

‘A perilous situation’: Whitehaven-built ships in the Northern Whale Fishery

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Much has been written about the British whaling industry in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but there have been few studies of individual ports such as Whitehaven, and even fewer studies of British ships that sailed to the Northern Whale Fishery. Although Whitehaven was involved in whaling from the 1760s, it was not until the 1780s that the first Whitehaven-built ships became part of Britain’s whaling fleet. None of these vessels were initially constructed as whalers, but once fitted out for whaling they sailed for the Northern Whale Fishery from Whitehaven as well as from other ports. This article examines the histories of these ships and demonstrates that the larger Whitehaven-built ships were so well constructed that they could work successfully for many years in some of the most dangerous seas in the world.

Whitehaven and the Northern Whale Fishery¹

DURING the eighteenth century Whitehaven’s prosperity was in large part built upon coal and tobacco. However, as trade in these commodities declined, Whitehaven’s ship owners and merchants engaged in new ventures such as the Baltic trade, the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and the Northern Whale Fishery. They were encouraged by a government bounty designed to encourage expansion, and payable to whale ships based on their tonnage, as well as by the expansion of the whaling industry at other small west coast ports. The loss of the tobacco trade to Glasgow during the 1750s, and competition for the coal trade from other Cumbrian ports during the 1780s and 1790s, led to the two phases of Whitehaven’s direct involvement in the increasingly profitable whaling industry.² However, the expansion of the industry led to a glut of whale oil during the 1780s and a consequent reduction in the value of the bounty during the 1790s. Expansion at Whitehaven was also limited by the lack of a port infrastructure and local expertise, as well as by a restricted market. As whaling became less profitable therefore, Whitehaven, like many of the other smaller ports, withdrew from the trade. Consequently the port only participated in the Northern Whale Fishery in the 1760s and between 1785 and 1791, although Whitehaven-built ships continued to sail to the arctic from other ports until the 1860s.

Ship building was one of Whitehaven’s major industries during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but out of the 800 or so ships built during that period, only four are known to have become whaling vessels.³ Few whaling vessels were constructed as such, so the refitting of the Whitehaven-built ships *Thompson*, *Precedent*, *Alfred* and *Jumna* as whalers was not unusual.⁴ At least two ships built at Lancaster, *Harmony* (1798) and *Abram* (1806), were also later refitted as whaling vessels.

Eighteenth century Whitehaven-built whaling vessels

The conclusion of the American War of Independence in 1783 provided the right conditions to enable the British whaling fleet to expand rapidly. The fleet reached its maximum size (253 vessels) in 1788.⁵ The success of the Whitehaven vessel *Lonsdale* in the Northern Whale Fishery in 1786, led to the fitting out of two Whitehaven-built vessels as whalers. *Thompson* (221 tons: two decks, three masts, 85 feet long and 25 feet broad) had been built in late 1777 or early 1778 by the Whitehaven shipbuilders William Bowes and Sons,⁶ and *Pollux* (renamed *Precedent* – 301 tons) had been constructed by the Whitehaven firm of Spedding and Co. in 1780.⁷ Both ships were on the small side for whalers, but they remained active for a number of years (see Table 1).⁸

TABLE 1: Summary of the whaling activity of Whitehaven-built ships, 1787-1791.⁹

| Date | Vessel | Tonnage | Master | Catch and other information |
|------|---|----------|--------------|---|
| 1787 | <i>Precedent</i> (Built at Whitehaven 1780) | 301 tons | Joseph Benn | Whales – 6 Seals – 3 (20 according to <i>Cumberland Pacquet</i>) Blubber – 21.5 tons Bear skin – 1 |
| | <i>Thompson</i> (Built at Whitehaven 1777/78) | 221 tons | Joseph Bell | Whales – 1 Blubber – 16.5 tons |
| 1788 | <i>Precedent</i> | | | Whales – 2 Seals – 17 Unicorns (narwhal) – 1 Seahorses (walrus) – 4 |
| | <i>Thompson</i> | | | Whales – 4 Seals – 28 Unicorns (narwhal) – 4 Bears – 2 |
| 1789 | <i>Precedent</i> | | Joseph Benn | Whales – 10 Seals – 832 |
| | <i>Thompson</i> | | Joseph Bell | Whales – 3 Seals – 17 |
| 1790 | <i>Precedent</i> | | Joseph Benn | Whales – 2 Seals – 162 Bears – 3 |
| | <i>Thompson</i> | | Joseph Bell | Whales – 2 (lost) Lost in the Greenland Sea, 2 June 1790. Crew returned to Leith. |
| 1791 | <i>Precedent</i> | | Captain Wise | Seals – 25 Lost off the coast of Ireland, November 1791. |

Shortly after her construction, the smaller vessel *Thompson* had been set ablaze by the American privateer John Paul Jones who landed at Whitehaven on 23 April 1778. The damage to the vessel was not too extensive as 'immediately after the alarm was given, the fire engines were brought to the quay, and by the vigorous exertions of

people of all ranks, the fire was speedily extinguished, without damaging any other vessel',¹⁰ and she was quickly rebuilt. She became involved in trade with the American colonies sailing from Bristol, but in April 1785 she returned to Whitehaven 'after an absence of some years' and was fitted out for the Northern Whale Fishery.¹¹ In 1787 she was registered at Whitehaven, and like most ships of that time she was in multiple ownership.¹² She had three subscribing and nine non-subscribing owners including a number of merchants and people associated with shipping at the port, as well as Joseph Bell, her master on her last voyage to Virginia and on her Greenland voyages.

The square-sterned, three-masted *Precedent* (94' 11" x 27' 4" x 18' 0") was initially commanded by Daniel Brocklebank on a number of voyages between Whitehaven and America and the West Indies, as well as on journeys to Gibraltar and Riga.¹³ Brocklebank, who was one of her three subscribing owners, may have been encouraged by his elder brother John, a whaling master at Liverpool, to become involved in the industry.¹⁴ Like *Thompson*, *Precedent* was fitted out in time for the 1787 season, and as Daniel was about to set up his own shipbuilding yard in Whitehaven, Captain Joseph Benn was appointed as master.¹⁵

Ships built at Whitehaven for the Americas trade would not have survived an encounter with the Arctic pack ice without considerable modification. Accessing the government bounty required whaling vessels to be 'strongly built and a proper ship for such voyage and fishery'.¹⁶ William Scoresby, the most famous whaling master of the era, believed that Greenland ships:

should admeasure 3-400 tons; built of the best and strongest material. Flush-decked; hold beams laying low the better to resist a pressure of ice. A flat-floored burdensome hold, for good stowage and carrying a large cargo...¹⁷

The process of refitting would have been unfamiliar to the Whitehaven shipwrights, so the work may have been undertaken elsewhere. The most important work involved strengthening their hulls to withstand the relentless pressure of the pack ice. This required covering the hull with a second layer of oak planks, 50 millimetres thick, with a third layer at the bow. In addition the bow and stern would have been fortified with thick oak beams and sheathed on the outside with iron plates. This would not have made either ship beautiful to look at, but it would have meant that they were fit for purpose – 'broad of beam to carry a 60 ton animal alongside, thick-skinned to absorb collision with the rock-hard ice, rigged for ease of handling in the unpredictable northern waters when all but a handful of men were away in pursuit of a whale'.¹⁸ They would also have to be redesigned internally to provide the 'flat-floored burdensome hold' to stow the barrels containing the blubber, and the whalebone, as well as space for a ship's company of about 50 (compared to less than half that figure when these ships were employed in the Americas trade), and provisions for a voyage of up to eight months. In addition space had to be found on their decks for six open boats used for the actual whale hunt. The cost of fitting out was substantial. A figure of £12 12s. 0d. per ton for a second-hand vessel was considered reasonable in 1786, which would have meant that *Thompson* would have cost £2,784 and *Precedent* £3,792.¹⁹ It was not surprising that most whale ships were in multiple ownership.

