful employment. From the age of ten she remembers working on occasion at the Commercial Hotel for a 'cashier' (cash in the hands – tax free), clearing tables and collecting glasses. At least it was paid employment. In her own words, "*her hands were never idle*" and that her life was ruled by the tides. She remembers getting up at the crack of dawn to cut up newspapers for baiting the fishing lines, gathering grass in the frost to line the creels, bashing open buckies and clams with a stone or a hammer to allow her mother Margery-Ann to bait the line. She remembers picking limpets from the rocks for the same purpose and having to handle lug worms. None of these activities were paid employment but were part of her familial duties. She laughs at the memory of earning occasional pennies by befriending employees of the railway who paid bairns like her for running errands to the bakery to get Gourdon softies or to a fish yard for a fry of fish for them to sell in Montrose. They also got a free hurl (ride) on the train. As a child Nan remembers helping her father at the harbour on a Saturday morning. She was good at counting and helped with sorting out the deals for the fishing boat her father owned. The dealing system was complicated and depended upon the number of debts. These dictated the size of the deals. There would be a deal for the boat, a deal for the fuel, a deal or deal and a half for the owners and a deal to pay insurance stamps. Nan kept her fathers books and operated a system at home of bills being placed on a spike until paid and ticked off her book. She recalls bi-annual trips to Montrose to a Solicitors Office to pay larger bills. She remembers what she now believes to have been shady double deals which occurred at the harbour when Solicitors runners came to the harbour. From the context and mood she sensed it was wrong. Nan left school at thirteen and worked in the fish yards at Graig and Waiters and then for Joe Craig where she worked until she left the village in 1957 to marry my father Ernest and begin a life of work on the land.

Both Nan and Robert discussed the fishermen themselves - they were a proud, independent breed of men who worked for themselves. Berths on boats tended to be allocated on a familial basis. In keeping with the times, many boys in Gourdon of necessity had to leave school at 14 with little schooling. In many cases the fishing was the only opportunity open to them, either that or join the Merchant Navy. Once in the occupation many were trapped into it as a way of life. Boats were social capital to be handed down to younger generation. Many boats were fully or partially owned by members of the business community in Gourdon, Montrose and Inverbervie. She remembers in excess of forty boats making a living from the sea. Their father Robert Gove was a self-employed fisherman, whose boat was called the Victoria. Nan remembers it with pride as a "*one man business*". Sadly, she recalls, the owners of such one man boats never grew past that stage. It was a way of life, or calling. Nan remembers a lot of fishermen whom she describes as "*comeday goday*" fishermen who only went to the sea when times were good. When things were bad they sold their shares in the boats and waited for better times. Nan remembers that those who made their fortunes, like her father, had the character and the perseverance to stick it out through thick and thin. In the bad years they supplemented their earnings by working on the land for the Farmers at

harvest time and had the sense to save their earnings for a rainy day. Nan saves her pity for the farm labourers because the average earnings of a common fish worker exceeded those on the land by £3 or £4 a week. She should know, she married a farm worker. The earnings of a self-employed fisherman were even higher. Nan remembers that her father Robert Gove, earned £100 in 1940, the week before he left for the War, a phenomenal wage in those days.

With the benefit of time, Nan also remembers the fish merchants as being entrepreneurs. For her they were working 'loons' [4], with no qualifications, who spotted an opening and grabbed it with hands, buying a lorry or van on the cheap and grafting hard to make ends meet until slowly the money came in. She appreciates that they often had a helping hand from wives and families. She remembers that it could be hard for them because it was such a cut throat business. The helping hand of reciprocity was not extended at that level. It was as if they cut themselves off from the village or vice versa. The sea was not for them and it would have been well nigh impossible for them to have afforded a boat anyway. Although the dream of having your own boat was a common one, perhaps achievable before the 1950's to 1960's in later years it was an impossible dream. The innovations which swept the fishing industry from the late 1960's and in particular the larger boats were a nail in the coffin of the system of subsistence entrepreneurship. Like farming, unless you had money, few people could contemplate the prohibitive bank loans.

