



Historic England

# 311 - 333 WHAPLOAD ROAD, LOWESTOFT, SUFFOLK

## HISTORIC AREA ASSESSMENT

Matthew Bristow

Discovery, Innovation and Science in the Historic Environment



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311 – 333 WHAPLOAD ROAD  
LOWESTOFT, SUFFOLK

HISTORIC AREA ASSESSMENT

Matthew Bristow

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## SUMMARY

Whapload Road, on the eastern edge of Lowestoft in northern Suffolk, contains preserved – amongst its light industrial premises, 20<sup>th</sup>-century housing, retail units and offices – the remains of a block of late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup>-century fishing buildings associated with the east coast's lucrative herring fishery. Although much altered and scantily documented, these 'Fish Offices' are the last physical vestiges of the herring fishing and fish curing industries entirely rebuilt following a catastrophic fire which swept through Lowestoft on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1645. The road to recovery for the Lowestoft fishermen and merchants was a long one, further complicated by the centuries old dispute with the Burgesses of neighbouring Great Yarmouth who sought to suppress the Lowestoft fishing industry to ensure the supremacy of their own. Following the final settlement of this dispute in 1663, Lowestoft's fishermen were free to recommence and expand their herring fishery, further aided in January 1679 by the grant of a port licence, allowing the landing of salt and other essential fishing materials at Lowestoft and ending the requirement to land goods at Yarmouth and transport them along the coast road. These resolutions allowed the major Lowestoft merchant families to invest in their fishing premises, rebuilding the lost timber fish houses and stores in brick and beach stone to mitigate the risk of fire.

The new fishing buildings, like their timber predecessors, were constructed at the eastern end of the narrow medieval burgage plots which extended down the cliff from the eastern side of the High Street above. As a result the fish houses and stores were, for the most part, aligned east to west and comprised long, narrow structures which extended from a frontage on Whapload Road facing the beach to the foot of the cliff behind. The buildings performed a range of functions associated with the catching and processing of herring between the months of September and December, when the herring shoals off the East Anglian coast were in prime condition with a lower fat content which made them less perishable. In contrast to Great Yarmouth and to the pre-eminent Dutch herring fishery of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Lowestoft fishery was not characterised by the production of pickled 'white herring', but rather favoured the production of smoked 'red herring'. As such, the fishing buildings on Whapload Road were constructed to process the landed fish in addition to storing and preparing the nets prior to the herring voyages. Each Fish Office provided space to store the imported salt, essential in the curing process, for salting the landed fish (a process called rousing or roaring), for smoking the fish for several weeks over low fires and for tanning, repairing and storing the miles of drift nets which the fishing fleet required. Though these processes became more industrialised over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the surviving Whapload Road buildings retain fabric evidence of all of these processes and allow an understanding of the way the pre-industrial Fish Office functioned.

The Whapload Road area remained at the heart of the Lowestoft herring fishing industry throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and from the 1790s was supplemented by the Beach Village, or 'Grit' which developed on the rough area of former common land between Whapload Road to the west and the shoreline to the east. Beginning in the 1860s, the Scottish herring fleet increasingly ventured down the east coast and from the 1890s, the Scottish voyages had become a full scale invasion leading to the golden age of Lowestoft's herring fishery in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The interruption to the industry caused by two world wars and depopulation, destruction by flood in 1953 and redevelopment of the Beach Village as the site of the Birdseye factory, combined with a depletion of the herring shoals to bring about the end of the Lowestoft herring voyages by the mid-1960s. The traditional fishing buildings which

once extended along the length of Whapload Road were gradually converted, repurposed and demolished during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and in 2019, numbers 311 to 333 Whapload Road contain the most complete extant remains of the pre-industrial fishing and herring curing industry.

311 to 333 Whapload Road contain important physical remains of a vital regional industry, the archaeology of which has received comparatively little attention. It is significant that through the analysis of the surviving fabric, the pre-industrial Lowestoft Fish Office can be interpreted and the original use of the buildings and the processes they were constructed to house, better understood. Detailed investigation of the surviving structures can also allow the Whapload Road buildings to be understood as the physical response to the challenges of the local topography and the socio-economic and political events of the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

## **CONTRIBUTORS**

This report was drafted by Matthew Bristow and read by Wayne Cocroft and David Went of the Archaeological Survey and Investigation Team and by Katie Carmichael and Rebecca Lane of the Regional Delivery Group. The majority of the ground photography was provided by Patricia Payne and graphics by Sharon Soutar, both of the Public Engagement Group. The reconstruction drawings of the Whapload Road fishing buildings were produced by Allan T. Adams and the report was desktop published by Rachel Forbes.

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Documentary research was undertaken during June and September 2018 and building survey and investigation between November 2018 and March 2019.

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# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
LOCATION AND SETTING	2
HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT	6
Origins and Growth of Lowestoft	6
High Street and the Cliff	7
The North Denes	8
Pre-Industrial Fishing	11
Dispute with Great Yarmouth	16
The Great Fire of Lowestoft	17
The Post-Fire Herring Fishery	20
The Drifter Fleet	21
Net Preparation and Storage	22
Red Herrings and Fish Smoking	26
The Scottish Herring Voyages	33
Beach Village or ‘The Grit’	34
Samuel Morton Peto and Lowestoft Harbour	35
The 20 <sup>th</sup> Century	37
LANDSCAPE AND TOPOGRAPHY	40
The Scores	42
The ‘Lost Score’	45
SITE DESCRIPTION	48
311 Whapload Road	48
312-314 Whapload Road	50
315 Whapload Road	64
317-321 Whapload Road	72
325 Whapload Road	74
329 Whapload Road	78
333 Whapload Road	104
DISTINCTIVENESS AND SIGNIFICANCE	111

The Lowestoft Fish Office	113
BIBLIOGRAPHY	115
Published Sources	115
Archival Sources	117
Digital Sources	117
ENDNOTES	118

## INTRODUCTION

This report on the buildings, landscape and historical development of the former fishing industry buildings which comprise 311 to 333 Whapload Road, has been prepared as part of the Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone, a joint initiative between Historic England, Lowestoft Town Council, East Suffolk District Council and East Suffolk Building Preservation Trust.

The report presents the findings of historical research and buildings investigation carried out between June 2018 and March 2019 by the Historic Places Investigation Team (East). Fieldwork was carried out to assess the significance of a range of buildings on Whapload Road, believed to be historic net stores in advance of proposed redevelopment of the area. Two of these buildings were assessed for dendrochronological dating, however no suitable timbers were identified. A detailed examination of the available archival, published and electronic sources relating to north Lowestoft and the Whapload Road area was undertaken in preparation of this report. Among these sources, the three volume manuscript history of the Lowestoft area produced by Lowestoft barber, Isaac Gillingwater and a history of the town, authored by his younger brother Edmund and published by subscription in 1790, provide invaluable accounts of early-modern Lowestoft. Similarly, the account of Lowestoft by the Reverend Alfred Sucking in *The History and Antiquities of the County of Suffolk* (1848) provided much context for the report. As far as 21<sup>st</sup> century scholarship is concerned, in addition to a number of fine accounts by local historians, the work of David Butcher and namely the publications; *Medieval Lowestoft: The Origins and Growth of a Suffolk Coastal Community, Lowestoft 1550-1750: Development and Change in a Suffolk Coastal Town* and *The Ocean's Gift: Fishing in Lowestoft During the Pre-Industrial Era*, have all been heavily cited. The Lowestoft branch of the Suffolk Archives holds considerable primary material relating to the growth and development of Lowestoft, amongst it, late 18<sup>th</sup> century topographical depictions of the Whapload Road and beach area produced by Richard Powles to illustrate Isaac Gillingwater's history. The records of the 1910/11 Inland Revenue Valuation Survey held at the National Archives were also examined and a full list of published works and sources consulted can be found at the end of this report.

The report presents an overview account of the historical development of north Lowestoft, its landscape and the growth and subsequent decline of the herring fishery. This introductory, contextualising account is followed by detailed descriptions of the buildings which comprise 311 to 333 Whapload Road, their history, ownership and significance. The report concludes with a reassessment of the significance of the pre-industrial Lowestoft 'Fish Office'.

Limited measured survey was undertaken and was confined to 329 Whapload Road. The southern range of 315 Whapload Road and the three cottages which make up 317-321 Whapload Road, were inaccessible and have not been investigated. Similarly, although included as part of this Historic Area Assessment, 333 Whapload Road was not surveyed as it was demolished in 1989.



## LOCATION AND SETTING

Lowestoft claims the distinction of being Britain's most easterly town, situated as it is on a headland overlooking Ness Point, the easternmost point of the British Isles. The historic core of the town is focussed on its High Street and overlooks the North Sea, while much of the subsequent development has taken place within those parts of Kirkley, Carlton Colville, Oulton and Gunton parishes which became part of Lowestoft in 1885 when it was incorporated as a Borough. Suffolk's second largest town behind Ipswich, Lowestoft is located in the north-east corner of the county, 11 miles (17km) south of its historic Norfolk rival, Great Yarmouth, 28 miles (44km) south-east of Norwich and 39 miles (63km) north-east of Ipswich (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Map showing the location of Lowestoft in the context of the major settlements and communications of Suffolk and Norfolk. © Historic England, base map © Crown Copyright and database right 2019. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900, illustration Sharon Souter

The ancient parish of Lowestoft lay within the historic half-hundred of Lothingland, its name derived from the natural haven of Lake Lothing to the south of the town through which the River Waveney flowed to the sea and which formed the southern boundary of both the ancient parish and the half-hundred. Lothingland was historically an island, with the North Sea to the east, Lake Lothing and Oulton Broad

to the south, the River Waveney to west and River Yare to the north, and included a number of parishes which were transferred from Suffolk to Norfolk in 1972 (Figure 2).



Figure 2: A map of 1584 showing the settlements of the island of Lothingland between Great Yarmouth (left) and Lowestoft (right). © The National Archives, MPF 1/283

Much of the historic core of the town is located within north Lowestoft and sits on a level promontory c.25m above sea level. The High Street extends southwards along this ridge, parallel to the sea, its eastern extent defined by a steep cliff descending to the beach and foreshore below. When describing Lowestoft's setting in 1848, the antiquarian Reverend Alfred Suckling wrote:

The face of the cliff on which it sits sinks abruptly towards the ocean.....is covered with gardens, trees and villas; displaying to the passing mariner a verdant prospect, unrivalled on the eastern coast.....At the bottom of these gardens is a long arrangement of Fish Houses which extend the whole length of the town, and

are so numerous, that had they been placed in a more compact form, would have been sufficient of themselves to have formed a considerable town.<sup>1</sup>

Whapload Road, at one time Whapload Way, sits above the high water mark separated from the sea at its northern end by a large expanse of grass and scrub vegetation known as the Denes. It tracks the line of the historic high street c.75m east of the base of the cliff and marks the eastern boundary of the medieval burgage plots. Whapload Road extends southwards from the intersection with The Ravine adjacent to Sparrow's Nest Park, to the Hamilton Dock (built 1903-4) where it becomes Battery Green Road. The gardens and terraces which once delighted Suckling are gone, as are a number of the buildings on the eastern side of the High Street, the latter the victim of a hit-and-run bombing raid in 1943. However the relationship between the fishing buildings fronting the beach and the residences atop the cliff linked by the narrow plots and the stepped 'Scores' - narrow, evenly spaced alleys connecting the beach and the High Street – endures and the historic grain of the landscape remains clearly visible.