Thompson and *Precedent* required licences to fish in 'the Whale Fishery of the Greenland Seas'. Those for 1789 and 1790 record the granting of individual certificates for the six whaleboats (boats up to about 27 feet long with crews of six) which were used to hunt a whale once it had been sighted.²⁰ Neither muster rolls nor crew lists have survived, but it can be surmised that as well as the master, a mate and a surgeon, the ship's company of about 50 would have included specialists such as the spectioneer (chief harpooner and 'officer' in charge of the flensing [cutting up of the whale]), harpooners, boatsteerers (responsible for steering one of the six whale boats) and line managers (responsible for coiling and managing the line which attached the harpoon to the whale boat). In addition there would have been a cook, carpenters and coopers and about 20 seamen and two or three apprentices, whose names are unknown. The parish registers are silent and the only reference is a newspaper announcement of the marriage of 'Mr Brown, Harpooner of the ship *Precedent* of this port to Miss Wilson of Ginn's' in August 1789.²¹ Some of the specialists may have served previously on *Golden Lion*, a Liverpool whaling vessel which had in the 1770s engaged a large part of her crew in Whitehaven, but many would presumably have come from Holland, a traditional source for skilled crew, or other whaling ports. One would expect the ships' masters to have had experience of ice navigation which they must have gained elsewhere.

The whale ship 'Thompson'

For three seasons *Thompson* had limited success. In 1787 she caught one whale, in 1788 four whales, 28 seals, four unicorns (narwhal) and two bears, and in 1789 three whales and 17 seals.²² As whale ships returned from the Northern Whale Fishery in the autumn and would not have set out again until the following spring, it was usual for the owners to engage in other voyages during the early part of the winter. Tony Barrow has suggested that these additional voyages were essential for the profitability of the whaling industry.²³ During the autumn of 1787 *Thompson* sailed regularly to Dublin, possibly as a collier. Many Tyneside whale ships were also employed in carrying coal, but in their case to London.

The 1790 season was more difficult. In July the *Cumberland Pacquet* reported that 'the quantity of ice on the coast ... has been much greater than ever was known. The season for seal fishing has been very unsuccessful ... we are sorry to add that the scarcity of fish is very much complained of'. The paper went on to report that 'The *Thompson*, Bell, was totally lost on the ice, in the Greenland seas, the second of last month (June). All the people were saved, and landed at Leith last week, in a vessel belonging to that port. The *Thompson* had got two fish'.²⁴ As whaling ships usually hunted within sight of other vessels, ship-wrecked crews were normally rescued, although their catch was lost. The ship that brought them home would have been overcrowded with double the usual number of crew, and food would probably have been short.

The whale ship 'Precedent'

Precedent was the most successful of the Whitehaven whalers although she may have made a profit only in 1789.²⁵ She sailed on her first voyage in March 1787, with

Captain Benn as master, putting in at Belfast before sailing north.²⁶ Like *Thompson* she operated in the less distant Greenland Sea, to the east of Greenland. Once in the whaling grounds she caught six whales and three seals which produced a total of 21.5 tons of blubber.²⁷ The largest of the whales was 46 feet long with a girth of 24 feet. After being struck by the harpoon this whale had dived below an ice floe, and eleven lines of rope, a total of about one and a half miles, had to be run out before she surfaced again. The skin of a polar bear was also brought back.²⁸ This and the 'horn of the Sea Unicorn' (narwhal) could later be viewed at Crosthwaite's Museum in Keswick, where in 1826 they were described as having been presented by the owners of the 'President (*Precedent?*) of Whitehaven'.²⁹ Within a few weeks of her return on 8 August, Daniel Brocklebank was advertising 'A quantity of Whale Oil' for sale from his Roper Street premises.³⁰ Like *Thompson*, *Precedent* was engaged in Irish Sea trade during the autumn, in her case operating between Whitehaven and Waterford.

Between them, *Precedent* and *Thompson* had returned to Whitehaven with 38 tons of blubber in 1787. There was no facility for boiling the oil at the port, but it seems that a temporary facility was created 'in a place prepared for the purpose on the shore near Parton'.³¹ The conversion of blubber to whale oil did not require sophisticated equipment. The task could be completed in three or four hours of boiling in large cauldrons, and 38 tons could be processed in a day or two. The oil was probably used for the new street lighting in Whitehaven. However, other whale oil was reaching Whitehaven from America. John Taylor, 'Brazier, Brass Founder and Tin Plate Worker of Whitehaven' referred in an advertisement to 'Spermaceti and Refined Whale Oil' for burning in his newly invented copper Swivel Lamps for the use of Ships' Binnacles.³² Any whalebone (baleen) from the Whitehaven ships would have been bought by local stay manufacturers such as Rose Ingram.³³

In 1788 *Precedent* netted two whales 'one of them large', one unicorn (narwhal), 17 seals and four seahorses (walruses).³⁴ 1789 was such a successful season that *Precedent* returned in July. She had caught ten whales and 832 seals. When she returned she also had on board part of the crews of two vessels lost in the ice.³⁵ Her early return enabled her to sail to Sheepscutt in North America later in the year.³⁶ She returned in time to set out again 'for the Whale Fishery of the Greenland Seas' in March 1790.³⁷ After her return on 7 August with two whales, 161 seals and three bears,³⁸ she sailed to Cork on a number of voyages, finally returning to Whitehaven in January 1791.³⁹

Her final voyage to the Greenland Fishery was in 1791 with Captain Wise in command, when she failed to catch any whales, returning with 25 seals only.⁴⁰ Her lack of success may reflect the change in her master, as a successful outcome to a whaling season was very dependent on the skills of the master and the other specialists on board. Over the previous years Captain Benn had shown himself to be a very successful master. Captain Wise seems not to have been so experienced and at the end of the year it was reported that she 'is on shore at Wicklow Bank. The people are all saved and it is hoped the vessel will be got off again'.⁴¹ It seems that that hope was not realised.

Whitehaven whalers in the nineteenth century

The whale ship 'Alfred'

Alfred (314 tons), a wooden vessel with a single deck, three masts and four guns, was built at Whitehaven in 1796. Her sole owner was the same Daniel Brocklebank who had part owned *Precedent*, and her first master was John Curwen.⁴² She was initially destined for the West India trade, but was sold to Hull in 1809 and thereafter participated in the Northern Whale Fishery. In 1837 she was sold to Bo'ness and continued to sail to the Arctic until she was wrecked in Davis Strait in 1847. In 1797 she was in Liverpool where she loaded a cargo for the West Indies.⁴³ She sailed to Cork where she formed part of a convoy of about 120 ships, 'their sails gleaming white in pale winter's sunlight', and sailed for Montego Bay in Jamaica under the protection of five frigates and a sloop.⁴⁴ At Montego Bay she spent a number of months surrounded by slave ships and yellow fever. The fever spread to the crew of *Alfred* and amongst those who succumbed and died was the 25-year-old son of Daniel Brocklebank, Captain Daniel Brocklebank Jnr.⁴⁵ *Alfred* returned to Liverpool in June 1798 as part of a convoy of 30 ships.⁴⁶ Throughout 1798 and 1799 she sailed to various ports in the West Indies, returning to Lancaster from St. Thomas's in December 1799 with a mixed cargo of mahogany, fustic, cotton, indigo, sugar, coffee and ox hides. Most of these products were delivered to the Lancaster firm of Worswick, Allman and Co.⁴⁷

In 1800 she was purchased by Thomas Worswick, banker and merchant at Lancaster, from where she continued to sail to Martinique and elsewhere in the West Indies during 1801 and 1802.⁴⁸ There is no record of her movements between September 1802 and her registration in Hull on 29 May 1809. She was reported as sailing from London to Hull in March 1810 under the command of John Dick, so it is possible that her refit to equip her for the Northern Whale Fishery had taken place in London. Initially ownership was invested in three members of a Hull merchant family, the Halls, but over the next few years ownership was spread more widely.⁴⁹ The Hall family kept their interest, but their new co-owners included a number of other merchants from Hull, Whitby, and elsewhere in Yorkshire.⁵⁰