Fear of poverty and penury features in the stories of Nan and Robert. This is most evident in their accounts of the travelling people who frequented the village. The travelling people had an encampment at the Bridge near Hallgreen Castle and a local saying used to scare the children was "*You'll land up at the briggie if you're nae careful*". The travelling people sold 'clothes pegs', mended pots and pans and begged for rags. Also there were six model lodging houses at David street, Inverbervie at one time and a common taunt used to be "*You'll end up at up at the modellie*". One of the principle factors in respect of this fear of poverty was that prior to 1947 there was no welfare state and consequentially, because there was no state pension people had to work hard to earn a living. An ability to laugh at yourself and ones predicament was a valuable commodity possessed by the older generation and black humour and sarcasm abounded.

Locating subsistence entrepreneurship within the narratives.....

From these two accounts above, a shadowy picture emerges of the economic subsistence strategies employed by the inhabitants of Gourdon. It also revealed the structure of the local business community over the duration of the study, mapping out the various levels of enterprise, in relation to each other, and provides a timeline for the natural demise and decline of the businesses. Change is a central facet of entrepreneurship and of life, *per se*. The decline discussed in this study occurred as a result of changing times and market circumstances. Income generation of a subsistence variety was very much part and parcel of everyday life in Gourdon. There were many ways of generating multiple incomes, for instance by taking on seasonal work, engaging in marginal employment

Seasonal Work: Engaging in seasonal work was an important facet in the lives of those raised in the village. This can be divided into work connected to the fishing industry and work connected to the rural hinterland. The most common type of seasonal work was that of the herring girls. Green *et al* (2000) talk of the lives and struggles of the Scottish herring girls or lassies that followed the fishing around the coast of Britain to undertake their work of cleaning and gutting fish. For Green *et al*, the image of the women worker as immobile and tied firmly to their local neighbourhoods in pre-suffrage Britain is not tenable. In discussing the herring girls, Green *et al* use the themes of routine and resistance. In many respects, entrepreneurship is driven by the tension between routine and resistance. The income provided by the rural hinterland provided a much needed, extra income to many in the community. The available seasonal work was mainly ‘the berries’ (summer) and ‘tattie picking’ (late autumn) in the nearby ‘Howe O’ The Mearns’. In this respect the experiences of those in the village mirrors the experience of many Scottish rural communities. It provided an extra income of marginal / subsistence value to those engaged in it. It also provided a valuable introduction to the world of work for many of the village children. It was also treated as an adventure – a bus trip, and a social occasion. The berries meant a trip to ‘Loughlands’ near Brechin, whilst the ‘tatties’ meant a shorter journey to various farms in the ‘Howe O the Mearns’, such as Fourdon, Auchenblae and Fettercairn. For the unruly, it permitted an opportunity to get into mischief and to engage in fights with other boys from neighbouring villages. Although the wages were poor, it was often supplemented by a ‘boiling’ of tatties (a bag of potatoes). Petty pilfering was a way of life for many, as for example in, filling ones empty ‘piece bag’ with tatties was considered acceptable to some of the workers. In many cases farmers turned a blind eye. Others did not. Many sold these in the village to gain an extra income. Many children in marginal families were kept of school after the allotted two-week school holidays by their parents of necessity, because they needed the money for the household. Another seasonal occupation was that of gathering ‘buckies’ primarily for the English markets. This was generally frowned upon by many in the village as being the province of the poorest sections of the community. This brings us to consider other marginal forms of employment. Nan remembers that her father Robert Gove also worked on the farms during lean years. Another strategy when times were bad was for him to work as a Salmon Fisherman between September and December, working out of the East End of Gourdon, St Cyrus and Montrose.

Marginal Employment: The main source of marginal employment, open to single women and widows alike was that of ‘baiting lines’ for their husbands, relatives or other fisherman of the village. If it were done for a husband it was most likely done as unpaid work. Baiting a line consisted of ‘shelling’ baskets of mussels and ‘baiting’ the line by attaching them to a hooked fishing line. It often entailed an early rise for the women to ensure that the lines were ready for the fisherman to catch the first tide. The women were paid a fixed sum dependent upon the length of the line. It was boring repetitive work which nevertheless required skill and manual dexterity to complete the task on time. The mussels were bought by the fisherman from ‘mussle’ merchants such as Joseph Johnston of America Street, Montrose, Moncur’s of Montrose, or direct from the Gourdon Fisherman’s Association whom also acted as mussel merchants. The mussels were picked by hand from the back sands at Montrose, the Tay Estuary, or from Newburgh in Fife.

Thus the fishing activities of smaller villages such as Gourdon were linked to a wider economic system.