North Lowestoft, loosely comprising the historic High Street, the site of the medieval parish church, the cliff, the scores, Whapload Road, the net drying racks on the North Denes, Bellevue and Sparrows Nest parks, and the late Victorian and Edwardian developments north of Belle Vue Park and the Ravine, all form part of a Conservation Area designated in 1973 and subsequently expanded three times, most recently in 2007. It is defined in terms of three distinct character areas. The High Street, which contains the historic core of the town, the site of the parish church, the scores and the greatest concentration of Lowestoft's historic and listed buildings; Bellevue, the post-1870s expansion of Lowestoft which includes Bellevue, Sparrow's Nest and Arnold's Bequest public parks, the north lighthouse rebuilt in 1873 and the war memorial; and the Denes, which includes the historic beach area with surviving net drying racks, the site of the lost beach village and the former fishing industry buildings of Whapload Road (Figure 3).<sup>2</sup>

Within this final character area, 311 to 333 Whapload Road forms a continuous run of buildings which present a mixture of long elevations and gable ends to Whapload Road. This block of buildings is located equidistantly between Lighthouse Score to the north and Mariner's Score to the south and below the northernmost section of the High Street, extending southwards from the site of No. 1, as far as the site of the Rectory which was demolished after sustaining irreparable damage in May 1943.<sup>3</sup>



Figure 3: An aerial image of 1926 showing much of the North Lowestoft Conservation Area including the east side of the High Street, Bellevue and Denes character areas and in the foreground, 311 to 333 Whapload Road. © Historic England, EPW016551

## HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

### Origins and Growth of Lowestoft

The etymology of Lowestoft's name suggests that it is a settlement of Scandinavian origin, literally translating as the homestead of an individual bearing the Old Norse name 'Hloðvér'; 'Hloðvér' s Toft' and that it therefore emerged in the mid-9<sup>th</sup> to early 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup> However, the Island and half-hundred of Lothingland in which Lowestoft sits, derives its name from Anglo-Saxon elements with a name which translates as 'the land of the people of Hlud'.<sup>5</sup> This disparity may indicate, as David Butcher speculates, that Lowestoft was an Anglo-Saxon settlement, well established by the 9<sup>th</sup> century, whose name was changed from Hluda's Toft to Hloðvér' s Toft by Scandinavian incomers.<sup>6</sup> Either way, it is clear from Lowestoft's entry in Domesday Book that there was an established settlement by the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century but that it was not sizable, with a population that can be confidently estimated at about 75. It is also interesting to note, that while the neighbouring manor of Yarmouth is recorded as having 24 fishermen, Lowestoft's economy appears to have been entirely based on agriculture.<sup>7</sup>

Lowestoft, Yarmouth and the other manors of the half-hundred of Lothingland were held by the King in 1086 and continued in Royal demesne until the reign of Henry III, making Lowestoft's manorial history indivisible from that of Lothingland. Having passed to John Baliol (King of Scotland), Lothingland was confiscated along with all Baliol lands by Edward I and remained in Royal hands until it was conferred to the Earl of Richmond, John de Dreux in 1306.<sup>8</sup> While in de Dreux's hands, the fortunes of Lowestoft began to diverge from those of Lothingland. On the 15<sup>th</sup> November 1308, John De Dreux received a royal grant entitling the manor of Lowestoft and not the half- hundred of Lothingland to hold a weekly Wednesday market and an annual fair, the latter to take place on the vigil, the feast of St Margaret (20<sup>th</sup> July) and the six days after.<sup>9</sup> The granting of a royal licence for a market and the lack of a suitable market site may have been the stimulus for the re-establishment of Lowestoft to its present location atop the cliff, removing from the supposed original settlement site about a mile WSW from the High Street.<sup>10</sup> If it were the stimulus, that the new site afforded better opportunity to shift the focus of Lowestoft's economy towards fishing, cannot be coincidental.

In 1376 Edward III granted the manor of 'Lowystoft' and the hundred of 'Luddynglond' to John de Surrey and it subsequently passed to Michael de la Pole during the reign of Henry IV. On 15<sup>th</sup> December 1445, Henry VI granted a market charter to William de la Pole, conferring on Lowestoft the privileges of a market town and additionally granting the right to hold two fairs, to take place on the 1<sup>st</sup> May and 29<sup>th</sup> September.

Grant, of special grace and for good service, to William de la Pole, marquis and earl of Suffolk, and his heirs, of a weekly market on Wednesday and two yearly fairs one on the feast of SS. Philip and James and the other at Michaelmas and for the three days before and after either feast at their town of Lothuwistoft in the half-hundred of Ludingland co. Suffolk, which is of the ancient

demesne of the crown; and that they may appoint a steward to hold their courts of the markets and fairs there; to the exclusion of the jurisdiction of any justice, sheriff, escheator or other minister of the King from the said town during the said fairs<sup>11</sup>

The right to hold markets and fairs within the town clearly brought wealth to Lowestoft and with it an increase in population, attested by the rebuilding and enlarging of the parish church in the latter years of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>12</sup> By 1524, Lowestoft was the most highly taxed settlement in the hundreds of Lothingland and Mutford and by 1568 it was making contributions 4 1/2 times the size of its nearest rival.<sup>13</sup> Between 1561 and 1675, Lowestoft's population remained at around 1500, significant growth hampered by the on-going dispute with Great Yarmouth over fishing rights and a devastating fire which swept through the town in 1645. Stimulated by the resolution of the dispute with Great Yarmouth in 1663 and the granting of port status in 1679, Lowestoft's population climbed to about 1650 between 1676 and 1700 and by 1750 had reached just short of 2000.<sup>14</sup>

The manor of Lowestoft, which had descended through the de la Pole family, was forfeited to the Crown in 1513 when Edmund de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk was executed, and the manor re-granted by Henry VIII to Edmund Jernegan of Somerleyton Hall. From there it passed, with the Somerleyton estate through the Wentworth, Garneys, Allin and Anguish families before it was sold in August 1844 to Samuel Morton Peto.<sup>15</sup> In 1885, and with a population which had swollen to over 20,000, Lowestoft received a charter of incorporation to become a municipal borough, replacing the existing system of parish vestry and manorial court governance.<sup>16</sup>

## High Street and the Cliff

The core of Lowestoft is the historic High Street which runs for c.900 metres parallel to the cliff edge and appears to retain its ancient north-south alignment. At the time of the granting of the manor market in 1308, the cliff top site was likely to have been under-exploited, but well drained coastal heathland (referred to as 'waste from the Lord' in 18<sup>th</sup>-century documents) which was sold off as building plots on a copyhold basis which entitled the Lord of the Manor to a fine each time the plots subsequently changed hands.<sup>17</sup> These narrow and regularly sized copyhold, or burgage plots extended eastwards away from the High Street, down the face of the cliff to the level beach below and indicate that, in common with many small market towns of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Lowestoft was a planned settlement, comprising little more than a single street. The narrow plots down the cliff afforded easy access to the shore and were supplemented by the 'Scores', a distinctive feature of Lowestoft's landscape which were created out of natural drainage channels formed by surface water running down the cliff face. These regularly spaced gullies down the cliff gave easy access to the beach for fishing, and over time were consolidated through the addition of steps, walls and paving to improve their function.<sup>18</sup> Despite the steepness of the cliff and the loose, sandy soil of which it is comprised, the property owners exploited the full extent of their plots, adding stability through the introduction of terraces and outbuildings, and creating yards and fine gardens, leading to this section of the cliff being referred to as the 'Hanging Gardens of Lowestoft'.<sup>19</sup> Writing

in 1790 in his history of the town, Edmund Gillingwater described how the cliff had been developed and the way that it linked the residences of the High Street with the fishing premises of the beach below:

The declivity of this cliff, which formerly was one continued slope of barren sand, is now converted by modern improvements into very beautiful hanging gardens, descending from the dwelling houses above to the fish houses below.<sup>20</sup>

The plots on the east side of the High street extended beyond the foot of the cliff to the level land above the high water mark, the line of what is now Whapload Road. This allowed the merchants resident in the High Street properties to exploit their property to its fullest through the construction of fish houses and net stores (Figure 4). The fish houses, of which 311 to 333 Whapload Road are the direct descendents, were needed in order to cure, through salting and smoking, the landed fish in order to create Lowestoft's most famous export, red herring (see below). The narrow proportions of the plots would have required that these fish, or smoke houses be aligned gable end to the sea, and although no detailed depictions of them survive, they would almost certainly have been of timber construction. Lowestoft benefitted greatly from the fish houses being detached from the town and situated off the beach beneath the cliff. It made the conveyance of the herring from boats, landed on the beach, to fish house simpler and quicker, and kept the smoke and smells associated with herring preparation, away from the town. It has also been suggested that the alignment of the fish houses along the narrow plots, punctuated by the scores, created optimum air movement creating a better smoke and a superior product.<sup>21</sup>

## The North Denes

In 2019, the area which formerly comprised the North Denes, or Lowestoft's beach area, plays host to the North Denes Caravan Park, an area of relict 20<sup>th</sup>-century racks for drying fishing nets and the Birds Eye frozen food plant, which from its beginnings in 1949 as a small depot, has expanded across the site of the lost Beach Village and pickling plots into a major factory. Historically though, the North Denes was one of Lowestoft's seven areas of common or waste as listed in the 1618 manor roll and formed a large expanse of beach area above the high water mark.<sup>22</sup> The width of the Denes protected the cliff from erosion by the tides, maintaining its stability, while the open area of scrub vegetation and grass provided the space to lay nets out to dry after the catch had been landed. A vast space between the shoreline and the fish houses at the foot of the cliff, the North Denes was also used for storage of goods and for boat building and repair.<sup>23</sup>

The North Denes is now a clearly defined space, with the seawall of 1947-8 to the east, the Birdseye factory to the south, Whapload Road to the west and the caravan park to the north. However, it is clear that the beach area was formerly both much larger and much less clearly defined. The earliest and clearest description of the Denes is contained within a letter sent by the Duke of Norfolk to Henry VIII on the 12<sup>th</sup> May 1545. He wrote:



**Figure 4:** A perspective view of Lowestoft by Richard Powles from the Denes looking south-west in 1786. Powles' composition clearly shows the relationship between the fish houses on the level ground at the foot of the cliff and the High Street residences above, linked by gardens, terraces and punctuated by the Scores. © Suffolk Archives [Lowestoft], SA [L] 193/2/1



At Laystofte, for small ships of 10 or 12 foot draught, are two very good roads called the North Road and the South Road, in either of which a good number of mean ships may ride against all winds. Between the landing place and the town is at least 40 score “tailor’s yards,” and the landing place is more than half a mile in length.<sup>24</sup>

In the Duke of Norfolk’s estimate of the size of the beach area, it is unclear whether by ‘the town’ he means the High Street and is thus including the cliff, or whether he is describing the level area between the shore and the base of the cliff. If it were the latter, based on a ‘tailor’s yard’ being either 37 or 42 inches, he is describing an area which spanned between 2, 467 ft (752 m) and 2, 800 ft (853 m) between the shore and the cliff, a considerably wider beach area than exists today.

What is clear is that the Denes were integral to the Lowestoft fishing industry prior to the construction of Lowestoft’s first harbour in 1827-30 and remained an important communal space until the cessation of herring fishing in the 1960s. The rough scrub vegetation allowed for fishing nets to be spread out and kept off the ground in order for them to be cleaned and dried, a privilege which was free of charge for Lowestoft townsmen, but for which visiting fishermen incurred a charge. In addition to net drying and boat repair, the Denes also saw some fish processing. A long trench, aligned north-south and still discernible, once contained copper vats placed above open fires in which cod livers from the Icelandic voyages were boiled down to make oil for lamps, though this activity appears to have ceased by the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>25</sup> In 1790, Gowing’s Rope works ropewalk was established on the Denes running for about ¼ mile north to south, parallel with Whapload Road (Figure 5). The ropery building faced Whapload Road and the gardens behind Arnold House and the Rectory on the High Street.<sup>26</sup> The site of the rope walk also remains visible in 2019.

From the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, likely coinciding with the construction of Lowestoft’s first harbour and a reduction in the reliance on the Denes as a makeshift wharf, the northern section of the Denes saw the gradual construction of dedicated net drying racks, known locally as the ‘spars’. These rows of wooden frames allowed nets and ropes to be both dried after use and to be hung up after being given a preservative treatment, a process known as tanning. Simple post and crossbar structures, they were regularly refreshed throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and the few that remain on the Denes in 2019 date from the final years of the Lowestoft herring fishery in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Denes remained important to Lowestoft throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the herring fishery expanded. That importance was emphasised in 1897 when a proposal promoted by the Midland and Great Northern Joint Lines for a railway from Great Yarmouth to Lowestoft entering the town across the Denes, was rejected following large public opposition as it was felt that it would both take fishing away from Lowestoft to Great Yarmouth, but also that it would ruin the Denes and destroy the prospects of North Lowestoft.<sup>27</sup>



**Figure 5:** An engraving depicting the North Denes in 1874. The scale of the beach area is clearly conveyed as is its use for a multitude of fishing relating activities, among them net preparation and rope manufacture, with Gowing's rope walk at the centre of the composition. While the fish offices of Whapload Road are shown in less detail than Powles' perspective, the relationship between them, the cliff and the High Street above is again emphasised. © SA [L] 1300/72/18/32

## Pre-Industrial Fishing

Writing in 1790, Edmund Gillingwater contended that Lowestoft 'probably, received its very existence from the convenient situation of its coast for the fishermen to exercise the several occupations of a life dependent on those employments'.<sup>28</sup> Whilst, Lowestoft as a settlement would appear to predate the development of a fishing industry, as shown by the absence of fishermen from its Domesday entry, the relocation of the town to its current cliff-top situation in the 14<sup>th</sup> century must have coincided with greater exploitation of the sea as part of its economy. Lack of specific records mean that it is not possible to estimate the scale of Lowestoft's medieval fishing, however the bitter dispute with neighbouring Yarmouth over the rights to the inshore herring fishery, which lasted for over 300 years from 1357, attests to the growing scale of the Lowestoft fishing industry.<sup>29</sup>