Between 1825 and 1836 she was part of the fleet owned by Gardiner and Joseph Egginton, leading Hull merchants who had a stake in another 16 ships. William Brass, an extremely experienced whaling master and master of *Alfred* between 1830 and 1836, had shares in the vessel by 1834.⁵¹

From 1810-1815 *Alfred* enjoyed mixed fortunes, sometimes in the Greenland Sea and sometimes in Davis Strait, under the command of John Dick. The dangers of voyages to the Northern Whale Fishery are well illustrated by events in 1812 when *Alfred* suffered damage even before she left British waters:

The *Alfred*, Dick, of this port, for the Whale Fishery, arrived at Stromness on the 21st ult., after a very stormy passage of 11 days from the Humber; during which, while going into Holm Sound, the ship struck thrice, in consequence of which she sprung a leak, and made much water. The ship having been lightened and the leak stopped, she sailed on the 3rd inst. for the fishery.⁵³

TABLE 2: Masters and annual catches of *Alfred* during the years she sailed from Hull (1810-36).⁵²

| Year | Master | Whales caught | Tuns* of whale oil | Tons of whalebone (baleen) – where known |
|------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|--|
| 1810 | John Dick | | 108 | |
| 1811 | John Dick | 10 | 165 | |
| 1812 | John Dick | 6.5 | 186 | |
| 1813 | John Dick | 1 | 21 | |
| 1814 | John Dick | 14 | 119 | |
| 1815 | John Dick | 3 | 44 | |
| 1816 | Martin Morris | 6 | 64 | 2 |
| 1817 | Martin Morris | 3 + 110 seals | 45 | |
| 1818 | Martin Morris | 3 | 37 | |
| 1819 | Martin Morris | 3 | 38 | |
| 1820 | William Clark | 5 | 53 | |
| 1821 | William Clark | 0 | clean | |
| 1822 | No record | | | |
| 1823 | No record | | | |
| 1824 | No record | | | |
| 1825 | John Johns(t)on(e) | 11 | 150 | |
| 1826 | John Johns(t)on(e) | 3 | 42 | |
| 1827 | John Martin | 20 | 198 | |
| 1828 | John Martin | 10 | 140 | 6 |
| 1829 | John Martin | 12 | 138 | |
| 1830 | William Brass | 5 | 80 | 4 |
| 1831 | William Brass | 5 | 85 | 4 |
| 1832 | William Brass | 20 | 124 | 5 |
| 1833 | William Brass | 20 | 188 | 9 |
| 1834 | William Brass | 11 | 101 | |
| 1835 | William Brass | 2 | 23 | 1 |
| 1836 | William Brass | 2 | 20 | |

* A tun is a cask containing approximately 252 gallons.

With the end of the French wars in 1814, the whaling industry was once again able to expand and the next few years were amongst the most prosperous. The size of the British fleet increased from 110 vessels in 1812 to 146 in 1815, Hull alone sending 58 ships in the latter year.⁵⁴ Although *Alfred* was well positioned to take advantage of these boom times, she was not very successful under her master, Martin Morris, which suggests that he was inexperienced and that her crew lacked the necessary skills. The expansion resulted in a sharp fall in oil prices in the early 1820s, which alongside a slowing down in the growth of the markets, caused a reduction in the size of the fleet from 158 to 94 ships between 1821 and 1826. The industry also suffered from the unreliability of the annual catch, and consequently the purchasers of whale oil (or train oil as it was known) were searching for and finding substitutes. From 1809 coal gas had been replacing train oil in street lighting. During the later 1820s rapeseed and linseed oil were being substituted for train oil in the cleaning processes in the woollen industry, a development encouraged by the reduction of the duty on imported rapeseed oil. However, in Dundee and Kirkcaldy the needs of the jute industry and the manufacturers of oilcloth and linoleum ensured a continuing demand for whale oil. Whale oil also continued to have a number of uses in the domestic environment,

such as in the manufacture of soap, and whalebone (baleen) was used in ornaments, articles of clothing such as corsetry, household objects such as sieves, riddles, trellises, umbrella spokes, brush bristles, watch springs, tennis rackets and whips, as well as blinds and guards for shop windows, so all was not lost despite the government's refusal to renew the bounty in 1824. The Hull fleet numbered only 13 ships in that year, and it seems that *Alfred* was not amongst them.

The later 1820s saw a short term improvement. By 1827 the Hull fleet had again risen to 30 ships, including *Alfred*, commanded by the very successful Captain Martin. In that year, like most of the Hull fleet, she fished in Davis Strait and returned with her most successful catch, 20 whales and 180 tuns of oil.⁵⁵ Those ships which continued to be active in the Northern Whale Fishery were often able to increase their catches because competition was less.

The 1830s was a disastrous decade for the whaling fleet. Whales were becoming less plentiful in the traditional fishing areas, so the fleet had to sail further to more dangerous waters. The fleet was approaching the limits of physical endurance. 'As the whalers moved ever northward after their elusive quarry, "rock nosing" through uncharted waters and ignorant of ice-bearing currents, the Arctic moved southward to meet and overcome them'.⁵⁶ However, under the command of William Brass, *Alfred* continued to enjoy considerable success.

In 1830 *Alfred* sailed to Davis Strait via Lerwick in the Shetland Islands. This was normal, although occasionally she had sailed via Stromness on Orkney as had been the case in 1812 and 1826.⁵⁷ In 1830 she was one of 38 whalers which passed through Lerwick between 5 February and 7 April – a period known locally as the 'Greenland time'. The ships visited the port in order to hire Shetlanders to complete their ship's company, as well as to take advantage of the last opportunity to purchase supplies before sailing for the Arctic. Whaling ships required a crew of about 50, of which about 20 were signed up at Lerwick. As 30 was more than enough crew to sail a ship from her home port to Lerwick, it made sound economic sense to hire the full ship's company as late as possible in order to reduce the wage bill. Shetlanders were also experienced seamen and efficient oarsmen. Many had been haaf fishermen. These men were members of small teams of deep-sea fishermen who rowed their sixareens some 40 or more miles into the Atlantic to catch cod and ling. This fishing took place from fishing stations such as Fethaland and Stenness, whose primitive conditions made the potential profit to be made from whaling and the privations of life on board the whale ships seem a more attractive proposition for the summer months.⁵⁸ Egginton's agent in Lerwick in 1830 was Hay and Co. who on this occasion provided *Alfred* with 23 men. Their average wages were £1 4s. 2d. per month with a promise of an additional 10d. per ton of whale oil brought back to Hull.⁵⁹

The 1830 season was the worst ever experienced in the Arctic. Of the 91 British ships in Davis Strait during that season, 19 were lost and 21 returned clean. *Alfred* was one of the most successful of the Hull ships returning with five whales and 80 tuns of oil, as well as four tons of whalebone. Nearly 20 per cent of the Hull fleet was wrecked that year, and those ships that returned had only caught 77 whales between them.

The resulting shortage of whale oil caused the price to rise to £60/ton, a boon for those ships that had been successful, but a further impetus for industry to continue its search for substitutes.⁶⁰

There was a decline in the size of the British whaling fleet in 1832 and 1833, but those ships which persevered, including *Alfred*, had profitable seasons. 1835 was less successful and was another disastrous one for the whaling fleet. As winter approached eleven ships became trapped in the ice in Davis Strait. *Alfred* was initially frozen in, although she was able to make her escape in October and arrived back at Hull on 12 November, with eight of the crew of the wrecked *Mary Frances* on board. The *Hull Pacquet* reported that: 'The master of the *Alfred* arrived here from Davis Straits; bore away from Queen Ann's Cape on the east side of Davis Straits 13th ult., and reports six sail being beset'.⁶¹ William Brass therefore brought the first news of the fleet's predicament, although he was incorrect in reporting 'six sail', as eleven ships had become iced in.⁶² In December, thirty-four Hull shipowners, fearful for their potential loss as much as the predicament of the crews, 'sent a Memorial to the Admiralty stating that on 11 October, eleven whaling ships had been left by the *Alfred*, Hull, closely beset in Davis Strait between latitudes 69° N. and 70° N., and longitude 60° W and 65° W, frozen in by the early approach of winter'.⁶³ Brass was called to a meeting in Hull to give his advice as to what action might be taken, but before a rescue ship could be sent to Davis Strait, all but one of the frozen-in ships drifted to the edge of the pack ice and were able to return to the United Kingdom. The events of that winter resulted in a much-reduced fleet in 1836. *Alfred* did sail, but on her return she was put up for sale and purchased by Mr John Anderson, a merchant banker in Bo'ness on the Firth of Forth.