Paid work: Working in the fish houses, gutting and preparing fish was one of the most prevalent jobs particularly for women and young girls. There were several such yards in the village and others in nearby Inverbervie. Another option was to work in the rag mills in Inverbervie. Again this was considered to be the province of the poorest sections of the community.

Illegal income: As in many Scottish rural communities a low level of poaching was carried out - mainly of rabbits and game from the surrounding countryside, either for the pot or to sell to the butchers. A thriving grey market for all forms of goods was there for those who had access to it. Being a fishing port and many of the sons of Gourdon being sailors – parcels from a variety of locations were sent home. It is hardly fair to refer to it as a grey market because it was more like a system of fair exchange.

These subsistence strategies when combined with regular employment allowed families to survive and have a little extra money to spend. It also kept the money circulating within the village, which is important because by the late 1960's early 1970's by which many of the businesses were closed or in decline the amount of money circulating within the village declined. Value generated within the village was sucked away to be spent in Montrose, Inverbervie and Stonehaven. Less creation results in less extraction and a vicious circle of decline occurs. See diagram 1 below for a visual representation of the village economy.

**Please insert diagram 1 here please**

Perhaps the decline of Gourdon was inevitable after the mid 1960's when the railways closed thus cutting off a valuable income stream. Transport prices increased making it unprofitable. Sea based incomes also declined in the late 1970's early 1980's due to the innovations in the fishing fleet with the increase in size of trawlers and the dominance of urban fishing centres at Aberdeen, Peterhead and Fraserburgh. The land based income stream has all but dried up being the province of migrant labourers. The existing hotel extracts value but generates little and the mobile shops have long given way to Super stores in nearby Stonehaven and Montrose. Free buses and the motor age make shopping there convenient. The communal pot of money has shrunk. Making a living from the village is now a difficult challenge.

The level of enterprise within the village is now a shadow of its former glory. The harbour is now almost silent. There are only four small fishing boats operating out of it. Despite this, at the time of writing, there are still six fish merchant businesses left in the village. Namely

- Alexander Gove & Sons
- Douglas Welsh
- David Ritchie
- Robert Warden



- Ian Craig
- Charles Bruce Dorward.

To survive they transport the fish from the fish market at Aberdeen. This practice has always occurred but used to be supplemented by fish from the local vessels. It is now time to consider the findings of this study.

## ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This study is of value to entrepreneurship scholars because it considers an alternative form of subsistence entrepreneurship in Britain that has hitherto been all but ignored. The study places an emphasis upon collective forms of value generation and extraction and adds a new dimension to peasant entrepreneurship other than the criminological and deviancy models. It is also a type of entrepreneurship that is far removed from the heroic narrative we are accustomed to reading. It is a narrative of making do, not making good and may open our eyes to current forms of enterprise which may be neglected. It is a narrative of cyclic change.

Furthermore, this paper opens up the notion of entrepreneurship both theoretically and empirically and presents the work in an original fieldwork setting and style. Also, it brings the reader into the subject area in an engaging way. It also demonstrates originality of theory, practice and application and uses innovative methodology making it a very interesting and different approach to entrepreneurship. However, it must be stressed that the current period studied in this paper is simply one among many, thus it should be borne in mind that whilst the historical analysis presented in this paper allows us to understand that the period we ourselves live in is probably no more remarkable than any other; it is our perspective that makes it seem so. Also, there is no peak of action or understanding relative to time, particularly the contemporary period.

The economy of rural villages such as Gourdon was a complex affair because the incomes of many were all interlinked. When the balance of an economy is changed by external forces decline may be inevitable but we could do well to learn from the lessons of history. This study has also demonstrated the value of narrative as a tool for uncovering and understanding elements of entrepreneurship. How else but in narrative could I have located subsistence entrepreneurship set in a historical format. Indeed, entrepreneurship comes to life in narratives forms. Of these ethnography and oral storytelling are powerful research tools. Building up layers of separate stories permits the multiple voicing advocated by Green *et al* (2000) and Perren and Ram (2004). Adopting this multiple voice approach permits us to look beyond the traditional entrepreneur as hero model. Indeed, new stories must be narrated in context for them to make sense.