Throughout the medieval period and up until the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Lowestoft's townsmen and immigrant fishermen fished a seasonal cycle. In the early months of the year between February and July, white fish such as cod, hake and ling were fished in Icelandic, Faeroese and Shetland waters before the fishing vessels returned to drift net fish local waters for mackerel between May and June. During the autumn, local inshore waters were again exploited as the Lowestoft men fished for the herring which came to characterise the east coast fishery of the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>30</sup>

Before the final resolution of the dispute with Great Yarmouth in 1663, the Lowestoft fishing industry had remained relatively small and throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century, only around 20 boats were fishing for herring out of Lowestoft, employing around 200 people.<sup>31</sup> However the Lay Subsidy returns of 1524 and 1568 listed Scots, Frenchmen, Islanders, Dutchmen and Icelanders as resident in Lowestoft, demonstrating the importance of the industry and the value of the local herring stock.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to the seasonal rhythm of the east coast fishery, at Lowestoft there was a significant distinction between the fishermen and the town's wealthy merchants. This manifested itself physically in the ownership of fishing vessels for the various fishing voyages. The in-shore vessels were generally smaller and intended for a crew of two or three and were generally owned and operated by the fishermen themselves. The larger vessels needed for the Icelandic voyages and for Europe-wide trade in landed fish, tended to be owned on a share basis by the town's merchants. On these larger vessels, it was customary for all members of the crew to contribute a number of nets or lines in order to spread the investment in gear and justify distribution of payment by shares. This ultimately allowed enterprising fishermen to rise up to become wealthy merchants, owning shares in a number of vessels.<sup>33</sup>

## The Cod Fishery

Requiring of both the greatest investment and the greatest risk taking, by the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there was a well-established pattern of voyages from the east coast of England to the Faeroe Islands and Iceland in spring and early summer to fish for cod and ling. The voyages began in February or March and continued until June or July with a single crew able to make two long voyages to the fishing grounds during the season if the catches were made quickly enough during each trip.<sup>34</sup> Unlike the mackerel and herring seasons, the cod and ling were line caught. The fishermen employed a single hemp line called the 'great line' which extended to ninety fathoms (540ft) and carried a heavy iron bar with a number of small hooked lines, each baited with smaller fish.<sup>35</sup> The cod voyages were long, with the boats remaining at sea for a number of weeks and in order to preserve the catch, the fish were processed at sea. Each fish was decapitated, opened, gutted and boned before being salted. Once each voyage was over and the fish had been landed, they were reprocessed in one of two ways in order to prepare them for sale. The first method was to pound the cod with wooden mallets and leave them to dry to stock fish, and then further desiccate to form Haberdines. The drying process took place in an open-sided shed called a barfhouse and these would likely have been numerous among the pre-fire buildings of the Lowestoft fishing industry. The second method saw the cod re-salted and packed into barrels for transport and sale. Most of the fish was consumed locally and unlike the preserved herring (see below), dried and salted cod was intended for very local markets, and likely rarely travelled further afield than Norwich.<sup>36</sup> While still at sea, the livers were saved during the gutting process and once on land, were boiled down in large coppers to produce 'Train Oil', which was used to fuel lamps and dress leather.<sup>37</sup> This process is believed to have continued to take place on the Denes until at least 1720 and the 'blubber trench' which held the coppers was still clearly visible at the time Gillingwater was writing his history of the town.

An important fishery throughout the medieval period, the Lowestoft cod fishery appears to have almost entirely ceased during the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, possibly the result of changing dietary habits and a decline in fish consumption brought about by the Reformation.<sup>38</sup> Gillingwater claims it again flourished in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century when between 20 and 30 vessels were regularly making the cod voyages.<sup>39</sup> By the end of that century however, the numbers had again declined and only one boat was recorded in the 1699 tithe accounts as fishing for cod. Parochial records suggest that a limited number of fishermen made irregular voyages north to fish for cod during the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with the last documented voyage occurring in 1743, though Gillingwater claims that the last Cod voyage out of Lowestoft took place in 1748.<sup>40</sup> It is possible that small scale cod fishing continued out of Lowestoft throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1882, the Shoals, a large Fish Office at the foot of Lighthouse Score opposite the Denes, was put up for sale and the particulars listed in local newspapers. The advertisement for the Shoals listed 'Netchambers, Barfhouses and Saltstores, 12 drying houses'.<sup>41</sup> This may indicate that the drying of cod had again become part of Lowestoft's fishing industry as the term 'Barfhouse' is not used in similar adverts of sale for other Fish Offices, nor is the term drying houses used for the buildings used to smoke herring. If cod fishing had continued out of Lowestoft, it played a minor part in an industry which from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century was entirely dominated by the herring fishery.

## The Herring Fishery

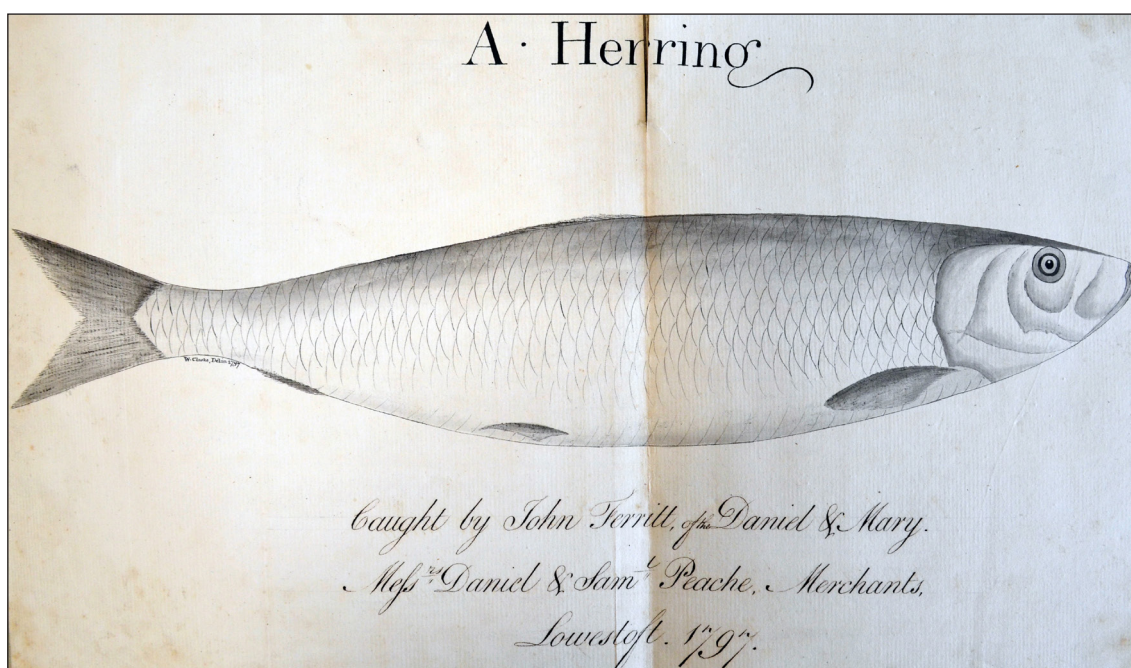
Herring are a schooling, pelagic species meaning they live in large groups and inhabit the oceans' pelagic zone, neither close to the bottom nor close to the shore (Figure 6). They are one of the most populous species of fish on the planet and have been exploited for food in England since at least the 8<sup>th</sup> century when they first appear in the documentary record, in a chronicle of the monastery of Evesham.<sup>42</sup>

From the Middle Ages until the late eighteenth century herrings dominated commerce in a way that is comparable to the importance today of north sea oil.<sup>43</sup>

John Dyson's powerful description of the herring fishery gives some sense of importance of herring to the coastal communities of eastern Britain and northern Europe, an importance so evident that it led the *London Illustrated News* of May 19 1883 to describe the herring as 'the most important fish, as an article of food and trade, caught in the British seas'.<sup>44</sup>

In his history of the town, and no doubt writing with no small degree of bias, Gillingwater speculates that the east coast herring fishery originated in Lowestoft before transferring itself to Great Yarmouth where the beach was more convenient for landing herring, drying nets and preparing the fish.<sup>45</sup> While Yarmouth's herring fishery grew quickly following the grant of borough status by King John in 1208, the Lowestoft fishery remained modest throughout the medieval period before finally escaping Great Yarmouth's yoke in 1663 and flourishing as a port town in its own right in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In England before the Reformation, herring was the only cheap and readily available alternative to meat on many Church fast and holy days and as such there was a ready market.<sup>46</sup> The herring season lasted

throughout the late summer and autumn months as the shoals moved down the east coast of England, but it was the October and November herring which the fishermen of Lowestoft fished for. The herring were in prime condition later in the year and contained a lower fat content which made them less perishable than those taken in the summer months and thus likely to return to shore in a better condition.<sup>47</sup> During most of the season, the boats were working within 30-35 miles of the town, employing drift nets to make their catch rather than the line fishing techniques of the cod voyages. The herring were caught using large drift nets made of hemp or linen twine woven to form a mesh of about 1 inch square. The Lowestoft drifter boats usually worked around 100 individual 20 yard nets, with each boat 'shooting over a mile of nets'.<sup>48</sup> The drifter fleet was largely comprised of boats of between 30 and 50 tonnes known as 'Great Boats', crewed by 10-11 men, which could hold between 10 and 12 'lasts' of herring (120,000 to 144,000 fish) before having to return to offload the catch.<sup>49</sup> Unlike the cod and ling fisheries, most of the processing of the herring took place once the catch had been landed, with only preservative salting taking place at sea in order to ensure the catch did not spoil before it could be brought ashore. Once ashore, the herring were left whole and un-gutted and dry salted in heaps on the ground for two or three days before being smoked over slow fires for up to a month.<sup>50</sup> This gave the herring a red colour, lending this type of fish their name, 'red herring', a method of preservation which became synonymous with Lowestoft (see below).



**Figure 6:** An illustration by Richard Powles of a herring landed by a Lowestoft drifter in 1797. Such was the importance of herring to Lowestoft that this illustration was intended for inclusion in Isaac Gillingwater's History. © SA [L] 193/2/1

For much of the medieval period, herring would have been caught for a local market, as herrings salted in ships hold often became tainted by the time they reached the consumer.<sup>51</sup> In 1486, a Dutchman called Willem Beukels, refining a 13<sup>th</sup>-century

Swedish process, realised that if the herring were gutted immediately and laid in barrels topped up with brine, they became pickled and lasted a long time.<sup>52</sup> The ability to preserve the herring in a way which ensured they would remain in good condition for an extended period allowed the fishermen of the east coast of England and of northern Europe to establish a lucrative trade. While for Lowestoft, this trade would be restricted until the latter years of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the pickled or 'white herring' allowed the establishment of the great Dutch herring fishery which dominated English waters from the late 15<sup>th</sup> to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Dutch herring season began at Shetland where they fished between mid-summer day and July 25<sup>th</sup>, then moved to eastern tip of Scotland near Aberdeen till Sept 14<sup>th</sup> and then 70 days of fishing off Norfolk, where the fleet were based at Great Yarmouth.<sup>53</sup> The large Dutch fishing vessels, known as 'Herring Busses', fished off the British Coast for half the year in a huge fleet numbering around 2000 with each boat able to catch 10-20 lasts of herring in half mile long nets. By contrast, England's herring fleet numbered less than a hundred boats, fished a season which lasted just seven weeks and had nets half the size of those used by the Dutch.<sup>54</sup> A treatise on the cost of fitting out a herring buss, written in 1615, attested to the dominance of the Dutch herring fishery, stating that, 'A Flemish Busse doth often take seaven or eight Last of Herringes in a day'.<sup>55</sup> The English herring industry declined further following the Reformation, when the requirement to not eat meat on certain days was removed, leading to a general reduction in the amount of fish eaten. The decline of the fishing industry in the face of greater freedom to eat meat in Protestant England, led Elizabeth I to intervene and to create demand for fish by prohibiting, by Royal decree, the eating of flesh of beast or fowl on 152 days a year. Although well intentioned, the decree proved almost impossible to enforce and the newly created 'Fish Days' met with much resistance and as a result, the decree soon lapsed.<sup>56</sup> The decline in demand for fish following the Reformation and the continued oppression of the Lowestoft fleet by the burgesses of Yarmouth meant that throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century only around 20 boats were fishing for herring out of Lowestoft, with somewhere around 200 people employed in the industry. By contrast, the Great Yarmouth fleet numbered around 200 boats and the town also profited from the use of its harbour by the Dutch fleet.<sup>57</sup>

The fortunes of both the Lowestoft fleet and the English herring fishery more generally, took a significant upturn towards the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Regarding the latter, the on-going Anglo Dutch Wars rendered the North Sea unsafe for the Dutch herring fleet and during the first two Anglo Dutch wars (1652-4 and 1665-7), they stayed at home. This had a significant effect on the Dutch fleet's dominance of the herring grounds and after the third Anglo Dutch War (1672-4), the Dutch fishery went into decline.<sup>58</sup> Lowestoft's fishermen were buoyed by the final end to Great Yarmouth's suppression of the fishing rights in 1663 and the subsequent granting of permission to import salt for curing, and fishing equipment in 1679. Despite this, between the Navigation Act of 1651 and around 1800, the British fishing industry, inclusive of the east coast herring fishery, struggled to establish itself and was said to be the despair of the Crown. In fact, it would be the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century before British fishermen started catching and properly curing their own herrings on a large scale.<sup>59</sup>