Bo'ness was one of a number of Scottish east coast whaling ports which was involved with the Northern Whale Fishery. *Alfred* joined the existing fleet, three ships of which belonged to John Anderson, who also owned one of two boiling-houses for preparing the whale-oil.⁶⁴ Some of the returned crews, supervised by the harpooners, worked in these two factories during the winter, boiling the blubber in huge copper pans, 15 to 20 feet long and 12 to 14 feet broad.⁶⁵ However, the Bo'ness fleet was in decline during the 1840s as by 1843 it seems that *Alfred* may have been the only whaling ship left at the port.⁶⁶

The early 1840s were not a prosperous time for the industry, although conditions did improve a little towards the end of the decade. Information about the fortunes of *Alfred* at Bo'ness is sparse. William Walker was her regular master, and we can surmise from descriptions of the departures of other whaling vessels from the port, that her departure would have been accompanied by the noise of cannons and the cheers of well-wishers.⁶⁷ Some information about events in 1842 has survived as oral testimony, and details of the role of Hay and Co. at Lerwick have been preserved in their ledgers. However, we do know details of events that took place in the Arctic on her final voyage in 1847.

Thomas Grant, an eleven-year-old stowaway on board *Alfred* in 1842, described, nearly 70 years later, how he had approached Captain Walker to be an apprentice, but had been turned down.⁶⁸ He threatened to go 'in spite of him', and had hidden on board the ship before it set sail.

I boarded his ship and stowed myself away under some straw, which had been brought on board with some potatoes and had been placed in the seamen's bunks. As the vessel got to sea, I became rather uneasy in my confinement and this led to my discovery by two sailors who occupied these bunks. In the morning I was taken before the skipper [who was] rather tickled at my boldness in having carried out my threat. The *Alfred* was a little square-rigged ship and he ordered me to go aloft and loosen the top-gallant sail. I went aloft and after a little guidance from the skipper, managed to do so. These operations of mine were keenly watched not only by the skipper but my father, who was the harpooner on board but who, until then, was quite unaware of my bold venture. The skipper handed me over to him, with the instruction to make me a half-deck boy. The duty of such was to carry the food of the harpooners from the galley to the half-deck and make myself generally useful on board. We went to Greenland and returned with seven whales.⁶⁹

During the mid-1840s, the ledgers of Hay and Co. in Lerwick provide extensive information about the ship's company, and the conditions under which they worked.⁷⁰ Of the 20 crew members engaged in 1845, 75 per cent came from communities on Mainland (the main island of Shetland), the remainder coming from the islands of Bressay, Yell and Fetlar. Their average age was 33, which is on the high side and suggests that they were employed because of the experience they could bring to the job. It is apparent that many members of the Shetland crew, and no doubt the Bo'ness crew as well, were loyal to a master, especially if he was successful. Captain Walker clearly built a loyal following, as 60 per cent of his 1845 crew signed up again in 1846, but all 16 of Captain Isles's Shetland crew in 1847 were new to *Alfred*.

In 1845 the Shetlanders' wages varied between 16s. and £1 10s. per month depending on experience and role, and their oil money bonus similarly varied between 6d. and 1s. 3d. per tun. As the voyage lasted six months and three days (from 24 March to 27 September) the wages earned by the crew members varied between £4 17s. 7d. and £9 3s. 0d. Oil money varied between £6 5s. 0d. and £2 10s. 0d. which meant that *Alfred* had returned with about 100 tuns of whale oil. This was a successful season and after the mariners had paid off their debts, they were able to take home between £12 1s. 11½d. and £4 5s. 8½d. This would have helped to support the crew members and their families during the winter when employment was limited.

Each Shetlander had an account with Hay and Co., which allowed him to purchase items needed for the voyage and provided a facility for his family to buy provisions while he was away. As Hay's was responsible for paying the wages the expenditure was subtracted from the earnings in advance of payment at the end of the voyage. The 1846 account of William Williamson, a 59-year-old mariner from Lerwick, shows how the system worked. Sailors were responsible for their own clothing, so on 24 March he purchased two pairs of drawers, one pair of canvas trousers, one pair of breeches, two shirts, a nightcap, duck cloth, sheets, handkerchiefs and three pairs of mittens. The fact that he needed all this, despite having sailed on *Alfred* in each of the previous two years, shows the wear and tear on clothing caused by working on a whale ship. He also bought oatmeal, coffee and sugar, presumably to supplement the food provided on board ship, and he also purchased a tin basin, a towel, soap, tobacco and a share in a frying pan. In addition he borrowed cash to the sum of £1 5s. 6d. All these purchases totalled £3 7s. 10d. It is likely that most of these items accompanied him on the voyage, but some may have been made on behalf of his family. His family were certainly responsible for further purchases while he was at sea. They bought tea, oatmeal, India meal, bymeal, bread, a bottle of rum, soap, linen and frocks, as

well as taking out some more cash and paying into the seaman fund, and paying for the carting of peat for their winter fire. Williamson earned £10 14s. 0d. for the seven months and four days voyage, as well as £3 15s. 0d. for his proportion of the 60 tons of oil money. At the end of the year his income and expenditure exactly balanced. As 1846 was a fairly successful year, most of the Shetlanders either broke even or had made a slight profit at the year's end.⁷¹

In most years some members of the ship's company were new to the Arctic. In 1845, three of *Alfred's* Shetland crew were on their first voyage which meant that they were the centre of attention on 1 May during the Neptune festival. William Scoresby described what happened in *Journal of a Voyage to the Northern Whale Fishery, 1822*.

The 1st day of May is usually ushered in by the Greenland sailors, by the suspension in the rigging of a garland of ribbons, attended with grotesque dances and other amusements, and occasionally with ceremonies somewhat similar to those commonly practised in crossing the line. One at a time they (those on their first voyage) were brought into Neptune's presence, and each submitted to his humorous interrogatories, and to the coarse operation of shaving.⁷²

In 1847 the stowaway Thomas Grant was once again on board *Alfred*, this time as one of the apprentices. The ship was commanded that year by Captain John Isles of Dundee, and it was the year that she was crushed by ice in Davis Strait.⁷³ Her destruction was widely reported at the time, but only through the eyes of Mr F. Lee, Mate on *Bon Accord* of Hull which sank in the same place at the same time. According to Mr Lee, in a letter written to his wife and printed at length in the *Hull Packet*, the *Caledonian Mercury*, the *Glasgow Herald* and the *Aberdeen Journal*, *Alfred* sank in the early hours of 3 July 1847 at 75°N.⁷⁴ She had only managed to catch a single whale. At the time 'it was blowing a hurricane from the SW with constant snow'. The ice was on the move and 'the *Alfred* was about 200 yards ahead ... she took the first nip and the ice went right over her'. A short time later the *Bon Accord* also sank. Both crews were saved but had to camp on the ice, although the *Bon Accord's* crew was worse off as they had been able to salvage very little before their ship went down. Mr Lee 'travelled over to the *Alfred's* tents and there they were a great deal more comfortable, for they had saved their bed clothes and their chests all dry'. The weather remained stormy the following day, but on 5 July it was 'calm and warm'.