One of the most significant findings of the study from a sociological perspective is that demographically, in Gourdon there appears to have been no middle classes. Thus Gourdon was a pragmatic rural working class enclave. Its sole purpose for existing was

the fishing industry and destructively, every activity was directed towards this end. To locate a significant middle class enclave you had to travel to Inverbervie and such streets as Castle Terrace, Hazel Grove and Farquhar Street where according to Nan the “*well to do*” doctors, lawyers, industrialists and mill owners lived in large houses. Many had servants. At one time there were nine flax mills in Inverbervie. This is important because in order to develop an entrepreneurial climate in a local community it is necessary to have working and middle class environments in close proximity. There was thus no visible ‘peasant pole of social order for the inhabitants of the village to climb. This more than anything ensured that entrepreneurial activity in Gourdon remained at a subsistence level. In addition, the entrepreneurial classes in Gourdon such as the fish merchants and publicans were visibly working class in speech and dress. They did not adopt middle class pretensions or mannerisms. Many Fish merchants had genuinely started from nothing and in a working class village where everyone knew everyone else’s business there was no opportunity for rising above one’s station in life.

The intense competition especially in relation to the number of shops was another factor which ensured that entrepreneurial activity was stifled. As in most small communities the shops and businesses were clustered together. There were sound reasons for the number of shops. Firstly, over crowding in the poorer houses meant a lack of cooking space for many families. Secondly, the long hours in the Mill or of the fishermen sometimes 6am to 6pm meant that a meal may consist of buying a pie from the bakers. In many families the women couldn’t cook so buying from the bakers or the chip shop was part of their staple diet. Thirdly, owing or running a shop was one way of increasing a revenue stream in a family and having a share in a boat and a shop ensured that one increased one’s chances of survival. In addition, many of the subsistence type shops were run by widows or elderly women.

It is also essential to further explore the notion of the work ethic, as embedded in the fabric of village life and also make an attempt to differentiate the local context of this paper from other examinations of peasant entrepreneurship discussed earlier in the paper. This is of relevance in relation to the decline of the community under examination. Issues relating to the socio-economic locale are clearly of importance in shaping the type of entrepreneurship practiced in Gourdon. These include religion, health and education. Education and in particular the lack of it played a role in shaping the economic fortunes of Gourdon. It had one Primary school and the junior and senior secondary schools were both situated in Inverbervie. Pursuing education was often not a viable option.

The predominant religion of the area is that of Protestantism. It must be stressed that traditionally, fishing communities in Scotland have been very religious communities. A strong faith is often required in dangerous occupations. However, the roots of this intense faith go back to the religious revival of the period 1848-1849 which swept over the fishing communities like a tidal wave. Missionaries followed the fishing fleet as it progressed from Shetland to Orkney to Peterhead and down the coast as the herring season progressed, ending up at Great Yarmouth in England. Open air meetings and baptisms were the order of the day. Such communities tended to sustain many sects and denominations.

Gourdon is situated in the Parish of Inverbervie and thus like many other smaller Scottish villages it does not have the physical edifice of a Church in its midst to legitimise it as a cultural centre. The nearest Church of Scotland 'Church' is at Inverbervie. This entails a mile and a half walk. It is a mere five minute journey by car, but takes approximately forty minutes by foot. In the early part of the twentieth Century 'The Church of Scotland' was influenced by class based practices which now appear to be discriminatory in nature. For example, members of the congregation had to pay a 'Pew' rent to the Kirk to ensure that they had a regular seat. It was not possible to sit where one liked. There were fifty 'Free' seats for the poor which could be occupied on a first come, first served basis. The majority of the 'Pews' were occupied by the middle class families of the shopkeepers, the well dressed tenant farmers and public officials. For this reason and others to be discussed many occupants of Gourdon chose to worship in their own village. They were able to do so, whilst maintaining the Protestant faith by attending the 'Mission Hall' already discussed above. This hall was originally provided for the people of the community by the North East Coast Mission operated under the auspices of the British Sailors Society. In 1914 it became the East Coast Mission. The meagre collections helped pay the wages of the missionary. The overall ethos of the mission was that of emotive evangelism which did not sit well with middle class sensibilities. Open air meetings were common in the summer evenings and another prevailing spirit was that of fundamentalism. The core members of the mission congregation were thus deeply moralistic in their outlook to life. However, in 1948 the British Society of Fishermen decreed that Gourdon was no longer a 'deep sea' port and withdrew the funding for the 'Mission Hall'. The Church of Scotland stepped into the void and up until the 1980's provided funding to allow the religious ministrations to continue. In the late 1980's the Church of Scotland responding to a harsh economic climate rescinded the funding, leaving it up to actual Ministers in residence to provide cover as they saw fit. What is fascinating about this scenario is that the religious fate of the village mirrors the economic fate. Religion and economics both governed by pragmatics.