## Dispute with Great Yarmouth

As introduced above, throughout the medieval period and continuing into the years of the Restoration, Lowestoft's fishing industry and the prosperity of the town in general were largely shaped by a bitter dispute with neighbouring Great Yarmouth. The dispute can be said to have begun in the years following 1208 when Great Yarmouth was granted borough status by King John, which led to an attempt by the town's burgesses to maintain their dominance in fishing and trading over the manor of Lothingland which was granted a market charter in 1211.<sup>60</sup> Following the 1308 grant of a licence to hold a weekly market at Lowestoft and the establishment of a new settlement on the cliff overlooking the beach, Yarmouth sought to control Lowestoft's maritime affairs in order to preserve its own trading advantage.<sup>61</sup> Yarmouth's attempts to restrict the Lowestoft fishermen escalated following the passing of the Statute of the Herring in 1357. Ironically, it was passed as an apparatus to eliminate the perceived corrupt and restrictive practices of merchants, but was claimed by Yarmouth to have been passed in order to aid the enlargement of their liberties.<sup>62</sup> The general claim of the men of Great Yarmouth, based on their interpretation of the 1357 statute, was that no herring should be sold or bought at any town or place upon the coast, roads (inshore waters) or shore within 14 lewes or lewks of the town of Great Yarmouth during the time of the herring fairs which ran for 40 days between the feast days of St Michael and St Martin. The extent of these liberties being claimed by the burgesses of Yarmouth extended from Winterton Ness in Norfolk north of Great Yarmouth to Easton Ness in Suffolk, some distance south of Lowestoft and entirely encompassing its in-shore waters.<sup>63</sup> In 1372, Edward III further entrenched Great Yarmouth's control over Lowestoft's herring fishery by passing a charter which made it illegal to load or unload cargo anywhere within seven lewks of the town, allowed Yarmouth to levy customs on all herring bought and sold within the seven lewks and granted a monopoly on holding a herring fair.<sup>64</sup> This charter was particularly contentious for two reasons. Firstly, the interpretation of 'lewks' as leagues and not miles greatly extended the size of Yarmouth's liberties. Lewes or lewks were the French term for an English league, or London mile, approximately, 1500 paces in length and only slightly shorter than a modern mile.<sup>65</sup> The established distance for a league on land was closer to three miles, thus potentially giving Yarmouth control of a huge stretch of the East Coast. The charter also annexed Kirkley Road ('Road' referring to the inshore waters between Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft) to Yarmouth's jurisdiction to facilitate easier collection of tolls from ships offloading at sea and not in Yarmouth Haven. However Yarmouth contended that in addition to the seven lewks stated being leagues and not miles, the measurement be taken from the haven and not the Quay of Yarmouth, with the result of extending the liberties even further to the south.<sup>66</sup> Lowestoft responded by having Parliament repeal the law on where fish and other merchandise could be unloaded and sold.<sup>67</sup> In 1376, as tensions between the fishermen of Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft rose, the charter was repealed. It was temporarily re-granted in 1378 before being repealed and re-granted a total seven times by 1386, with the men of Lowestoft thereafter collecting the required customs on behalf of Great Yarmouth.<sup>68</sup>

From the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, Great Yarmouth's fishing industry had been hampered by the regular silting up of the haven and its equally regular re-cutting and re-

siting. The construction of a seventh haven near Gorleston in the 1570s, capable of accommodating ships of up to 250 tons allowed Yarmouth to once again attempt to exert its right to collect tolls from ships along the coast within the boundaries of its liberties.<sup>69</sup> This was again resisted by the fishermen of Lowestoft with much of the contest focused on establishing where 'Kirkley Road' was. Yarmouth contended it was the sea facing the town of Kirkley, which thus extended their liberties south of Lowestoft. Lowestoft claimed that that area was actually called Pakefield Bay and that Kirkley Seas was the general name for the inshore waters which extended as far as Yarmouth on account of Kirley's former position as a herring trading town.<sup>70</sup> In 1597, it was ordered by Act of Parliament that a measurement to determine the extent of the Yarmouth liberties in the Kirkley Road take place, the measurement beginning at the Crane Quay and extending southwards along the shore, with a marker post erected at the seven mile mark. This temporarily eased the tension, however in 1659 the dispute resurfaced as the men of Great Yarmouth attempted to extend their liberties beyond the legal bounds to hinder the men of Lowestoft from purchasing any herrings at or near their own town without paying customs to the burgesses of Yarmouth.<sup>71</sup> Additionally Great Yarmouth again contented that the measurement of the liberties be taken not from the Crane Quay to the north, but from the haven near Gorleston, extending the limits of their jurisdiction south of Lowestoft and essentially excluding all Lowestoft merchants from participating in the herring fishery.<sup>72</sup> Despite being ill equipped to contest Yarmouth's claims having suffered Parliamentary plunder whilst supporting the Royalist cause and having suffered greatly at the hands of the catastrophic fire of 1645, between 1659 and 1663, Lowestoft fought their case vigorously. Led by leading local merchants James Wilde, Samuel Pacey and Thomas Mighells, the men of Lowestoft took their case to the Privy Council and succeeded in obtaining a ruling by the House of Lords on 26<sup>th</sup> February 1662 that representatives of both towns should meet to agree the measurement of seven miles.<sup>73</sup> This new measurement and boundary marker continued to cause dispute until 15<sup>th</sup> April 1663 when, following further petitions from the men of Lowestoft, a second House of Lords order led to a final measurement between the Crane Quay and the seven mile mark, effectively ending the dispute.<sup>74</sup>

The importance of the herring fishing industry to Lowestoft and damage caused to it by the oppressive practices of Great Yarmouth can perhaps be best illustrated by the willingness of the men of Lowestoft to spend £600 fighting their cause through the Privy Council.<sup>75</sup> These costs were covered by a local tax per last of herring, levied on the herring fishery. The first tax, levied in 1660 was at a rate of 2 shillings per last, which was raised to 5 shillings per last in 1661 and levied again in 1663 at the same rate.<sup>76</sup>

## **The Great Fire of Lowestoft**

If the oppressive practices of the Burgesses of Yarmouth and the long-running dispute with its nearest neighbours retarded the growth of the Lowestoft herring fishing industry, a catastrophic fire on the 10<sup>th</sup> March 1645 near eliminated it altogether and precipitated several decades of slow recovery as the men of Lowestoft sought to rebuild what had been lost.



Lowestoft's coastal position and its reliance on the low-lying beach area for its fishing industry meant that the threat posed by storms and flooding was ever present throughout its history. Fire however, visited the town less frequently, though its impact was arguably far more significant. In a portent of what was to come, in 1606 the vicarage house to the south-west of the church burnt to the ground but far worse was to follow. On 10<sup>th</sup> March 1645, a major fire raged through the town consuming commercial buildings and dwellings alike and causing damage totalling £10, 297 2s 4d. This figure is drawn from a survey made on the 25<sup>th</sup> April 1645 to investigate the level of each man's loss in the fire and is recorded in the Lowestoft Town Book.<sup>77</sup> The entry in the Town Book lists by name those who suffered financial losses in the fire, detailing the losses as dwelling houses, fish houses and malt houses and goods (Figure 7).

James Atkinds	145 . 00 . 0	113 . 10 . 0	258 . 10 . 0
Josiah Wilde	400 . 00 . 0	218 . 00 . 0	618 . 00 . 0
John Barkot	25 . 00 . 0	85 . 00 . 0	110 . 00 . 0
James Wilde	120 . 00 . 0	40 . 00 . 0	160 . 00 . 0
Robert Drifingham	94 . 00 . 0		94 . 00 . 0
John Drifingham	0 . 00 . 0	10 . 00 . 0	10 . 00 . 0
M <sup>r</sup> Allen	140 . 00 . 0	40 . 00 . 0	180 . 00 . 0
Thomas Galor	5 . 00 . 0		
Robert Dooly	146 . 00 . 0	8 . 8 . 0	154 . 8 . 0
M <sup>r</sup> Hoove	102 . 00 . 0		102 . 00 . 0
Thomas Fulwood	240 . 00 . 0	32 . 00 . 0	272 . 00 . 0
Robert Coe	156 . 00 . 0	49 . 00 . 0	205 . 00 . 0
John Page	54 . 00 . 0	12 . 00 . 0	66 . 00 . 0
William Fenham	210 . 00 . 0	15 . 00 . 0	225 . 00 . 0
John Atkings the Elder		100 . 00 . 0	100 . 00 . 0
John Atkings the Younger		50 . 00 . 0	50 . 00 . 0
Thomas Atkings		20 . 00 . 0	20 . 00 . 0
William Atkings		150 . 00 . 0	150 . 00 . 0
Dorrey Garoy		35 . 00 . 0	35 . 00 . 0
Dorrey Ward Jun <sup>r</sup>		97 . 00 . 0	97 . 00 . 0
William Underwood		80 . 00 . 0	80 . 00 . 0
John Domes		55 . 00 . 0	55 . 00 . 0

Figure 7: An extract from the Lowestoft Town Book showing the survey of losses incurred during the fire of 1645. © Norfolk Record Office (PD 589/112)

Though the list is structured neither alphabetically according to the name of those recorded as losing goods and property, nor logically arranged topographically according to the position of the buildings lost within the townscape, the list has allowed a reconstruction of the path of the fire to be proposed. Through cross-referencing the names in the list against manorial records of copyhold property tenure, David Butcher and Ivan Bunn have been able to reorder the list topographically, speculating where the fire began and how it moved through the town. The loss of a number of those listed was confined to fish houses and goods, while others lost fish houses and goods and their dwelling house, such as Thomas Webb who lost his dwelling, his fish house and his goods totalling £1071 3s, comfortably the largest loss incurred by anyone listed.<sup>78</sup> The implication that the fire was confined to the beach area before jumping the cliff to engulf the houses on the High Street, combined with the extensive manorial records has allowed Butcher and Bunn to propose a chronology

of events for the 10<sup>th</sup> March 1645.<sup>79</sup> The fire appears to have begun in the fish houses below number 1 High Street, where the combination of closely grouped timber buildings and the open fires in the smoke houses provided the ideal conditions for a major conflagration. The owner of 1 High Street was James Munds, a fisherman whose fish house likely stood in the location later occupied by number 333. 2 High Street was occupied by Josiah Wilde, a prominent local merchant and brother of James Wilde, who would later lead Lowestoft's fight for the town's fishing rights in the dispute with Yarmouth. James lived at 3 High Street and although James and Josiah both lost fish houses — likely the antecedents of the buildings which now comprise 329 Whapload Road — their High Street dwellings were unaffected. This suggests that the fire moved southwards along the beach, destroying fish houses and stores but staying beneath the cliff. Of those men listed as losing both fish houses and their dwelling house, David Butcher has identified Thomas Harvey as the most northerly situated, residing as he did at 47-48 High Street. At this location it would appear that the fire jumped the cliff, spreading to the houses of the High Street and continuing southwards before being halted north of Rant Score.<sup>80</sup>

While the list in the Town Book suggests only 19 High Street dwellings were damaged and some only very lightly, the list indicates that the fishing buildings of north Lowestoft were completely devastated. It is also possible that the picture was even more bleak than the survey depicts as no fish houses are listed as lost by owners who could be identified as living between number 5 and number 24 the High Street, though as significant damage was caused to the fish houses to the north and south of this stretch, it is difficult not to conclude that any in that area were also lost.