At this point Thomas Grant takes up the story:

There were seven small boats in all, each containing fifteen hands, with provisions and clothing recovered from the wrecks. When the wind permitted we hoisted sail and made good progress. Left without wind, we plied the oars and covered close on 600 miles. We landed ultimately at Leevely, a Danish settlement and were taken on board a Danish brig, *Lousinda* of Copenhagen. She took us to the Shetland Islands and there transferred us to an English schooner, which landed us in Aberdeen. We then took steamer for Granton and as distressed seamen, our passages were paid by the Fisherman's Society and the Sea-Box Society.⁷⁵

According to Lee some other members of *Alfred's* crew reached Britain via Copenhagen and Hamburg much later in the autumn. As was usual the entire ship's company had been saved and returned to Britain on whatever ships were available. *Alfred* had successfully served in the Arctic for the best part of 37 years, testament to the shipbuilding skills of those at Whitehaven who had built her 51 one years earlier.

The whale ship 'Jumna'

Jumna was the last of the Whitehaven ships which were later reconstructed as whalers. She was a wooden sailing ship built by Thos. and Jno. Brocklebank in 1833 at a cost of £7,118.⁷⁶ At 364 tons, and with a length of 107' 10", a beam of 27' 9" and draught of 18' 11", she was one of the largest ships constructed in this shipyard. As Thomas Brocklebank had opened an office in Liverpool in 1822, it was from this port that *Jumna* sailed between 1833 and 1855. During those years the Brocklebank fleet increased in size, comprising 50 vessels in 1844, as the company capitalised on the trading opportunities in India and to a lesser extent China. In 1856 she was sold to the Tay Whale Fishing Company of Dundee, re-registered as a whaler in 1857, and after a refit sailed to Davis Strait and Baffin Bay between 1858 and 1863, when she was crushed by ice in Melville Bay.⁷⁷

In the mid 1830s *Jumna* was the fastest ship sailing to India and China. Captain Joseph Pinder, Thomas Brocklebank's most experienced master, was given the command on the maiden voyage from Liverpool to Calcutta in 1833-1834. She carried a mixed cargo of lead, iron, Manchester goods, wines and tar, beer, woollens, earthenware and cheese, as well as passengers, who according to a Whitehaven newspaper of the time, travelled in some style and comfort. 'Accommodation for passengers is admirable both in size and finish of the berths and state cabins'.⁷⁸ At Calcutta she took on board rice, sugar, hides, ginger, indigo, silk and oil, and arrived back in Liverpool on 22 February. The whole journey was completed in the then record time of eight months and two days.⁷⁹

Less than three months later, *Jumna* sailed again – this time to Canton, the first ship to sail directly from Liverpool to China. She returned to Liverpool with over 6,000 packages of tea, along with silk, ivory, fans and preserves, after 212 days at sea. Gore's *Liverpool Advertiser* noted:

This we believe the quickest voyage to China and back ever known. It is the more remarkable when it is stated that the *Jumna* lay two months at Canton owing to the dispute with Lord Napier and the Chinese. The *Jumna* is the first ship that has made the voyage between this port and Canton direct.⁸⁰

Apart from a single further voyage to Canton in 1835, all subsequent voyages were made from Liverpool to Calcutta. By 1856 *Jumna* was the last of the Brocklebank vessels sailing regularly to Bombay,⁸¹ and in that year she was sold to the Tay Whale Fishing Company of Dundee.

During the 1850s Dundee's need for whale oil increased as the jute industry expanded. Indian jute was used for sacking, carpet backing and linoleum, and whale oil was the most suitable material for softening the fibres before spinning. The newly formed Tay Whale Fishing Company sought to capitalise on this development and the purchase of *Jumna* was part of the firm's expansion. At that time the Dundee shipyards were experimenting with converting the old wooden whaling vessels from sail to steam power but *Jumna* continued as a sailing vessel.⁸³ After the usual refit she was re-registered at Dundee on 15 January 1857.



FIG. 1. '*Jumna* and other Brocklebank Vessels' by Joseph Heard.⁸² *Jumna* is second from the right.
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In the following year she departed from Dundee on 17 March 1858, commanded by an experienced whaling master, George Deuchars. She called in at Stromness before continuing to Davis Strait.⁸⁴ The entire ship's company of 49 had signed on at Dundee.⁸⁵ Sixty-three per cent of the crew had been born in the city, and nearly all the rest came from various ports along the east coast of Scotland. The average age of the crew was 29.5, actual ages ranging between 65 (the cook) and 17 (an apprentice). All except nine sailors were literate enough to sign their own name. The voyage seems to have been uneventful, but there is no record of how many whales she caught. The only untoward event seems to have been the refusal of the carpenter Alexander Anderson (41), to do any more work on 24 August. He apparently armed himself with an axe, but was overpowered and put in irons. He was released the next day and ordered by the master to return to work. He said that he would think about it, but he seems to have chosen not to, although he behaved himself for the rest of the voyage. Consequently he forfeited all further pay.⁸⁶

In 1859 and 1860 Captain Alexander Stuart commanded the ship. In neither year was the ship particularly successful, and the crew's retention rate was poor. *Jumna's* voyage to Davis Strait in 1859 followed the more traditional practice of calling in at Lerwick, where 12 Shetlanders joined the ship's company. Hay and Co. were the agents for the Tay Whale Fishing Company as they had been for *Alfred* earlier. As before the Shetlanders purchased their personal requirements from the company. The 'Greenland time' at Lerwick also provided a final opportunity for the Dundee men to purchase any necessities for the voyage. Hay and Co., supplied them with 'hosiery', a

mixture of mittens, sou'westers, oiled trousers, trousers, braces, sailing caps, frocks, night caps, canvas trousers, oiled jackets, stockings, canvas, white and blue frocks, gloves, drawers, caps as well as a cravat and a small shawl. They also purchased coffee, a coffee mill, mustard, pepper, combs, knives, frying pans and a kettle. In total they bought £17 6s. 10d. worth of goods.⁸⁷ Captain Stuart purchased a sou'wester, gloves, three dozen mittens, two Shetland night caps, a bag and six pairs of stockings on his own account (£1 18s. 8d.), and 80 dried eggs, two frying pans and a coffee mill on the ship's account.

In 1861 Alexander Deuchars was appointed master. This was *Jumna's* most successful year as she returned from the western side of Davis Strait with 18 fish and 140 tuns of oil.⁸⁸ Deuchars' appointment as master had clearly paid off, although it has to be said that 1861 was a very good year for the Dundee whalers, *Narwhal*, for example, catching 29 whales and *Wildfire*, 21.⁸⁹ Deuchars remained master in both 1862 and 1863 when *Jumna* was at the centre of a series of disasters that beset the whaling fleet. The events of those years were published at length in newspapers across the country, so consequently we have a clear picture of her role in the dramatic events which were taking place in the Davis Strait.

The events of 1862 were reported by Captain Wells, master of *Emma* of Hull. Like *Jumna*, *Emma* was a sailing vessel, and was trapped, along with *Jumna* and much of the rest of the fleet, by 'a heavy barrier of ice' which prevented the ships from reaching Melville Bay on the west coast of Greenland for most of June and July. Eventually on 16 July the fleet was able to sail through a series of leads in the ice into Melville Bay, but a change of wind direction the following day put the ships into great danger. The words of Captain Wells provide a vivid description of the events of the following weeks:⁹⁰

On the 17th July the ships sped northward through very narrow and intricate channels of water, and great hopes were entertained of getting into the north waters, and thence to the west side of the Straits, but to our great disappointment the weather became deadly thick, with snow and fog, and we soon found ourselves embayed in the ice, which was closing so rapidly that no time was to be lost in getting the ship into a safe position. All hands were called ... and a dock [a place where a ship was relatively safe from the movement of ice floes] was cut in the land ice [ice that was attached to the shore and therefore did not move like pack ice], which was much thicker than we had ever before known it, averaging about seven feet. The docks took eleven hours to cut, and the ships were only got in time to save them from damage, as other floes were closing in rapidly and causing great pressure ... Our position in the bay was anything but enviable, as we lay at the foot of the great ice glacier which forms the arm or throat of the bay. The icebergs around were immensely large and innumerable. The floes, or sheets of flat ice, were also exceedingly heavy and dangerous. On the night of the 27th there were evident signs of an approaching storm, which made us feel very uneasy for the safety of the ships. On the following morning the hurricane reached us, accompanied with rain and snow, and never in my experience have I seen such a dreadful storm in these high latitudes. ... Boats, provisions, bags of clothes, beds etc were taken out of the ships to temporary canvas tents on the ice, the ships being in such a perilous situation that it was at one time thought that not one out of the twelve in company would be saved to carry home the 600 who were standing on the ice watching their fate. During the night the gale continued to rage with great fury, and the pressure amongst the ice in some places was so great that in the neighbourhood where the *Jumna*, of Dundee, and the *Active* of Peterhead, lay docked, it was observed that the floes run over the tops of icebergs sixty feet high, and fell down with a tremendous crash on the other side, close to the ships.