Other religious sects practiced in the village included the Christian Brethren, The Free Church, The Episcopalian Church and Roman Catholicism. The Christian Brethren were also known as the Plymouth Brethren or 'Plummies'. They are a Protestant sect who are deeply moralistic and have a very strict work ethic. The Brethren ethos appealed to many women in the village. Meetings tended to be in members houses. The Free Church was situated in Inverbervie and was opened in 1843. It was also a strict fundamentalist Protestant sect which appealed to many fishermen. The Anglican or Episcopalian Church was also located in Inverbervie and was considered to be the church of the ruling elite, Lairds, Gentry and well to do business families. The nearest Roman Catholic churches to Gourdon were situated in Montrose and Stonehaven. Protestant hegemony, distance and geography made it an impractical religion of choice. Those of catholic faith worshipped in the privacy of their homes.

It is necessary to return to the question of pride and hubris. Hubris is not all about excessive pride and boasting. It can have negative manifestations where it reveals itself as the defence mechanism of concealment. In such a format it can become destructive as

secrecy is magnified. Fishers were often excessively secret about their earnings, not just to avoid paying excessive tax in times of plenty, but to avoid the embarrassment of revealing their lack of earning power to the shopkeepers and tradesmen with whom they competed for income. To ask a man about his earnings was to question his manhood and insult him. Many fishers distrusted banks and when they died it was not uncommon to hear stories about large sums of old and often withdrawn currency being found in places of concealment. This is a similar practice to the proverbial Farmers 'biscuit tin'. The fishers were also fiercely independent and often not ask for help even in times of dire need. They considered fishing their 'calling' and there was a definite correlation between strength, physical health and the ability to create value in the form of wealth. For many enduring the hardships of fishing symbolised their ability to pit their wits against the elements and the establishment. Also, the fishermen were often either too poor or too proud to attend the church at Inverbervie where they would have had to rent their 'Pew' and file past the well dressed Kirk elders and tenant farmers who stood at the door with the collection plate. The inability to pay money is a matter of pride. Many fishers did not want to reveal their poverty by the inability to leave a substantial donation in the collection plate. In addition, many did not have a dress suit to wear on a Sunday. Often with large families to feed and cloth the luxury of buying a Sunday suit was not open to them. Their lives were also dictated by time and tide to a certain extent thus Sunday was the traditional day for many fishermen to catch up on their sleep. Like many farm workers they could not refuse to work on the Sabbath, although many baulked at breaking the rule of resting upon the Sabbath day. They were intensely secret about their business and if asked where they were going or what they were doing would reply "I'm away to see a man about a dog" or some equally spurious answer. Thus as a general rule, the fishermen as a collective group practiced their religion in private excluding themselves from the criticism of the moral and self-righteous. As an indication of how peer group morality affected many fishermen, Nan tells a story of grown fishermen setting off for the harbour on a Sunday evening to catch an early tide but upon seeing the Minister or Kirk elder turning back to walk home for fear of moral censure. Religion thus acted as a class barrier. Embedded social factors such as those discussed above are invisible to those passing through a community and it requires careful analysis to appreciate the significance of the relationships between religion, social class, employment, marginality and the behavioural practices which develop in a living community. Also of significance was the fact that there was little or none migration or immigration to Gourdon during the period of study. Thus ethnicity did not come into play as a regenerating influence.

It is now time to consider what made the system of peasant entrepreneurship as practiced in Gourdon different from the studies reported on earlier in this paper. To recap, many of these studies related to poor communities in such countries as Poland and Italy in which the communities were undergoing periods of severe economic change. Mass migration and the exodus of the economically surplus work force of whole communities was often a feature of such communities. The Italians and Polish feature in the entrepreneurial mythology of America as being fabled entrepreneurial peoples. The studies of marginality and peasant entrepreneurship mostly relate to the exported communities. The dynamics of those communities are so different from the dynamics of the communities