### Recovery and Rebuilding

Fire returned to Lowestoft again on the 14<sup>th</sup> August 1670, though on a less devastating scale, destroying six dwelling houses and two barns filled with corn.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, it no doubt amplified the fear of further fires, especially among the smokehouses on which the fishing industry relied. The rebuilding of the fish houses would clearly need greater investment with more robust structures of brick, stone and tile, less susceptible to fire, built in place of those lost in 1645. However, the constant quarrel with Yarmouth and the collective drain on the finances of Lowestoft's fishermen and merchants it caused, no doubt delayed rebuilding and prevented post-fire recovery. The dispute with Great Yarmouth was resolved in 1663, but soon after an enquiry into the state of the herring fishery found that Lowestoft's industry was greatly on the decline, caused partly by the feud with Yarmouth, but also by the combined effects of the Civil War, the fire of 1645 and the on-going Anglo-Dutch war.<sup>82</sup>

Though the dispute as to the extent of Yarmouth's fishing liberties was concluded in 1663, the fishermen of Lowestoft still relied heavily on their neighbours in order to equip their fishing fleet and cure their catch. Without a port or the liberty to import goods, fishing equipment and salt from the Bay of Biscay used in the curing of herring had to be imported into Yarmouth and carried overland down the coast to Yarmouth, both increasing their cost and preventing the expansion which economies of scale would allow. In 1678 the townspeople of Lowestoft petitioned

the Treasury for the privilege of being granted port status, claiming the duties imposed on their goods at Great Yarmouth were a burden on trade as was having to transport the goods overland.<sup>83</sup> In January 1679, Lord Treasurer Danby accepted the recommendation of the Commissioners of the Customs that the merchants of Lowestoft should have liberty to import salt for the curing of fish and to import fishing gear, broadly described as 'Gruff Goods'.<sup>84</sup> Later that year, in May, Lord Treasurer Danby wrote again to the Customs Commissioners to inform them that the town also be allowed to export grain but not import it and to import coal but not export it.<sup>85</sup>

The end of the dispute with Great Yarmouth and the freedom which the granting of port status afforded the fishermen of Lowestoft, had the combined effect of kick-starting the expansion of the town's fishing industry. The effect of the former can be seen in a significant increase in the number of merchants and lasts of herrings cured at Lowestoft either side of the resolution of the dispute with Great Yarmouth. In 1661, 16 merchants are recorded as curing 450 lasts of herring, whereas in 1674, 20 merchants had cured 700 lasts of herring.<sup>86</sup> Evidence for the effect of the latter can perhaps be seen in the emergence of a new building type at Lowestoft, the salt store or salt house, which begins to appear in the documentary record from the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, such as the case of Thomas Walesby, a merchant of Lowestoft and copyhold tenant of the manor who is recorded in 1705 as holding five fish houses and a salt house.<sup>87</sup> With restrictions on the quantity of salt imported removed by the granting of port status, the fishermen and merchants of Lowestoft could import more salt than they could immediately use, requiring the construction of well built, well ventilated and secure storage buildings which, along with the rebuilt fish houses, would characterise the expanding herring fish industry of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### **The Post-Fire Herring Fishery**

Though fire again returned to Lowestoft on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1717, destroying the fish-houses belonging to the heirs of Captain Josiah Mighells and damaging the fish houses of William Mewse, the Lowestoft fishery experienced a period of steady expansion and relative prosperity following the granting of port status in 1679. David Butcher's analysis of occupational data (parish registers, wills, inventories, manorial records) shows a marked increase in the direct ownership of boats, gear and fish curing premises between 1700 and 1730 when compared to earlier periods. Between 1560 and 1599, 33% of the merchants recorded had a direct interest in fishing and fish curing premises, a figure which remained largely unchanged at 34% between 1600 and 1699. However, between 1700 and 1730 that figure jumps to 64% of Lowestoft's merchants, in addition to an estimate of 25% of Lowestoft's adult male population engaged in maritime pursuits, pointing to a definite increase in the size and financial attractiveness of the fishery after the granting of port status.<sup>88</sup> It also suggests that the physical process of recovery after the fire was a slow one, with many of the replacement fish houses not built until the early years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

By the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Lowestoft was a port town with a maritime specialism, no longer reliant on Great Yarmouth and with its own resident customs officers.<sup>89</sup> However, the wars with France and others meant the waters were not

safe for fishing boats and much of the operation at Lowestoft remained relatively small and off the beach. The lack of a proper harbour also dictated that the vessels be small, placing additional constraints on the overall size of the industry.<sup>90</sup> The fishing boats which comprised the Lowestoft fleet were of the two and three masted type, about 50ft in length and landed their catches by beaching themselves in the shallows off the Denes, offloading the fish into small rowing boats and then re-floating on the next high tide.<sup>91</sup> The Lowestoft fishery continued to grow through the 18<sup>th</sup> century and a little over 100 years after the town was granted port status, the Lowestoft fleet had grown to around 33 boats, and between 1772-1781, an average of 714 lasts of herring (10,000 fish per last) were being caught each year.<sup>92</sup> Part of the reason for this expansion can be found in the 1771 White Herring Fisheries Act which permitted people to fish in any part of the British Isles, use any natural ports or harbours free of charge and use all beaches and uncultivated land for 100 yards above the high water mark to dry nets and land and pickle fish.<sup>93</sup> These freedoms did not extend to the exemption of harbour duties, but did consolidate the rights of the Lowestoft fishermen to fish their waters, use the natural haven and beach and utilise the expanse of the Denes for net drying and fish preparation without the incurring of duties.<sup>94</sup> Further legislative regulation of the herring fishery in 1808 and the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 similarly contributed to the increase in size and prosperity of the east coast fleets. Following the conclusion of the hostilities, the dominant Dutch herring fishery went into decline and the Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft fleets were quick to expand into that vacuum. Such was the increase in the share of the herring fishery enjoyed by the men of Lowestoft, that in 1821, the total value of the catch made by just 16 boats on 20<sup>th</sup> June, amounted to £5252 15s 1d, an average of £328 5s 11d per boat.<sup>95</sup>

## The Drifter Fleet

Prior to the damage wrought on Lowestoft by the fire of 1645, the fleet had been a mixture of those boats taking part in the Icelandic voyages to line-catch cod and those drifting for herring in the local waters off the east coast. However by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the entire industry was focused on drift net fishing for herring with a number of the drifters converted from fishing for cod. The method was very simple and remained relatively unchanged between the 17<sup>th</sup> century and 1897 when the first steam powered drifters were introduced. The herrings were caught in drift nets made of hemp or linen twine with a mesh of about one inch square which were fixed to a net rope or cork line, a double cord with large flat corks fixed at intervals along its length to increase buoyancy.<sup>96</sup> The nets were fastened onto a hemp master rope known as a warp from which they hung below the surface of the water. The warp was in turn attached to wooden buoys on the surface called 'bowls', with a capstan used to wind in the warp bringing in the entire train of nets.<sup>97</sup> Drift fishing for herring always took place at night, with the crews 'shooting' the nets at sunset – which among the Lowestoft fleet could amount to 100 individual 20 yard nets per boat – before putting the boat into the wind and taking in the sales. As such, drifting was a very economical method of fishing which was entirely passive, in effect, 'setting a trap and hoping for the best'(Figure 8).<sup>98</sup>



**Figure 8:** 'The Lowestoft Herring Fishery' drawn by E. Duncan and published in the *Illustrated London News* on 30<sup>th</sup> September 1854. The size and appearance of the traditional two-masted Lowestoft herring lugger are clearly apparent from Duncan's depiction as is the requirement for the boats to off-load their catch onto the Denes via smaller ferryboats.

The absence of a harbour at Lowestoft and the requirement for the boats to lie close to the shore for unload by smaller boats, kept their size relatively small, certainly smaller than the herring 'Busses' which were the mainstay of the Dutch fleet and that in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century could hold 35 lasts or around 70 tonnes of herring.<sup>99</sup> The Lowestoft 'lugger', was crewed by eight to ten men, shooting over a mile of nets each night and would stay at sea for days at a time, salting the herring as they were caught until the hold was filled.

### Net Preparation and Storage

Key to the success of the Lowestoft herring fleet were the miles of drift nets which each boat required in order to land the catch, which needed to be carefully treated, dried after use and regularly repaired. Constant exposure to sea water caused the nets, ropes and lines to rot unless they were treated with a preserving agent first. The drift nets were traditionally woven from hemp until 1835 when Walter Richie of Musselburgh invented a net making machine. This led to a change from the use of hemp to cotton for drift net manufacture, with hemp nets known as 'rough nets' and cotton ones 'Scotch nets'.<sup>100</sup> Irrespective of the material used to make them, all nets and lines needed to be treated prior to use. This involved their steeping in a tanning solution of water and tree bark, known as cutch.<sup>101</sup> Bark of local species of trees was

initially used to make the cutch before more effective foreign barks became the norm, of which the East Indian betel-nut palm was one of more effective.<sup>102</sup> The nets and lines were immersed in the cutch in a tanning copper and the solution heated, before the freshly tanned nets were laid out on the Denes to dry. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century, tanning coppers were replaced by large raised cutch tanks, significantly increasing the capacity of the fishing concerns to tan their nets (Figure 9).



**Figure 9:** A large cutch tank (since demolished) at the Shoals fishing premises, 389 Whapload Road photographed in 1968. The raised tank on a wooden frame was a characteristic feature of the Whapload Road fishing buildings. © Historic England, AA98/13201

In addition to treating the nets for the fishing voyages, their regular repair and their drying and storage were also key elements of the industry. In order to drift fish effectively, the integrity of the nets' one inch mesh had to be retained, with any tears or breaks repaired prior to the next voyage. The requirement to regularly repair the nets provided work throughout the herring season, with each drifter keeping two

women employed throughout the autumn. These women were known collectively as 'Beatsters' after the large metal 'beating' needles they used to execute repairs to the nets. Writing in 1977, shortly after the Lowestoft herring voyages had ceased, John Dyson described the process of repairing and preparing the nets for sea, and the nature of the buildings in which the processes took place:

The work was done in large airy attics in flint cobble and brick net houses scattered on the outskirts of town. The job of the women 'Beatsters' was to search for 'spunks' or tears, cut out torn meshes and repair them by knotting new meshes using beating needles. The nets were hung from the rafters and the women worked with the light of a skylight or large window behind them. When they had finished, the Beatsters dropped nets through the floor to the 'Ransackers' who assembled them, putting on the 'norsels' (lengths of line fixing the net to the cork tope). The whole thing was then immersed in cutch (the bark of the East Indian betel-nut palm, *areca catechu*) in a big tanning copper in the yard, then spread on the denes to dry, or hung from the net-house balconies.<sup>103</sup>

Part of the process of preparing the nets involved attaching the head rope and giving the nets distinguishing markings so that their ownership could be easily identified when they had been laid out on the Denes to dry. A report in the *Lowestoft Journal* of September 19<sup>th</sup> 1906, detailed how James Henry Fletcher, a dealer in old fishing nets, was charged with the theft of two of Charles Turrell Day's nets worth £2. The testimony of the forewoman in Mr Day's net chamber in Whapload Road provides some detail as to what the net preparation entailed.

The nets came from the factory straight to her hand – in the hut, as it was called or white. The head ropes were put on, and the nets oiled. On or about the 14<sup>th</sup> September, certain nets came through her hands or the hands of the girls on the chamber. They were hooked up and oiled, and then put on the Denes to dry. Each girl working on the net chamber made her own private mark near the head rope. A white produced [in court] bore the mark of Lily Butcher.<sup>104</sup>

The use of the open expanse of the Denes for drying the nets was also an important part of the process. The short east coast herring season and the relatively high value of the nets, meant that when not in use they had to be securely stored. It was essential, in order to prevent rotting, that the nets, lines and ropes were dry when they went into storage. Throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the drying mostly took place on the Denes, with the nets hung and draped across the scrub vegetation which covered the open expanse between the shore and Whapload Road. As the fishery expanded during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the number of nets each concern had increased, more formal arrangements for drying the nets evolved (Figure 10).



**Figure 10:** Drift nets drying on the net racks or 'spars' which were erected on the North Denes during the latter years of the 19th century. © SA [L] 1300/72/15/31

Some of the Lowestoft fishermen added wooden galleries (often referred to locally as balconies) to the long elevations of their net stores and fish houses, over which the nets could be hung to dry before being stored inside. This arrangement became fairly common along the east coast and a number of examples survived into the late 20<sup>th</sup> century including one on Honeymoon Loke, off Tan Lane in Caistor-On-Sea.<sup>105</sup> At Lowestoft, rows of wooden racks were also constructed on the Denes to allow for the continued communal use of the area for drying nets. These simple post and cross-bar structures likely started to appear from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, increasing in number dramatically around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Once dry, the nets were returned to the net stores, or net chambers, bundled up and stored in small compartments accessed by a long corridor running the length of the store (Figure 11). As the smoking of fish at Lowestoft gradually became focussed less on Whapload Road and more on new industrial smoke houses elsewhere in the town, a number of former traditional fish houses were converted to net stores and remained in use as such up until the middle of the 1960s.





