

Sensory experiences



Jelberts ice cream,
fish and chips



The harbour and lighthouse,
The Mount



The seagulls, the boats
coming and going, the ice
machine in the harbour



The harbour walls, the ropes
hanging from the walls

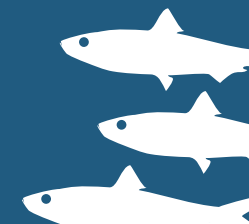


The fish market!



a sensory guide

Newlyn fish tales



“ A sound peculiar to Newlyn was that of Penlee quarry...a large granite quarry at the top of Newlyn, largest in Cornwall I expect. There was a railway track from the quarry to the end of the pier to load the boats, you had the crash of the granite, and from the other pier all of the sounds of the fishing industry. At 12 o'clock noon we had the sound of the Penlee quarry guns, the dynamite explosions, as they brought the granite out of the cliffs. Everyone knew it was coming, it would stop the traffic in case of any blasts going onto the road. People on the beach between Newlyn and Mousehole would scurry to the purpose-built shelter to keep them safe in the ten minutes or so of the explosions. They would also blast at 5pm so the children would know it was time to get home for their dinner, no excuse that you didn't know what the time was! ” *Douglas Williams*

Newlyn is an important part of Cornish history. One of the earliest references to fishing in Newlyn is the annual payment made by fishing ports to the Duchy of Cornwall in 1337. Newlyn has retained its identity as a working port and is still one of the biggest in the country. Now, on average, the port turns over about £25 million worth of fish a year.

The earliest record of a quay in Newlyn is in 1437 when the Bishop of Exeter gave some money to support its repair. This medieval quay can still be seen to the right of the harbour.

Over time Newlyn grew, by the end of the nineteenth century the 40-acre harbour was planned and built, being enclosed by the North and South pier unifying Newlyn into the town we know now. Even this was not enough and a final central pier, the Mary Williams pier was built in the 1980s.



Tales of pilchards...

Pedn-a-teen...

Head and tail, mode of packing pilchards, with heads out and tails in middle of barrel.

Newlyn is best known for the fishing of pilchards. Pilchard fishing was at its peak from 1750 to around 1880.

The old method of catching pilchards was a little different to today. A man high up on the hill, known as a huer, would have kept a watch on the sea waiting to spot the pilchards. He would be looking for a purple patch, like an oily slick on the water. When he spotted it he'd tell the fishermen by yelling 'Hevva, Hevva!' at the top of his voice. The fishermen knew it was time to launch their boats and get the pilchards.

When the pilchards were pressed into barrels their air bladders would burst causing them to produce a long drawn out sigh, known as 'crying for more'. This was an eerie sound in the pilchard cellars but it was seen as a good omen.

... Popes and priests ...

**"Here's a health to the Pope
And may he repent,
And lengthen six months
The term of his lent.
It's always declared
Betwixt the two poles
There's nothing like pilchards
For saving the souls."**

Lots of the pilchards caught and packed in Newlyn were sold to Italy where the Catholic population ate pilchards on Fridays and during Lent when they gave up meat. This Cornish toast to the Pope celebrates this trade.

It was thought to be bad luck however to have a clergyman aboard a boat. Even the mention of one aboard was not allowed, instead they would be referred to as 'Fore and after' linked to the clerical collar or 'White choker'. There are lots of superstitions among fishermen. It was also bad luck to eat a pilchard starting at the head end as this was seen to be driving the shoals of fish away!

The fishing fleet in Newlyn are not restricted by the tides so the boats can work at any time, night and day. Fishing is a hard and dangerous way to make a living which gives Newlyn its feel of a working port with an edge.

... and paintings

This hard-working environment attracted an unlikely set of visitors in the 1880s. A community of artists began working in Newlyn. They painted the people of Newlyn - the fishermen, fish sellers, women and children - and the work they did.

Newlyn residents were often asked to sit for the artists as models which would allow them to make a little money - very helpful if the fishing was slow. Artists such as Walter Langley, Thomas Gotch and Stanhope Forbes became known as 'the Newlyn school'. A large collection of works from the Newlyn artists can be found at Penlee house in Penzance.



**Between the Tides
by Walter Langley**