they leave behind. As Arlacchi stresses many of those who leave are the adventurous, the deviant and criminally inclined. During the late 1800's and early 1900's Scotland (as part of The United Kingdom) was undergoing a period of economic growth and prosperity. As such, villages like Gourdon were economically viable. There was no need for mass migration. Gourdon, being situated in the fertile plains of North East Scotland was part of a wider Industrial and Agrarian system. Despite being a marginal village it was nevertheless stable and prosperous. There was no need to emigrate. This prosperity along with the religious and moral fibre of the village kept deviance at bay. Gourdon did not have a criminal culture or population. Like many Scottish villages crime was not a spectre which haunted the community. Drunken fights, rivalries, petty jealousies crimes of passion and exuberant behaviour were about as 'bad' as things got. Regular attendance at the pub was frowned upon, as was the sin of smoking. There was a village 'Bobby' until the 1960's when the police station was closed as it was deemed that there was not enough work to keep a police officer occupied. Again, this mirrors the decline in all aspects of the social fabric. A series of pragmatic decisions made by the establishment combining to create a sense of social decay as in the closure of the railway lines, the closure of the police station, the withdrawal of funds for the Mission Hall.

What is immensely interesting is the question of what happened to all the entrepreneurial flair and experience, engendered by the system of subsistence entrepreneurship? One would surely expect that it would manifest itself as future businesses, but this is clearly not always the case. The decline in the rural fishing industry was perhaps inevitable but the real loss is in terms of the demise of the spirit of subsistence style entrepreneurship. Its demise removed a work ethic and an opportunity for creating value by engaging children in the work of a community. The remaining lessons learned from this study are generic ones, pertinent to all such rural fishing communities. Whilst it is too late to turn the clock back the lessons are nevertheless relevant to living communities practicing similar forms of entrepreneurship. The moral of the story is that the chill winds of economic change shape the rural and maritime landscapes, equally as much as the bleak winds of the North Sea. In such a hard climate these subsistence type local entrepreneurs had to 'make do' with the resources at hand. Making do does not always equate with 'making good'. When income streams dry up the way of life they sustain also changes. This narrated case study illustrates the effects of these changes and all that can be done is to encourage future generations of entrepreneurs in these communities to move on to new challenges in the community.

However, Wiber *et al* (2004) are more optimistic about the future of community based fishery management projects, so what does the future hold for fishing villages such as Gourdon? As a postscript to this tale, several months after first writing up this research and presenting it at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Rural Entrepreneurship Conference at Dumfries in October 2004, I returned to Gourdon to find that several new houses were being built in the village (in keeping with other communities), a new café come chip shop had been opened on the pier and in the bay, I saw a lone fisherman obviously piloting new technology in the form of a new type of fast and manoeuvrable fishing boat. As the sun shone on the sea, my spirits soared. I realised that I was watching a timeless scene of man

battling with the elements to 'eke out' a living from the sea. It was a living story of renewal, continuity and change and arguably an entrepreneurial cycle. As the lone fisherman toiled, his actions created a living narrative that defied the story of a cruel waning as told in this paper. One can but hope for a brighter more entrepreneurial future.

## NOTES

[1] The respondents Annie Lownie Gove or Smith and Robert Gove are my mother and uncle respectively. Using relatives as respondents although perhaps controversial is a pragmatic method of conducting small scale research.

[2] The word 'Toun' is of Scots derivation and means 'town'. It is a term that covers any collection of houses, irrespective of size. It can also be used to refer to a larger farm as in 'farm toun'.

[3] I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer who pointed out to me that the notion that the community has shifted from being productive to being reliant on the wider economy (i.e. from subsistence to dormitory) underpins this paper, but was not supported by any previous literature in the area or analysis of social trends. This academic area is a large one and is a peripheral subject of the paper itself. For this reason, as narrator, I have made no attempt to introduce supporting literature. Thus what knowledgeable readers may interpret as unsupported assertions are manifestations of an emotive style of writing.

[4] The Scots word 'Loon' denotes a boy or young man.

## REFERENCES

- Adams, D.G., (1991) *Johnshaven and Miltonhaven: A Social and Economic History*, Chanonry Press, Brechin.
- Anderson, A.R. (1995) *The Arcadian Enterprise*, Unpub. PhD Thesis, University of Stirling.
- Alongi (1894) as cited in Hess, H. (1998:38) *Mafia and Mafiosi: Origins, power and myth*, Hurst & Co. Ltd, London.
- Arlacchi, P (1983) *Mafia, peasants and great estates: Society in traditional Calabria*, Translated by Jonathon Steinberg. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Barth, F. (1963) Introduction, in F Barth ( Ed) – "*The role of the entrepreneur in social change in Northern Norway*" , pp 5-18, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Barth, F. (1967) "*Economic spheres in Dorfur*", in R Firth ( Ed ) - *Theories in economic anthropology*, pp 149-174., London, Tavistock.
- Blok, A (1974) "*The Mafia of a Scician Village 1860-1966: A Study of Violent Peasant Entrepreneurs*", Basil Blackwell, Oxford.