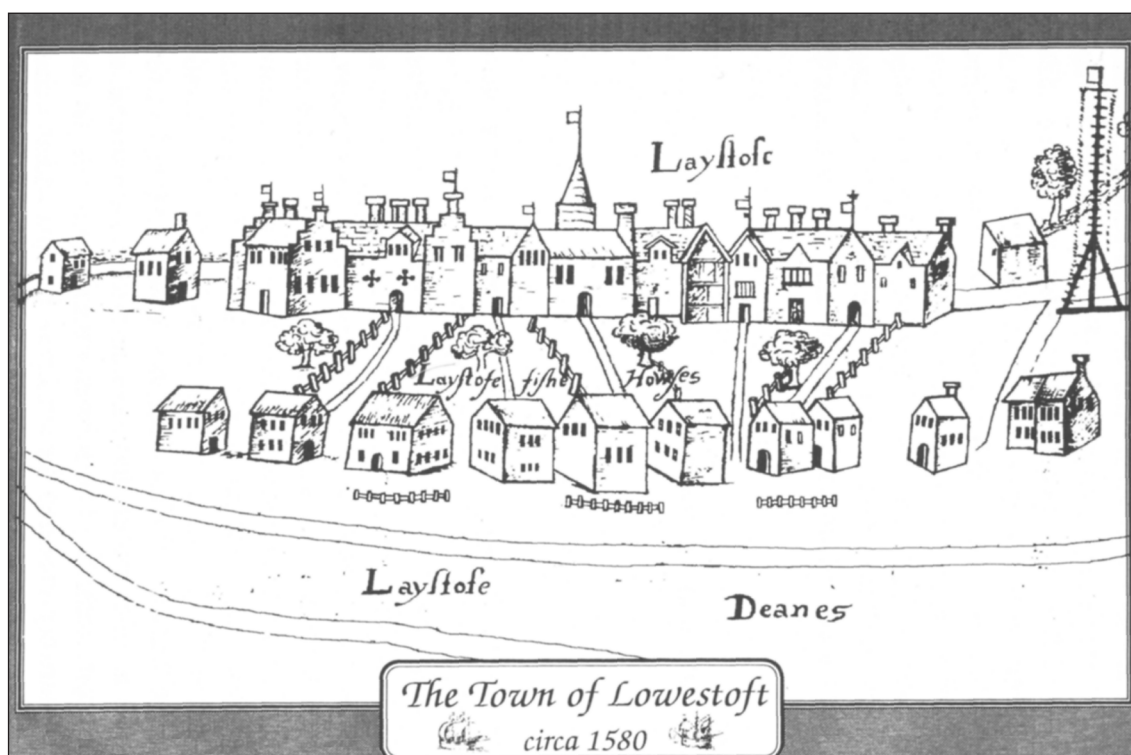
**Figure 11:** The internal arrangement of a Lowestoft net store at Shoals Yard, 389 Whaplod Road. Many of the net stores would have been located on the first floor of the buildings, located beneath a net loft for net repair and above a salt store or roaring house. First-floor galleries added in the 19<sup>th</sup> century provided a convenient means of drying the nets and accessing the first floor stores. © Historic England, AA 98/12838

## Red Herrings and Fish Smoking

Throughout the late medieval and early modern period, the east coast fishery and northern European fishing industry were dominated by the seasonal catching, curing and sale of herring. Towards the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, close to the time that the Dutch were pioneering the pickling of herrings in brine to create white herring for export and sale, the fishermen of Great Yarmouth had realised the advantages of smoking herring for a prolonged period over low fires.<sup>106</sup> The fishermen of Great Yarmouth would later become more closely associated with the production of pickled white herring, however through the dominant years of the Dutch herring fishery, Great Yarmouth's main product was the heavily smoked red herring.<sup>107</sup> The red herring, so named due to the distinctive colouration imparted by the lengthy

smoking process, formed the backbone of the east coast fishing industry until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and offered the fishermen of Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth distinct advantages over pickling or brining herring. For the fishermen, smoking was hugely advantageous as very little salt was needed at sea and the quality and condition of the fish was less important, therefore allowing the boats to stay at sea for longer and return with larger catches.<sup>108</sup> For the merchants, the advantages of ‘Redding’ the herring in a smokehouse were that the cheapest fish could be used as they did not have to be in prime condition and that far less of the expensive imported salt was required for the process.<sup>109</sup> Salting the fish and then slowly smoking them over low fires produced a product with both a distinctive colouration and distinctive taste, which appears to have been more appealing to continental markets, to where the majority of east coast red herring were exported. Far from drying the fish out, the process produced a product described in 1682 as; ‘Well seasoned, comparatively fresh, red, fat, oily, soft and pliable, so as to bend about the fingers, without cracking or breaking’.<sup>110</sup>

Beyond the initial salting at sea to ensure preservation, all of the processes required to produce the red herring were conducted onshore in purpose-built ‘fish houses’. Little is known about the exact form of these structures in Lowestoft, other than they would have been of timber construction and they were numerous, as depicted in a view of the town from the sea produced c.1580 (Figure 12).



**Figure 12:** The town of Lowestoft from the sea c.1580. Ivan Bunn’s copy of a 16<sup>th</sup> century panorama of unknown provenance held by the Suffolk Archives, clearly marks the location of the pre-fire fish houses (smoke houses) on the Denes beneath the cliff. Reproduced by courtesy of Ivan Bunn

The fish houses, which at Lowestoft were all likely destroyed by the fire of 1645, would likely have been tall, timber structures, the upper storeys punctuated with shuttered ventilators or louvers to allow control of the smoking process and the periodic clearance of the smoke and extinguishing of the fires in order that the fat could drip from the fish prior to the next round of smoking. Internally, frames comprised of rows of horizontal racks, known locally as 'loves' ran the length of the building at a likely interval of three to four feet, allowing the fish to be hung on wooden spits to smoke. The fish houses were loaded from the top downwards and the curers used the inner rows of loves as ladders to reach all parts of the building. A space about head-high was left beneath the floor and the lowest row of hung fish to ensure an even smoke from the fires, and doors and ventilation louvers were kept shut while the smoking was taking place.<sup>111</sup>

While the exact form and arrangement of the pre-1645 fish houses in Lowestoft is unknown, the exact nature of the process of making red herring is well documented and appears to have changed very little between the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the 1840s. An entry in the Lowestoft manor court book from December 1584 details the process of producing a red herring in the context of an agreement between the merchant George Phifeld to provide them as part of the sale of the Swan Inn;

Full red herrings good able and mchaunt of one nightes takinge to be rored in fattes with sufficient salute before they be two nightes owlde dryed with asshen bylletes of the best usuall maner and order of making of herrings for Legorne beyond the seaes with a bright and clere color and without gorge to be packed in such good and drye Caske as usuallye is Transportid to Legorne aforesaid.....<sup>112</sup>

The manor court entry outlines the basics of the process for making red herring and that for the most part, the product was intended for Livorno, often referred to in England as Leghorn, a market which remained important as late as 1755 when 13,000 barrels of the 70,000 barrels of herring produced at Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth, headed for Livorno.<sup>113</sup> The results of a single night's fishing, upon being returned to shore, were first 'rored', a process variously called 'roared' or 'roused' which involved heaping the fish in loose piles, covering them in salt and turning them with wooden shovels to ensure they were well coated in a mixture of salt and their own fat. Once the roaring of the herring was complete, the fish were smoked for two days over fires lit from billets of ash and once smoked and reddened, packed in barrels for transport.

The red herring was Lowestoft's principal product and the town's fishermen did not produce white herring in any great number.<sup>114</sup> This was in contrast to Great Yarmouth who, likely due to their association with the great Dutch herring fishery, favoured the production of pickled or white herring. Much of the preparation of white herring was performed at sea with a process similar to the roaring performed prior to smoking, taking place in the holds of the fishing boats, as described in 1682 by Richard Alcorne:

The Herrings as soon as caught are thrown in the holds of their boats, and is not carried forthwith on shore fresh, are salted with

Bay or French Salt. One scatters salt with a shovel on the thick heap, another turns them with another shovel, and so continue till salted enough for preservation, when the boat hath sufficient quantity, the Master carries them on shore to his host and there delivers them to him, according to a price the town sets. Many of the fish are bad, because the salt is of such irregular size that the third part of it does not dissolve in proper time. The best of them are barrell'd up with Salt and Pickle for Exportation. The worser sort or bad ones (to prevent the loss of them) are dressed over a Woodfire and are thereby dried and rendered Red or Red-Herrings.<sup>115</sup>

Alcorne's assertion that the production of red herrings was an inferior process to pickling and that it was used as a way of salvaging those fish of poor quality or for which the preservation process had been unsuccessful, speaks to the differing priorities and approaches of the neighbouring fishermen. While Great Yarmouth reserved the best fish for pickling and smoked only those of inferior quality, Lowestoft focussed solely on the smoking of red herring. The use of the best fish, the inspection of the fish by the merchants themselves and the perceived benefits to the smoking process enjoyed by the location of the fish houses along the scores, meant that the Lowestoft red herring commanded slightly higher prices than those produced by Yarmouth and were seen as a superior product.<sup>116</sup> It is also highly likely that the specialisation in red herring production manifested itself physically in larger smoke houses and greater investment in the fish houses (Figure 13).



**Figure 13:** A late 18<sup>th</sup> century engraving showing a cross-section through a herring smoke house, published in Gottlieb Tobias Wilhelm's, *Encyclopedia of Natural History: Fish* (1799)

As the 1584 description of the process makes clear, the two commodities which were essential in the making of red herring were salt and wood. Huge quantities of salt were required – Great Yarmouth was reported as using more than 10,000 tons in the course of single season by the 19<sup>th</sup> century – however until the town gained port status in 1679, both materials were brought into Yarmouth and conveyed to Lowestoft by wagon which increased their handling cost and their value.<sup>117</sup> The freedom, from 1679 onwards, to directly import salt and fishing equipment in large quantities without the additional cost of transporting them down the coast had a hugely positive effect on the Lowestoft fishery and the 18<sup>th</sup> century saw considerable

growth in both the size of the fleet and the scale of the fish smoking operation. Despite this growth and the wholesale rebuilding of the fish houses following the fire of 1645, the process of making the red herring had changed very little by the time Gillingwater detailed it in 1790s.

As soon as the herrings are brought on shore, they are carried to the fish houses, where they are salted, and laid on the floors in heaps, about two feet deep; after they have continued in this situation about fifty hours, the salt is washed from them by putting them into baskets and plunging them into water; from thence they are carried into an adjoining fish house, where, after being pierced through the gills by small wooden spits about four feet long, they are handed to men in the upper part of the house, who place them at proper distances as high as the top of the roof, where they are cured and made red. The upper part of the house being thus filled with herrings, many small wood fires are kindled underneath, upon the floor, whose number is in proportion to the size of the room, and the smoke which ascends from these fires is what dries or cures the herrings. After the fish have hung in this manner for about seven days, the fires are extinguished, that the oil and fat may drip from them and in about two days after the fires are re-kindled and after two more such drippings, the fires are kept continually burning until the herrings are perfectly cured, which requires a longer or shorter time according as they are designed for foreign or domestic consumption. After the herrings have hung a proper time, they are taken down (which is called “striking”), and are packed in barrels containing 800 or 1000 herrings each.<sup>118</sup>

What is notable from Gillingwater’s description is the increased length of time it takes to produce the red herring, pointing to a refinement in the process and the ability to better control the fires to ensure to a long, slow smoke. Gillingwater also provides greater detail as to the stages of the smoking process. The description also gives an indication as to the internal arrangement of the smoke houses. The horizontal racks or loves were about four feet or 120cm apart, a distance determined by the length of the spits from which the fish were hung. The whole building was filled with racks up to the apex of the roof, save for the ground floor where numerous small fires were lit. Gillingwater also observes that the length of the smoke was dictated by whether the herring were intended for domestic or foreign consumption, suggesting that local tastes were for a less strongly smoked and strongly flavoured fish.

During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the production of red herring for foreign markets in traditional fish houses was gradually replaced by the production of kippers in larger industrial smokehouses for the domestic market. However, it is clear that in the 1830s, and in Lowestoft, certainly not before the completion of the first harbour in 1847 that the production of red herrings continued in the same way as it had since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Published in *The Penny Magazine of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge* in February 1837, this lengthy account of the

production of red herring at Great Yarmouth expands on Gillingwater's description, reiterating the steps of the process, the distinction between herring intended for foreign and domestic consumption and providing greater detail as to the physical arrangement of the fish houses.