At this point *Abram* of Kirkcaldy 'was crushed to atoms' and *Alexander* of Dundee 'also went to pieces'.

Consternation ran through the whole fleet, and it was truly distressing to see the wretched men dragging the few clothes they had saved along the ice to the other ships. The crews of the yet surviving ships wandered about in the rain and snow, with their beds and clothes saturated with wet. ... When the gale abated rain, snow and sleet began to fall in torrents, until the decks of the ships were completely flooded. The following day, on looking from the masthead, not a drop of water could be seen. The ice was crushed up and overlapped in some places three or four feet thick.

By August, the summer was far advanced and night frosts were causing the ice to thicken. There seemed to be no way of escape:

After lying a week in this miserable position... (the ships' companies including those of) the *Jumna* and *Active* commenced sawing [literally sawing a passage through the ice with ice saws]...from the nearest lane of water to where the ships lay. The sky again blackened and another heavy southerly gale approaching, made what preparation was necessary, and in a few hours it was raging with dreadful fury. The icebergs again began their work of destruction; the ice that had been fast to the land now became torn into parts, and the ships began to drive to the north along with it. All our clothes, beds, provisions etc, were again put on the ice, and for about 48 hours we scarcely knew from one hour to another whether our ship would weather the storm.

On this occasion all the ships survived, but with the crews of the two wrecked ships divided between the ten surviving ships, conditions were cramped and rations in short supply. The remaining ships were still iced in on the 20 August and the crews were put on 'short allowance and the fires were put out after cooking'. However, warmer weather put the ice in motion and on the 23 August all but one of the ships, thanks in large part to the efforts of *Jumna's* crew, escaped into open water. During the previous six weeks the almost constant southerly wind had caused the ships to drift further north, almost to Cape York at the northern end of Melville Bay. Captain Wells had nothing but praise for the crew of *Jumna*:

The crews of *Jumna* and *Active*, in getting out of the ice, had accomplished a feat that I fear not to say had never been done in this country, a description of which could scarcely be credited, having made a way for seven or eight miles through very heavy ice by means of warping, sawing and blasting.

Twenty-two of the 49 strong crew had sailed with Captain Deuchars in 1861 and the loyalty to their master that this suggests, will no doubt have helped the crew survive the dangers. Having escaped the ice in Melville Bay the fleet did not return home but continued to their original destination, the Baffin Island coast to the west of Davis Strait. *Jumna* eventually returned to Dundee on 8 October. 1862 was a particularly bad year. There was grim news from Dundee's neighbouring port of Kirkcaldy whose entire whaling fleet was sunk in Melville Bay.

Captain Wells had commented that the steamships, with their extra power, had been able to pass through the ice to the North Water and the western coast of Baffin Bay without the problems that had confronted the sailing vessels. By this time Dundee shipowners were convinced of the advantages of converting their wooden sailing vessels to steam power, while at the same time maintaining adequate sail power to enable them to reduce costs through using wind power whenever possible. By keeping sails in reserve, it also allowed the ships to operate silently when in whaling waters. It is therefore not surprising to find that during the following winter *Jumna* was converted

to steam power as evidenced by the inclusion, for the first time, of an engineer and three firemen amongst the ship's company in 1863.⁹¹

With Captain Deuchars once again master, *Jumna* sailed for Davis Strait on 19 March 1863.⁹² On this occasion the crew numbered 51. Their average age was 28, ranging from 16 to 56. Despite the events of the 1862 voyage, nearly half of the crew had sailed in *Jumna* that year. Sailing past Orkney and Shetland, she entered Davis Strait on 27 May 'having made bad passage'.⁹³ The ice conditions proved as taxing as in the previous year. Captain Wells of *Lady Seale* and Captain Walker of *Wildfire* provided a commentary on the events as they unfolded. By the last week in June, seven steamships, including *Jumna*, entered Melville Bay. Progress north was maintained until 2 July.

Here we were brought to a standstill – in fact, put to our wits' end. We could neither advance nor retreat. The ice in this place was very thick, the single ice being from seven to ten feet, and in some places along the edge of the floe it was squeezed to sixty or seventy feet in thickness. ... I have been on a lee shore more than once, and have seen death staring me in the face...and here we had to stand with our hands in our pockets; could do nothing but look on, expecting every minute to see our great ships made mincemeat of. On the 6th the ice began to move slowly, and ...a sudden and fearfully tremendous rush took place, crushing in the whole starboard broadside as if the ship (*Lady Seale*) had been an egg-shell, when she began immediately to fill and settle down. The boats with the crew were got away at all possible speed – every one working with a will, life itself now being wholly dependent on each man's activity. Louder than the wind, and the bustle of 300 men trying to save their boats and a few things, was heard the breaking of bolts and the tearing to pieces of the good old oak. The ice at the time took full charge of all the ships now lying in close proximity to one another, and the *Jumna* also received a fatal squeeze.

Lady Seale sank within ten minutes, 'her stern foremost, her bowsprit end pointing towards the heavens, as if bidding farewell to the light of day before descending to her future icebound home'. *Jumna* 'also sunk in a very few hours to swell the number of ships that have left their bones in the battlefield of Melville Bay. The crews of both ships escaped on the ice, losing greater part of their clothing, and were divided amongst the remaining ships'. A month or so later those members of the ship's company that had been taken in by *Tay*, rowed one of the surviving ship's boats to Umanaaq, a trading settlement on an island off the Greenland coast where they were taken on board a Danish schooner bound for Copenhagen. 'After a long and tedious voyage – the crew having no other place to sleep on than amongst the oil casks in the forehold – they were landed at Westray on Orkney', from where they made their way to Kirkwall. The rest of the crew, with the exception of the engineer who died from consumption, eventually returned to Dundee on board the other whalers in the fleet.⁹⁴ The loss of *Jumna* meant that Whitehaven's century-long connection with the Arctic was brought to an end.

Conclusion

Between 1762 and 1791 a small number of ships departed from Whitehaven for the Northern Whale Fishery, and returned to the port with whale oil and bone, most of which probably found local markets. Between 1787 and 1863, a considerably longer period, Whitehaven-built vessels participated in the whaling industry from Whitehaven, Hull, Bo'ness and Dundee. As the earliest two Whitehaven-built whaling ships had been constructed in the later 1770s and the last was wrecked in 1863, Whitehaven shipbuilding skills were creating ships suitable, after some modification, for the

extremely dangerous icy waters of the Greenland Sea, Baffin Bay and Davis Strait, for the best part of nine decades. Although some whale ships were later converted into naval transports or were re-employed on other trading routes, most of those which continued as whale ships were eventually wrecked in the Arctic ice. The fact that three out of the four Whitehaven-built ships were sunk in the Arctic should not therefore be viewed as a criticism of their seaworthiness. Few whaling ships of any port survived as many Arctic seasons as did *Alfred* between 1810 and 1847.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Whitehaven built small ships for the coastal trade as well as larger vessels for the trans-Atlantic and far-east trades. All four of the Whitehaven-built ships had sailed these latter routes prior to being converted to whale ships. It is clear that such vessels were particularly suited for conversion. West coast ports such as Liverpool, Glasgow and Greenock all made use of ex-American traders.⁹⁵ Two Lancaster-built whale ships, *Harmony* and *Abram*, built in 1798 and 1805 respectively, worked out of west coast ports on voyages to the West Indies, before being registered as whale ships at Hull.⁹⁶ Ships constructed at east coast ports, such as *Grenville Bay*, built at Stockton in 1783, also sailed to the West Indies before being converted into a whale ship and sailing to the Northern Whale Fishery from the Tyne from 1816.⁹⁷ However, it is likely that vessels of a similar size, constructed on the east-coast and working out of east-coast ports, were also engaged in the Baltic trade before their conversion to whale ships. Some of the vessels in the whaling fleet of the leading eighteenth century Hull ship's master and merchant, Sir Samuel Standidge, may well have included vessels that he had commanded earlier while working in both the American and Baltic trades.⁹⁸

