

Dundee Whaling History Project

Dundee was Britain's premier whaling port in the late nineteenth century. Men from Dundee sailed to the Arctic and spent many months involved in the harsh and treacherous occupation of hunting whales in the hope of receiving good financial rewards. As a result, it was an industry that has been of huge importance to Dundee, and beyond, and it deserves to be understood in its historical context.

The Dundee Whaling History Project has created a resource that brings together the rich history of whaling material (archives, images and objects) held by different organisation across Dundee. This has produced a comprehensive topic-led resource on the history of the Dundee whaling industry which includes business archive material that that celebrates an important part of Dundee's vibrant history, has improved access for researchers and left a positive legacy of cooperation and effective organisation.

In 2008, Dundee City Council Leisure and Communities (DCCLC) applied for, and were successful in achieving Recognition for the Whaling Collection and the Fine Art Collection through the Museums Galleries Scotland's Recognition Scheme. In 2009 DCCLC submitted an application to undertake a project on the Whaling Collection which was successful and just under £40,000 was awarded.

Excellent cooperation and teamwork across Dundee, principally from Archive Services at the University of Dundee, the Local History Centre in Dundee Central Library and the Archive and Record Centre for Dundee City Council was essential to the project's success. The cooperation element in the establishment of this resource has meant a cross-disciplinary awareness that has added depth and richness to the Council's collections and enhances potential for further research and interpretation. The creation of the archive also forged unexpected links, such as with the University of Abertay which has used the Whaling Collection as inspiration for students on the Computer Arts course.

The project has produced three databases which bring together information from all the partner collections on whaling masters, crew and ships. Topic sheets have been written covering a wide range of related subjects (working life, Antarctic expeditions and exploration, Inuit etc), talks have been given and the Whaling Collection has been photographed and received improved conservation.

Feedback provided for this evaluation report reveals that all participants have valued the project highly and have appreciated its simplicity and ease of participation. It has led to enhanced mutual understanding between colleagues and collaborators, and has enabled Cultural Services staff to have a better awareness of the context of their own collections and how the content of these relates to the other collections in Dundee. Records kept since 2010 show a steady increase in the number of whaling enquiries received; meaning the creation of this archive has allowed the partner organisations to better serve the needs of the community.

Cultural Services staff have commented that the project has increased their own awareness of the quality and quantity of the Whaling Collection which has led to an increased pride in the collection and greater confidence as holders of a Recognised Collection. Links have been made internally between the Whaling Collection and other collections, such as ship portraits held within the Fine Art Collection, and artefacts in the Natural History and World Cultures collections which were brought back to Dundee by whalers.

The creation of the Dundee Whaling History Project was a resounding success which has educated many and left more opportunities for research and further investigation to be carried out.



www.themcmanus-dundee.gov.uk/category/objectcategory/whaling

**leisure &
culture** DUNDEE

Working in Partnership
with Dundee City Council