The white or pickled herrings merely require to be salted and put into barrels, which is done while the vessel is at sea, but when it is intended to prepare red herrings a different process is adopted. The herrings are sprinkled with salt, in quantities which depend upon the state of the weather, or the distance from port. About one-third of a ton is used to each last of herring. On being landed they are immediately carted or carried away in baskets to the "rousing house", adjoining the house where they are intended to be hung and smoked. They are then again sprinkled with salt, and are heaped together with wooden shovels, on a floor covered with brick or flag-stones, in which state they remain five or six days and they are then washed, spitted, hung up and fired. In spitting, as well as in hanging up, great care is necessary to prevent the herrings touching each other. The spits are round rods made of fir, about four feet long, pointed a little at one end. The herrings are hung on these rods by the mouth and gills. The spits, when so full of herrings that no more can be put upon them without causing the herrings to touch each other, are handed to persons who place them regularly tier above tier on wooden fixtures, supported by joists, until the house is full. The distance from the tails of the lower tier of herrings to the floor is about seven feet. Fires of wood are then lighted, and the great art is to manage these fires in a proper manner. They must neither be too quick nor too slow, and at times they must be extinguished. Green wood is commonly used, and as a large quantity is required the expense is considerable. Oak and beech are considered to communicate the best colour and flavour; but other wood, such as ash, birch, and elm are used with beech and oak. The wood of fruit-trees, of fir, or the timber of old ships could not be employed without the herrings acquiring a bitter taste. The operation of smoking red herrings occupies at least three weeks for those which are intended for home consumption, as they are preferred when soft and not too highly dried; but those for exportation undergo the process for four weeks or thirty days. The fires are then extinguished, and after the house has been allowed to cool, the spits are taken down, and in a few days afterwards the herrings are put into barrels. The barrels are made of fir, and sometimes of oak and other hard wood. When the season has been abundant, some attention is paid by the curers to dividing the herrings of different qualities into distinct lots. Others do this when they are taken from the spit. They are usually distributed into four classes; the large, full-grown, and well-made herrings form the first quality, and are known under the name of "bloaters." After these are removed the best of those which are left constitute the second class. Those which are broken in the belly,

or will not take the salt upon the spit, but turn white, are the third description; and the fourth consists of those which are headless, or which will not hang by the gills, but are hung by the tail, or any other part of the fish, upon tender-hooks. About 7 1/2 per cent of the herrings intended to be reddened prove unfit for the process: two-thirds of these are cured as white-herrings, and the remainder are thrown away. A red-herring-house is usually divided into five parts, and the cost of erection is between 2000l and 3000l.<sup>119</sup>

As far as understanding the physical layout and arrangement of the fish houses, the above description makes it clear that the rousing house was not a separate building, but a part of the fish house, almost certainly at ground level and with a flagstone or brick floor. It is also clear that by the 19th century, the smokehouses were divided up into smoke bays, presumably to both better control the fires and the smoke, but also to allow more efficient smoking in instances of smaller catches which would not fill the whole smoke house. In the latter respect, the fish houses did not differ greatly from the larger industrial smoke houses built towards the end of the 19th century (Figure 14).

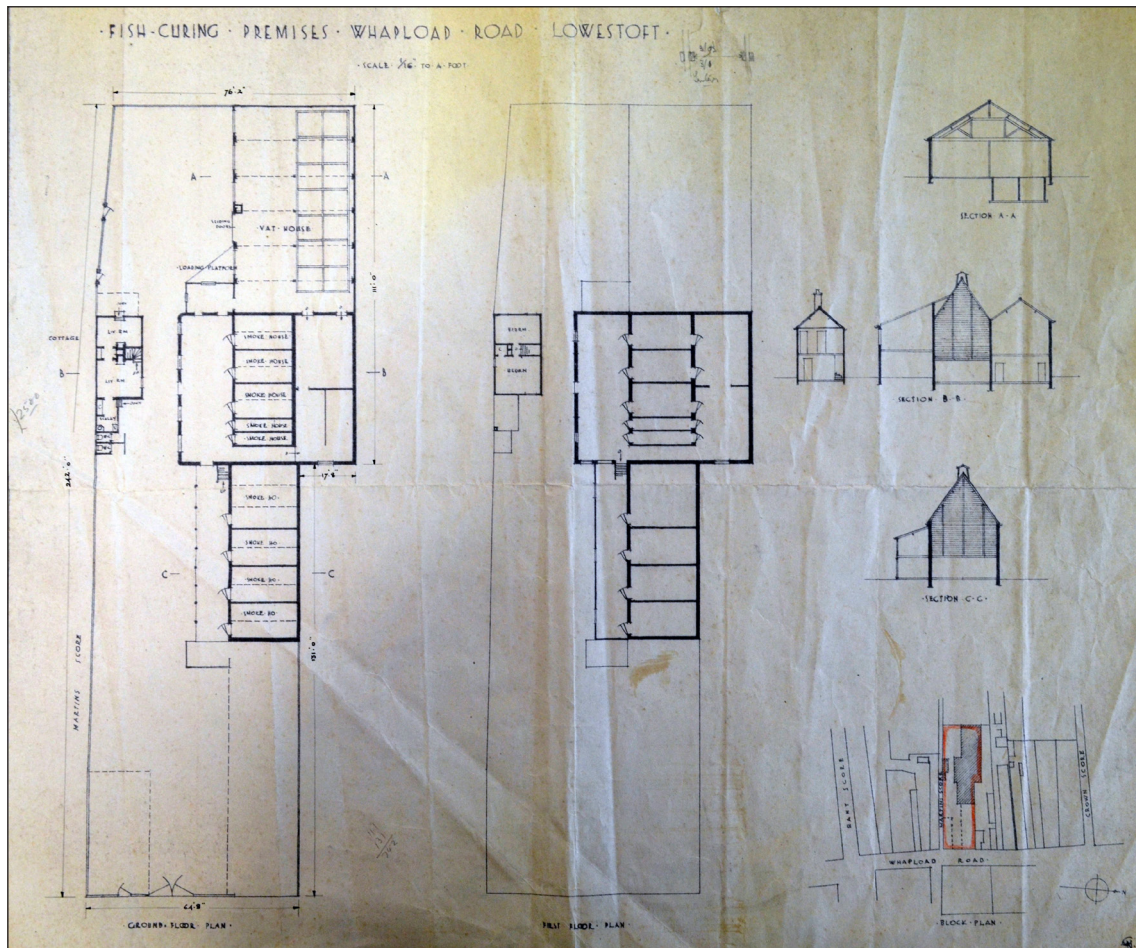


Figure 14: Plans for a large, compartmentalised smokehouse built on the corner of Martin's Score and Whapload Road, Lowestoft in 1897. © East Suffolk Council, SA [L] 101/1

## The Scottish Herring Voyages

Drift fishing for herring and their smoking in the beachfront smokehouses facing the Denes, continued almost unchanged in Lowestoft until the 1860s. It was at this time that the first trawlers started coming to Lowestoft, hunting sole and other bottom dwelling fish on the Dogger Bank.<sup>120</sup> Prior to arrival of the Kentish trawlermen, the entire fleet at Lowestoft was comprised of drifters, with the exception of those who made the long Icelandic voyages to line fish for cod and ling. The arrival of the trawlermen saw local fishermen expand their operations to include trawling smacks to exploit the profitable local trawling grounds and Lowestoft drifters venturing further afield, chasing herring and mackerel outside of the established local seasons. Attempts to extend the herring season by fishing beyond local waters were mirrored by the Scottish fleet and during the latter decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was a steady increase in Scottish vessels coming to Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth during the autumn season which had expanded to a full scale invasion by the 1890s.<sup>121</sup> While Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft were the centres of the herring fishery in England, their outputs were far exceeded by the Scottish fisheries of the east and west coast, whose produce in 1880 amounted to 767,500,000 herrings worth about £1million.<sup>122</sup> The Scottish fleet brought with them a preference for the production of kippers, which were invented in Newcastle in 1843 and quickly became the most important product for the home market.<sup>123</sup> While the red herring, the staple product of the Lowestoft fishery, was steeped in salt for two days and smoked for two or three weeks with intervals for the oil to drip out, the kipper was split, gutted, soaked in brine for about half an hour, then hung on hooks from long rods in the smoke of a fire of oak chips and sawdust for 6 to 18 hours.<sup>124</sup> In addition to a shift in focus to the production of kippers, refinements in the pickling of herring in brine led to the production of pickled herring for export to Germany and Russia, surpassing the export of smoked herring to southern Europe. The requirement for the herring to be gutted prior to smoking in order to produce kippers and prior to pickling, required a large additional labour force, which came down from Scotland with the boats. Almost entirely comprised of women and known as the 'Herring Girls', they arrived in Lowestoft on specially chartered trains and worked large wooden vats called 'Farlanes', gutting and boning the herring prior to their brining (Figure 15).<sup>125</sup>

The pickling was conducted on the Denes facing the Whapload Road fish houses, in the area roughly covered by the Birds Eye frozen food factory. This large expanse of vats for brining and barrels for exporting the herring was known as the 'pickling plots' (Figure 16). Owned and managed by the Borough who had secured the manorial rights to the Denes in 1889, gutting fish and erecting buildings was strictly prohibited with merchants able to let plots which each had a 28 ft frontage to Whapload Road and extended between 105 and 163 ft eastwards toward the shore.<sup>126</sup>

The Scottish herring voyages had a considerable effect on the Lowestoft fishing industry. They dramatically increased the scale of the autumn herring fishery, but also precipitated a change from traditional curing of red herring on a pre-industrial scale, to the industrial production of brine pickled herring and smoked kippers. Though it is not recorded when the production of red herring ceased in Lowestoft, it is likely to have occurred by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and resulted in the conversion of a number of the former Whapload Road fish houses into net stores or kippering houses.





Figure 15: Photograph showing the Lowestoft 'Herring Girls' at work at a 'Farlane' gutting herring prior to pickling in brine. © SA [L] 1300/72/20/26



Figure 16: Photograph of the 'Pickling Plots' looking North West across Whapload Road towards the cliff and the High Street. © SA [L] 1300/72/20/5

### Beach Village or 'The Grit'

Though the erection of buildings on the 'Pickling Plots' was strictly prohibited by Lowestoft Borough, prior to 1889, permission could be sought from the Lord of the Manor to build on the Denes, an area considered to be part of the Lord's waste.<sup>127</sup> In 1791, the first houses were built in the Denes facing the Whapload Road fish

houses and by 1806, 76 tenements had been erected in a series of squares and courts focused on Anguish Street, so named for the Lord of the Manor who had granted permission for the development.<sup>128</sup> Known as the Beach Village, or locally as ‘The Grit’, the new squares were built to both house Lowestoft’s expanding population, and also accommodate those working in the fishing industries close to where they worked. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Lowestoft was a moderately sized market town with a population of c.2,300 people, however the continued expansion of the fishing industry saw that population double by 1841 and expand to 13,000 by the 1871 census, largely as a result of the improvements made to the town by Samuel Morton Peto (see below).<sup>129</sup> Beach Village expanded in line with Lowestoft’s increased population, gaining its own church with seating for 460 in 1869 and by 1900, the first tenements had grown into a tight group of cottages, houses, squares and lanes and become home to 2500 people.<sup>130</sup>

Like the herring industry so many of its inhabitants worked in, the high point of Beach Village came in the years leading up to the First World War. Following the cessation of hostilities, the herring fishery struggled to recover from the enforced hiatus and entered steady and ultimately terminal decline. This led to depopulation of Beach Village and plans as part of the Lowestoft Corporation Redevelopment Scheme of 1937, to clear it and replace the dwellings with modern council housing.<sup>131</sup> Though no progress was made beyond the demolition of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century fishermen’s cottages on Lighthouse Score, due to the return of war in 1939, further depopulation during the Second World War, damage by aerial bombardment and the effects of the tidal surge and flooding of 1953, by the 1970s almost all evidence of the Beach Village had been lost from the north Lowestoft landscape.<sup>132</sup>

## Samuel Morton Peto and Lowestoft Harbour

Much of the Lowestoft’s prosperity of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and the stimulus for the town’s expansion, can be attributed to the work of the engineer, railway developer and politician, Samuel Morton Peto, and specifically to his work on the creation of Lowestoft Harbour. Peto’s association with Lowestoft began in 1844 when he purchased Somerleyton Hall, and with it the manor of Lowestoft. Having rebuilt the hall in a neo-Jacobean style to designs by the architect John Thomas and equipped it with modern facilities, Peto turned his attentions to Lowestoft and in particular the lack of a proper harbour to support the fishing industry.<sup>133</sup> Lake Lothing, through which the river Waveney joined the sea, formed a natural navigable haven for boats, but was frequently blocked by sand and shingle brought in by the sea and gales.<sup>134</sup> In 1814, the engineer William Cubitt made a survey to ascertain whether it was practicable to develop the haven at Lowestoft so that vessels could pass from the North Sea into Lake Lothing and then proceed via a navigable canal to Norwich.<sup>135</sup> In 1821 he published his report recommending the scheme go ahead at an estimated cost of £87,000.<sup>136</sup> The Bill for the scheme received Royal Assent on May 28<sup>th</sup> 1827 with work beginning that year. However, although the work was sufficiently advanced that the harbour was able to receive its first shipping by 1831, by 1844, the Lowestoft Norwich Navigation company was in financial ruin and the navigation was a failure. Morton Peto bought out the ruined operators of the navigation and a year later, promoted the incorporation of the Lowestoft Railway

and Harbour Company to complete the work on the harbour, build a dock railway and construct an 11 mile line to connect with the Yarmouth and Norwich Railway. Built by the Norfolk Railway, the line from Lowestoft was completed in 1847 along with Lowestoft's harbour and within ten years – also promoted by Peto – the development of a seaside resort on the former marsh and scrubland to the south.<sup>137</sup> The increase in boats and fishing activity led to the opening of the first Fish Market at Lowestoft in 1872, built by the Great Eastern Railway who owned the harbour. It was extended 10 years later with the construction of the Waveney Dock, the herring market and trawl market which opened on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 1883.<sup>138</sup> The effect of the new harbour on the Lowestoft fishing industry can be seen in the huge numbers of herring landed after the harbour's completion. Between 1868 and 1881, 122, 367 lasts or over 1.6 billion herring were landed at Lowestoft.<sup>139</sup> By 1892, the facilities built just a decade earlier were deemed inadequate for a burgeoning fishing industry whose numbers were annually inflated by visiting trawlers from Kent hunting bottom dwelling fish and in the autumn months by a large fleet of Scottish herring drifters. As a result, a new dock was created facing the London Road, increasing the capacity of the harbour and offering more berths for trawlers (Figure 17).<sup>140</sup>