Although mechanised whaling during the twentieth century did far more damage to whale stocks than anything that took place during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the Arctic, the Northern Whale Fishery was ultimately unsustainable, and whale stocks became depleted. Whitehaven shares some responsibility, along with other United Kingdom ports, for the demise of much of the Arctic whale population. Apart from the incorporation of whale flukes in the designs of the new seats around the harbour, there is no acknowledgement elsewhere in the town of its contribution to this destructive extractive industry. Whaling and the construction of vessels later converted into whale ships, may have been a minor economic activity, but these industries form part of the history of the port and therefore deserve to be incorporated more conspicuously into the town's representation of its past.

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3. H. Fancy, *Shipbuilding in Whitehaven – a checklist* (Whitehaven Museum, 1984).
4. The most famous whaling master of the era, William Scoresby, had two purpose-built whaling vessels – *Esk* (354 tons) built at Whitby, and *Baffin* (321 tons) built at Liverpool.
5. G. Jackson, *The British Whaling Trade* (London, 1978), 265.
6. *Cumberland Pacquet*, 2 December 1777. The card index at CRO(W) records the build date as 1778.
7. CRO (W), TSR 1/1 p.109 (entry 56/1787) and TSR 1/1 p.109 (entry 55/1787); *Precedent* was one of eight vessels built by James Spedding and Co. between 1775 and 1783. See D. Hay, *Whitehaven: An Illustrated History* (Whitehaven, 1979), 66.
8. TNA, BT6/93/227. In 1786, 64 ships fitting out were below 300 tons, 95 above 300 tons and seven above 400 tons.
9. Sources: TNA, BT6/94/26; CUST82/15/53; CUST82/15/59; CUST82/15/66; CUST82/15/71 CRO (W), Whitehaven registration 55/1787; 56/1787; DH4/13. Merseyside Maritime Museum, Maritime Archives and Library, D/BROC/12/2/1; B/BROC/12/1/3a. *Cumberland Pacquet*, 7 March 1787, 14 March 1787, 25 July 1787, 8 August 1787, 29 August 1787, 5 March 1788, 26 March 1788, 9 July 1788, 30 July 1788, 27 August 1788, 25 March 1789, 8 April 1789, 24 March 1790, 31 March 1790, 14 July 1790, 27 March 1791, 11 August 1791, 29 August 1791, 29 November 1791. *The Times*, 25 July 1789, 10 July 1790.
10. *Cumberland Chronicle* as quoted in www.mightyseas.co.uk/marhist/whitehaven/thompson.htm
11. *Cumberland Pacquet*, 29 March 1785 and 26 April 1785.
12. CRO (W), TSR 1/1 p.109 (entry 56/1787); Eaglesham, *Growth and Influence of the West Cumberland Shipping Industry*, 302.
13. Merseyside Maritime Museum, Maritime Archives and Library, Manuscript book of ship movements 1770-1858, Vol. 1, B/BROC/12/2/1; J. F. Gibson, *Brocklebanks 1770-1950* (Liverpool, 1953), 178.
14. CRO (W), TSR 1/1 p.109 (entry 55/1787); Merseyside Maritime Museum, Maritime Archives and Library, B/BROC/12/4/6.
15. D. Hollett, *From Cumberland to Cape Horn: The Sailing Fleet of Thomas and John Brocklebank of Whitehaven and Liverpool 1770-1900* (London, 1984), 139; Merseyside Maritime Museum, Maritime Archives and Library, B/BROC/16. Benn remained master until 1790 – see CRO(W), Whitehaven Town and Harbour Commissioners' Minutes 1782-1812, DH4/12; TSR1/1 p.109, (Wh55/1787); *Thompson* was resheathed in 1786 and reduced in size from 240 tons to 221 tons in 1787: see www.mightyseas.co.uk/marhist/whitehaven/thompson.htm
16. T. and C. Stamp, *Greenland Voyager* (Whitby, 1983), 2.
17. 26 Geo III. C.41. Quoted in T. Barrow, *The Whaling Trade of North-East England 1750-1850* (Sunderland, 2001), 21.
18. D. Francis, *Arctic Chase: A History of Whaling in Canada's North* (St. John's, 1984), 7.
19. The figure of £12 12s. 0d. was an official estimate submitted to the Committee of Trade in 1786. See G. Jackson, *Hull in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford 1972), 169.
20. TNA, Whitehaven Collector to Board, Cust82/15, entries 53, 59 and 71. When all the whale boats were out, that left about 14 people to crew the mother ship.
21. *Cumberland Pacquet*, 2 September 1789: see Merseyside Maritime Museum, Maritime Archives and Library, B/BROC/12/1/3a. See also the baptism, marriage and burial registers for St Nicholas, St. James, and Holy Trinity churches, Whitehaven.
22. TNA, BT6/94/26; *Cumberland Pacquet*, 24 August, 1787, 27 August 1788; *The Times*, 25 July 1789.
23. T. Barrow, *Whaling Trade of North-East England*, 93.
24. *Cumberland Pacquet*, 14 July 1790.
25. 'As a rule of thumb, most whaler owners hoped that their vessels would obtain a cargo of about 60 tuns of whale oil and three tons of whalebone'. Barrow, *The Whaling Trade*, 39.