- Cameron, D.K. (1995) *The Cornkister Days: A Portrait of a land and its rituals*, Penguin Books.
- Carter, S. (1996) *The indigenous rural enterprise: Characteristics and change in the British farm sector*, *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, 8 (1996) 345-358.
- Carter, S, Tagg, S. & Dimitratos, P. (2004) *Beyond Portfolio Entrepreneurship: Multiple Income Sources in small firms*, paper presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Scottish Entrepreneurship Seminar, Strathclyde University, April, 2004.
- Green, M., Grieco, M., & Holmes, L (2000) *Archiving social practice: the management of transport boycotts*.
- Hobbs, D. (1988), *Doing the business: Entrepreneurship, the Working Class, and Detectives in the East End of London*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Jamieson, L. & Toynbee (2000) *Country Bairns: Growing Up 1900-1930*, Birlinn, Edinburgh.
- Long, N. & Roberts, B (1984) *Miners, peasants and entrepreneur*, Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Miller, J. (1999) *Salt in the Blood: The Fishing Communities of Scotland*, Canongate,
- Mumby-Croft, R., & Hackley, C.E., (1997) *The Social Construction Of Market Entrepreneurship: A Case Study Analysis in The UK Fishing Industry*, *Marketing Education Review*, Volume 7, Number 3 (Fall 1997).
- Outhwaite, W. (1986) *Understanding Social Life: The Method called Verstehen*, Jean Stroud Publisher, East Sussex.
- Pennewiss, S (2004) *The old man and the sea: a field study of change in the Greek fishing Industry based on interviews with fishermen on the Island of Santori*, *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small business*, Vol 1, No's ½ 2004: 206-210.
- Perren, L. & Ram, M. (2004) *Case Study Method in Small Business and Entrepreneurial Research: Mapping Boundaries and Perspectives*, *International Small Business Journal* Vol 22(1): 83-101.
- Pollock, V.L. (1988) *The Sea-fishing Industry in County Down 1860-1939*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Ulster.

Pipes, R. (1974) *Russia under the old regime*, Harmondsworth, Penguin.

Schumpeter, T. (1934) "The theory of economic development". Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.

Thomas, W.I. & Znaniecki, F.Z (1984) *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, University of Illinois Press.

Wiber, M., Berkes, F., Charles, A. & Kearney, J. (2004) *Participatory research supporting community-based fishery management*, *Marine Policy*, 28(6): 459-468.

TABLE 1 – LIST OF BUSINESS IN GOURDON BETWEEN 1930's - 2004			
BUSINESS TYPE	BUSINESS NAME	NARRATIVE	BUSINESS DECLINED
FISH YARDS	James Ritchie and Sons	William Street. Established 1926. Also was a shop owner.	
	Eric and John Gove	William Street. Also have shops in Montrose.	Still in business.
	James Lownie		2004.
	Simpson & Gove		
	John Lindsay	Also owned a fish shop in Montrose.	
	Craig & Waiter		
	Frederick Birse		
	Robert Serettie		
	Alexander Gove & Sons		
	Douglas Welsh	West pier. Sells sweets and lemonade from fish shop on pier.	Still in business.
	David Ritchie	Has fish shops in Brechin and Montrose	
	Robert Warden	Operates a fish van near the monument.	Still in business
	Ian Craig	West Pier	Still in business
	Charles Dorward.	Near harbour Bar	Still in Business.
BOAT YARDS	James Mowat	2 East End. Died Circa 1924 but premises continued until?	1930?
	David Cormack	Selbie Mills	Early 1900?
ENGINEERING	Davie Joseph Craig	West pier – sold paraffin and employed out of work people to sell it door to door.	1960's?
LICENSED PREMISES	Harbour Bar	William Street. Formerly known as Shore Inn. Established circa 1570?	Still in business.
	Commercial Hotel	William Street. Built in 1870's by John Moir	2000
SHOPS	Moir's General Agents	Bridge Street. Opened in 1844 and it sold everything. Ran by Evelyn Ritchie. It was taken over in 1950's by the Fishermans	1950's and then 1960's.