26. *Cumberland Pacquet*, 14 March 1787: see also Merseyside Maritime Museum, Maritime Archives and Library, Manuscript book of ship movements 1770-1858, Vol. 1, B/BROC/12/2/1. This voyage was almost certainly to the Greenland Sea to the east of Greenland as voyages to Davis Strait to the west of Greenland lasted several months longer so ships did not usually return before late October.
27. TNA, BT6/94/26. According to the *Cumberland Pacquet* she returned with 20 seals (*Cumberland Pacquet*, 8 August 1787). Information about catches often varies between sources.
28. *Cumberland Pacquet*, 8 August 1787.
29. Carlisle Library, Catalogue of Crosthwaite's Museum, Keswick, 1826, M646. No ship by the name of *President* was registered at Whitehaven, so this is likely to be a misprint for *Precedent*.
30. *Cumberland Pacquet*, 3 October 1787.
31. *Cumberland Pacquet*, 18 August 1787. Parton is a small port a few miles north of Whitehaven. Such temporary facilities seem to have been usual at ports new to whaling. A similar facility was constructed at Howden when a whaling company was first established at Newcastle during the 1750s and 1760s. See Barrow, *The Whaling Trade*, 16.
32. *Cumberland Pacquet*, 5 September 1787.
33. *Cumberland Pacquet*, 24 September 1788.
34. *Cumberland Pacquet*, 18 March 1788 and 30 July 1788: see Merseyside Maritime Museum, Maritime Archives and Library, B/BROC/12/2/1. There is a reference to the ship's return in a letter of 11 September 1788 (TNA, Cust82/15, entry 184). As in the 1760s, there is no evidence of whale oil refining facilities at Whitehaven in the 1780s. See CRO(C), General estate cash books 1781-1790, DLons W3/53-54.
35. *Cumberland Pacquet*, 18 March 1789: see Merseyside Maritime Museum, Maritime Archives and Library, B/BROC/12/2/1. *The Times*, 25 July 1789.
36. *Cumberland Pacquet*, 5 and 26 January 1791; listed in B/BROC/12/2/1; and B/BROC12/1/3a (extracts from the *Cumberland Pacquet*, 26 August 1789).
37. TNA: Whitehaven Collector to Board, Cust81/15, entry 66.
38. *Cumberland Pacquet*, 11 August 1791.
39. *Cumberland Pacquet*, 5 and 21 January 1791: see Merseyside Maritime Museum, Maritime Archives and Library, B/BROC/12/2/1, and B/BROC12/1/3a.
40. *Cumberland Pacquet*, 29 August 1791: see Merseyside Maritime Museum, Maritime Archives and Library, B/BROC/12/2/1.
41. *Cumberland Pacquet*, 29 November 1791; Merseyside Maritime Museum, Maritime Archives and Library, B/BROC/12/1/3a.
42. CRO(W), YTSR 1/2 (Port No. 27/1796); Merseyside Maritime Museum, Maritime Archives and Library, B/BROC/16. For a summary of information about *Alfred* see: Hollett, *From Cumberland to Cape Horn*, 143.
43. *Alfred* was advertised as being for sale or charter. See *Williamson's Advertiser* and *Billinge's Advertiser*, 2 October 1797. See also Merseyside Maritime Museum, Maritime Archives and Library, Manuscript book of ship movements 1770-1858, Vol. 1B/BROC/12/2/1.
44. *Billinge's Advertiser*, Liverpool, 30 October 1797; *Cumberland Pacquet* 29 January 1798: see Merseyside Maritime Museum, Maritime Archives and Library, Manuscript book of ship movements 1770-1858, Vol. 1, B/BROC/12/2/1. Also referred to *in passim* in Gibson, *Brocklebanks*.
45. Gibson, *Brocklebanks*, 32.
46. *Cumberland Pacquet*, 30 April and 2 July 1798: see Merseyside Maritime Museum, Maritime Archives and Library, Manuscript book of ship movements 1770-1858, Vol. 1, B/BROC/12/2/1.
47. *Cumberland Pacquet*, 10 December 1799.
48. TNA, Lancaster crew lists 1800-1850, BT98/30. Lloyds Registers 1800-1802 list Worswick as owner.
49. Hull Archives, DPC1/1/61.
50. Hull Archives, DPC1/1/6.
51. Hull Archives, DPC1/3/43; DPC1/7/17; DPC1/7/11; Hull City Library, Bills of Entry, Hull Port, 14 November 1836.
52. William Coltish, *Whaling Statistics 1772-1842* (unpublished manuscript), Hull, Central Reference Library. Coltish died in 1844 so these statistics are a contemporary compilation, but figures such as these are notoriously inaccurate, varying significantly between publications. Supplementary information from reports in the *Hull Packet*. The figures for 1836 are taken from Bills of Entry, Port of Hull, 14 November 1836.
53. *Hull Packet*, 21 April 1812.
54. C. Holland, *Arctic Exploration and Development c.500BC to 1915* (New York, 1994); *Hull Packet*, 21 February 1815.
55. *Hull Packet*, 19 February 1828. P. Adamson, *The Great Whale to Snare: The Whaling Trade of Hull* (Hull, nd).
56. Jackson, *British Whaling Trade*, 126-7.
57. *Hull Packet*, 21 April 1812, 11 April 1826.

58. Samuel Hibbert described Fethaland in 1822 as 'On a narrow isthmus of low marshy land, that connects the peninsula of Feidaland with the mainland, is interspersed, with all the disorder of a gypsey encampment, a number of savage huts named 'summer lodges' and in the centre of them is a substantial booth used... for curing fish'.
59. Shetland Archives D/25/58/16.
60. B. Lubbock, *The Arctic Whalers*, (Glasgow, 1937 [reprinted 1978]), 281-3.
61. *Hull Packet*, 20 November 1835. *Alfred* is also mentioned in the account of Alexander Dunn of *Abram*, as both ships were trapped in the ice near to one another. See *The Criterion*, 17 April 1875.
62. W. G. Ross, *Arctic Whalers, Icy Seas: Narratives of the Davis Strait Whale Fishing* (Toronto, 1985), 70.
63. A. G. E. Jones, 'The Voyage of H.M.S. *Cove*, Captain James Clark Ross, 1835-36', *Polar Record*, 40, (1950), 543-556; reprinted in A. G. E. Jones, *Polar Portraits: Collected Papers* (Whitby, 1992), 229-242.
64. T. Johnston, *Records of the Bo'ness United General Sea Box* (Falkirk, 1890), 82. He says there were eight ships at the port, while T. J. Salmon, *Borrowstownness and District* (Edinburgh, 1913), 239 says there were four ships. For information on the boiling-houses see: *The New Statistical Account of Scotland*, (Edinburgh, 1845), 13.
65. Salmon, *Borrowstownness*, 405.
66. Jackson, *British Whaling Trade*, 130.
67. Salmon, *Borrowstownness*, 404.
68. William Walker was a leading member of the Friendly Society of Shipmasters and Mariners in Bo'ness during the 1840s, regularly presiding at their meetings. National Library of Scotland, United Seabox of Bo'ness: Dep. 259/17 and Dep. 259/24.
69. M. Egan, (ed.), *Borrowstownness: Reminiscences from the 19th Century* (Bo'ness, nd).
70. For information on the 1845-47 voyages see: Shetland Archives, D/31/6/2; D/31/6/13; D31/6/14.
71. Shetland Archives, D31/6/13.
72. W. Scoresby, *Journal of a Voyage to the Northern Whale Fishery, 1822* (Edinburgh, 1823), 34-38.
73. A. C. Credland, (ed.), *Baffin Fair: Experiences of George Laing, a Scottish Surgeon in the Arctic Whaling Fleet 1830-1831* (Beverly, 2003), 72.
74. *Hull Packet*, 17 September 1847; *Glasgow Herald*, 24 September 1847; *Caledonian Mercury*, 27 September 1847; *Aberdeen Journal*, 29 September 1847.
75. Egan, *Borrowstownness*.
76. Merseyside Maritime Museum, Maritime Archives and Library, B/BROC/12/1/3k.
77. *Ibid.*, B/BROC/16.
78. Gibson, *Brocklebanks*, 97.
79. *Ibid.*, 98-100.
80. *Ibid.*, 43.
81. *Ibid.*, 118-119.
82. Joseph Heard (1799-1859) was a Whitehaven marine artist. Joseph Pinder served on all the six vessels in this painting, so the picture represents his whole maritime career with Brocklebank's.
83. For information about Dundee during the 1850s see Jackson, *British Whaling Trade*, 148-150.
84. *Hull Packet*, 9 April 1858.
85. TNA: BT98/5434. Gibson, *Brocklebanks*, 72. In comparison the crew on *Jumna's* 1855 voyage to India had been about 18.
86. TNA BT98/5434.
87. Shetland Archives, D31/6/26.
88. *Aberdeen Journal*, 18 September 1861.
89. *Caledonian Mercury*, 12 October 1861.
90. *Glasgow Herald*, 29 October 1862.
91. Maritime History Archive, Memorial University of Newfoundland, crew list for *Jumna*, 1863.
92. Lloyds List, 20 March 1863.
93. Lloyds List, 25 March 1863, 4 April 1863, 19 August 1863.
94. Lloyds List, 10 October 1863, 15 October 1863, 16 October 1863; *Leeds Mercury*, 20 October 1863; *Hull Packet*, 23 October 1863.
95. Jackson, *British Whaling Trade*, 73.
96. 'A fine new ship was launched by Mr Brocklebank at Lancaster. She is built for a mercantile house in Glasgow, is 370 tons, called the *Harmony*: and intended for the West India trade', *Cumberland Pacquet*, 13 November 1798.
97. Barrow, *Whaling Trade of North-East England*, 59.
98. Lubbock, *Arctic Whalers*, 104.