		Association. It sold lines, nets, tar, paint, putty, brushes, and wall paper. It serviced the 40 or so boats operating out of the arbour.	
	Willie Douglas (Pluff) Newsagents	Arbuthnott Street. An ex Captain in Merchant Navy. Also mended books and shoes.	1950's
	Jim Mowat's Butchers shop	William street. In 1960's became hairdressers.	1960's
	F&J Anderson General Merchants	Frankie's. Queen Street. Run by Georgina Gowans. Chaotic with goods piled from floor to ceiling.. Money kept in China bowl on counter.	1950's
	Willie Perts Chip Shop	Long Close.	1970's
	Willie Perts Grocers shop	Brae Road.	Still in business. Now a Londis?
	Willie Douglas's Newsagents.	Brae Road.	Part of above shop
	Jean Ritchie's General Merchants shop	Queen street. Run by a widow. Sold sweets and lemonade.	1950's
	Ritchie's the Grocers	Queen Street. Later became the Post Office	1946 1980's.
	Hairdressers	William street.	Still in business.
	James Dickson's Tailors Shop	William Street. Went out of business due to personal problems.	1940's
	Katherine Milne's lemonade shop.	Operated from a tenement style building at West Bay. She was an elderly lady who sold lemonade from her rented house. She sold three or four crates of lemonade per week but had few customers.	Late 1950's.
	Katie ?	Had a shop in her house selling salt to cure Herring. Also sold vinegar	1950's
	Miggie Gordon's General store	Operated from a house at West Bay. It had a box bed behind the counter. She got deliveries from Montrose. The living room was the shop.	1950's
	Miggie Lownies shop	William Street. Sold sweets, lemonade, teas and Ices, cigarettes, biscuits. At one time included a chip shop.	1980's
	Mrs Dorwards General Merchants	Souters Close. Sold tobacco, biscuits, confectionary, jams and tinned goods.	1940's - 1950's?
	Charlie Ritchie's Chip shop	Owned Charlies chipper in Inverbervie. Here you could bring your own fish and	1960's

		have it fried if you were poor.	
	Robert Moncurs General Merchants Shop	William Street. Former Post office.	1940's
	Miggie Henderson's Shop	Sold medicines	1950's
	Canalies Shop	William Street. Confectioners, ice creams. Had shop in Inverbervie. Netta Canal sitting at Stove. Of Italian extraction.	1950's?
	Lizzie Douglas's General Merchants.	William Street. Known sarcastically as the Information Centre. Sold firewood and bark for preserving fishing lines.	1970's
	Bannermans Store	William Street. A grocers / bakers / butchers combined. Only privileged boys got delivery jobs. Also had a shop in Inverbervie.	Bankrupt in late 1930's.
HORSE AND CARTS	Harry Marnoch	Delivered groceries to hundreds of people in Gourdon from a horse and cart.	1950's
	Willie Eddison	Sold vegetables from a horse drawn cart	1950's
MOBILE VANS	Lipton's van	Operated out of Montrose and stopped door to door.	1960's
	CO-OP van	Two vans delivered to Gourdon, one operating out of nearby Inverbervie and the other from Brechin.	1970's?
	Lyon's of Bervie	General Grocers business operated by the Provost Mr Lyon who also owned the Cinema in Inverbervie and also a shop. His wife had a clothes shop.	1970's?
Coal Merchants	Cowies of Bervie.	Had premises in Gourdon.	
GARAGE	Willie Heaths	Heaths garage operated out of premises in William Street between 1945 and the 1970's. Willie Heath came from Fife and started up from nothing.	1970's
HAULAGE CONTRACTOR	Nicholsons?	From Inverbervie but had yard in Gourdon? Between the 1930's and 1950's Nicholson bought in supplies from Alloa Breweries and delivered to local pubs. The son Alec Nicholson was an enterprising individual, full of devilment and was reputedly thrashed by teachers for being wild.	Late 1950's early 1960's?
MILLS	Selbie Works	A flax mill in the East end of Gourdon employed 90 people in its hay day. In addition, there were four or five other Mills in Inverbervie, which provided employment for local women.	1970's.

**DIAGRAM 1 – ILLUSTRATING THE CREATION AND EXTRACTION OF FISCAL AND SOCIAL VALUE FROM THE ENVIRONMENT.**