**Figure 17:** An aerial view of Lowestoft from the north east in 1947 showing the completed harbour. Nearest the camera is the Hamilton Dock added in 1902-3 to the north of the Waveney Dock and fish markets opened in 1883. To the right of the outer harbour, the trawl basins of 1892 with the inner harbour and Lake Lothing beyond. The seaside resort promoted by Sir Samuel Morton Peto can be seen in the distance beyond the harbour. © Historic England, EAW005064

## The 20<sup>th</sup> Century

As the 19<sup>th</sup> century drew to a close, the fortunes of Lowestoft and its herring fishing fleet were on an upward trajectory. Incorporated as a borough in 1885 under the Municipal Corporations act of 1882, with a burgeoning population and a rapidly expanding fishing fleet, Lowestoft was about to enter a 'Golden Age' for the British fishing industry.<sup>141</sup> Writing in 1895 in an updated edition of Gillingwater's history, A.E. Murton stated; 'It is the proud boast of Lowestoft that she possess the finest fishing fleet in the word'.<sup>142</sup> Although Murton's description is hyperbolic, Lowestoft's fleet was certainly impressive. In 1897, the first steam powered herring drifter had been constructed and by 1913, there were 350 fishing for east coast herring in addition to the 420 boats which had made the voyage down from Scotland that year.<sup>143</sup> The enlarged local and visiting fleet required further expansion of the harbour and in 1902-3, the Hamilton Dock was added to the north of the Waveney Dock.<sup>144</sup>

The early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century also saw a dramatic increase in Lowestoft's population as a result of the prospering herring fishery. In the census of 1901, Lowestoft's population was recorded as 23,385, a figure that had increased by 62% to 37,886 by the time of the 1911 census. During this time, the fortunes of many of Lowestoft's fishermen also rose as the industry prospered. Where previous generations of Lowestoft fishermen had lived in the humble dwellings of Beach Village, living cheek-by-jowl with the smoke houses and net stores, in the years before the First World War, many were able to significantly improve their situation and move to the spacious terraces laid out around Belle Vue Park.<sup>145</sup>

When the war broke out, most of the steam drifters which comprised the Lowestoft fleet were requisitioned by the Admiralty for minesweeping and maritime patrol work. Although a number of small sailing smacks continued to fish, many were lost at the hands of German U-boats whose crews would board the smacks, take the fish and then scuttle the smack, having ordered the crew off into a dinghy.<sup>146</sup> Although herring fishing restarted after the end of the First World War, the returns were less lucrative, largely as a result of reduced North Sea herring stocks brought about by the destruction by trawling of the herring spawning grounds.<sup>147</sup> The 'Golden Age' of the British Fishing industry was over and the decline of the east coast fishery, begun by the over-exploitation of the herring stocks, would be further accelerated by the return of war.

## The Second World War

During the Second World War there was practically no fishing in Lowestoft as the boats of the home fleet were again requisitioned by the Admiralty to perform naval patrol duties, though net mending Beatsters found new work making camouflage nets.<sup>148</sup> While there are competing claims as to whether Lowestoft was the most heavily bombed place in England in terms of weight of ordnance dropped or in terms of damage and casualties relative to its size, what is clear is that the town was subjected to near constant aerial bombardment during the Second World War.<sup>149</sup> In fact, of the 2075 days of war, the air raid siren was sounded in Lowestoft on 2047 of them.<sup>150</sup> Lowestoft became a significant base for naval patrol vessels and minesweepers and with the east coast shipbuilding yards pressed into service building Motor Torpedo Boats, the town was seen as a strategic military target.

Additionally as Britain's nearest town to Germany, and at just 90 miles from occupied Holland, Lowestoft regularly found itself used as a training ground for enemy crews who would fly in over low over the sea, drop their bombs on the town and then head home.<sup>151</sup> It is also highly likely that a large quantity of ordnance was jettisoned on Lowestoft by enemy crews prior to making their return to mainland Europe. Despite improvements to radar detection and anti-aircraft defences made as the war progressed, Lowestoft continued to be subjected to bombardment, particularly in the form of low-level raids made by Focke Wulf 190 fighters armed with 500lb bombs. Approaching the east coast at low altitude and high speed, these hit-and-run raids were almost impossible to warn against. On the 12<sup>th</sup> May 1943, a series of these FW190 raids, caused significant damage to the town. A lone raider, targeting HMS *Europa* in Sparrows Nest Park, killed five people in Royal Avenue north of Belle Vue Park, and crucially severed communications with the Observer Corps post at Corton.<sup>152</sup> A further 12 planes returned later in the day, targeting the northern end of the High Street with cannon fire and 500lb bombs, striking without warning, killing three and injuring 55. One of the bombs bounced for over 150 yards before it destroyed a row of houses.<sup>153</sup> In total, the raiders struck Lowestoft five times during the space of 24 hours, damaging Wilde's School and destroying the High Street houses between Arnold House and the Old Rectory (Figure 18). The Old Rectory was so badly hit that it had to be pulled down and it is likely the obvious alterations made to the historic Whapload Road fishing buildings beneath the cliff, were made to repair damage suffered during these raids.<sup>154</sup>



**Figure 18:** Houses on the eastern side of the High Street destroyed during a FW190 raid on 12th May 1943. The Old Rectory to the right was beyond repair and had to be demolished, while the Old Fish House below the cliff likely also suffered significant damage. © Ford Jenkins.

Other raids caused even more damage and loss of life. On 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1941, the blast of a parachute mine which landed on the sea wall, damaged 450 houses, while an attack by a single Dornier bomber on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1942, saw four bombs dropped on the main shopping centre and the deaths of 70 people.<sup>155</sup> Over the course of the war, the aerial bombardment of Lowestoft claimed the lives of 192 civilians and 82 servicemen, with the combined injured totalling more than 650.<sup>156</sup> The damage to the townscape was equally dramatic, with over 50 acres of the built-up area cleared by demolition and over 13,000 houses requiring of emergency repair, many of them, several times over.<sup>157</sup> The Beach Village, situated as it was, so close to the port, was on the front line and many families were evacuated. The bombing rendered parts of the village uninhabitable and with so few people remaining, the army used the deserted streets for training in close house-to-house combat.<sup>158</sup> Many of the families never returned to the area after the Second World War, and were rehoused in new council estates, contributing to the eventual abandonment after the floods of 1953.

### **The Decline and End of the Herring Fishery**

During the war years, significant attention was given to how the fishing industry and in particular, the herring fishery, could be reconstructed following the cessation of hostilities. A special government committee had been formed to look at how the industry could be carried on after the war and the English Herring Catchers Association had formulated a proposal in which herring caught for the home market would continue to be fished independently, while the catch intended for export (some 70%) would be purchased by the government at a fixed price, with their processing becoming a state run industry.<sup>159</sup> In August 1944, the Herring Fishing Act received Royal Assent, making provision for grants totalling £820,000 to be made available to fishermen for the purchase of boats, nets and gear.<sup>160</sup>

At the war's end, those drifters requisitioned for naval patrol duties and the fishermen who had gone off to fight, returned. However, despite the efforts made to ensure reconstruction and a competitive British herring fishery, the golden years of the pre-First World War industry could not be recaptured. While the east coast herring fishery of the 1950s was broadly unchanged from that of half a century earlier, on the continent, large trawling fleets from France, Denmark and Germany were catching huge quantities of herring for oil and for animal feed (meal).<sup>161</sup> As W.C. Hodgson wrote in 1957;

The general view of the post-war herring fishery is that a revolution is taking place, in which the drifter is declining in popularity and is being replaced by powerful trawlers with the most up-to-date and efficient gear.<sup>162</sup>

Catastrophically for Lowestoft and the east coast fishery, industrial trawling for the oil and meal industries paid no mind to the quality or age of the catch leading to over-exploitation of the nursery grounds. 1955 saw the lowest annual catch on record for the East Anglian herring fishery, largely the result of years of over-fishing of juvenile herring which had not reached maturity. In the decades that followed, catches continued to dwindle as a result of the over-exploitation of the herring shoals and by the mid-1960s, the home fishing voyages had ceased altogether, drawing to a close an industry which had sustained Lowestoft's economy for over 600 years.<sup>163</sup>

## LANDSCAPE AND TOPOGRAPHY

The northern part of Whapload Road which retains buildings associated with Lowestoft's historic fishing industry, extends broadly southwards for 1.4km (0.85 miles) from its intersection with the base of The Ravine, north east of Sparrow's Nest Park, to the point where it becomes Battery Green Road. It runs broadly parallel to the High Street situated above it on the 20m contour. The buildings which comprise numbers 311 to 333 fall within the section of Whapload Road defined by Lighthouse Score to the north and Mariner's Score to the south and sit just above the high water mark between 1m and 5mOD (Figure 19). Most of the former fishing buildings are aligned broadly east to west – reflecting the boundaries of medieval burgage plots extending eastwards down the cliff from the High Street – and present narrow gable ends to Whapload Road. The Whapload Road fishing buildings face the North Denes, an area of rough grass and vegetation which was formerly the beach area but which is now separated from the sea by a concrete sea wall rebuilt after the Second World War.



**Figure 19:** Map showing the former fishing buildings on the west side of Whapload Road which are the subject of the descriptions below. © Historic England, base map © Crown Copyright and database right 2019. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900, illustration Sharon Soutar

In 2019 the North Denes covers an area of 20.7 acres (8.3 ha) defined by the sea wall to the east, the Birdseye frozen food factory to the south, Whapload Road to the west and a surface car park to the north. The north eastern corner of the Denes is occupied by the North Denes Caravan Park, while the area to the south retains rows of net drying racks, known locally as spars. These simple post and crossbar structures appear to originate from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but became more numerous and arranged in organised rows in first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The surviving spars are a mixture of posts and reused telegraph poles suggesting they have been repaired and refreshed regularly, though not more recently than the mid-1960s when the home herring voyages ceased. A path running broadly north to south between the rows of spars records the location of Gowing's ropewalk which was located on the Denes between the 1790s and the 1930s, while a similarly aligned gully located further to the east represents the remains of the liver trench where cod livers were boiled down for train oil during the Icelandic cod voyages of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries (Figure 20).



**Figure 20:** An oblique aerial photograph of the northern end of Whapload Road in June 2019. The surviving historic elements of numbers 311 to 333 can still be discerned, located at the foot of the cliff beneath the eastern side of the High Street and facing the remains of the net drying racks on the North Denes. © Historic England, Damian Grady, 33764\_024



## The Scores

One of the most distinctive features of the landscape of north Lowestoft are the scores; narrow, steep, stepped alleys which link the High Street with the beach and shore beneath the cliff. Similar in proportion to the rows of Great Yarmouth or the lanes of Bungay, the scores provided a crucial link between the High Street and the fishing communities of Whapload Road and the Beach Village, and remain an integral part of the landscape. The name, 'score', likely derives from the Old Norse word *skor*, to make a notch or *skora* (Scora in Old English) meaning to cut or incise, and the *Oxford English Dictionary* describes them as:

A vertical indentation in a hill; a gangway down a cliff; a cutting through a ridge; *spec.* in East Anglia, a narrow, steep path or street leading to the sea.<sup>164</sup>

Despite their importance as linkages between the High Street and the beach and their even distribution along the cliff, the scores are in fact naturally occurring features, created over time by water draining down the loose surface of the cliff face. As part of the process of consolidating the cliff face through the construction of terraces and gardens, the scores gradually became walled, surfaced and stepped, forging routes between the fishing buildings constructed at the foot of the cliff and fronting onto Whapload Road (Figure 21).<sup>165</sup>



Figure 21: The High Street entrance to Martin's Score. © Historic England, Kathryn Morrison

In 2019 there are 11 scores extending southwards from the Ravine, (formerly Gunton Score) north of Belle Vue Park, to Herring Fishery Score (recorded as Nelson Score on the 1884 Ordnance Survey Map), named after the *Herring Fishery* public house which also survives but renamed as *The Wheatsheaf* (Figure 22). The manorial records of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century and the Reverend John Tanner's survey of copyhold property ownership compiled 1720-25, suggest that at one time there were as many as 14 scores. South of Herring Fishery Score three further scores are referenced in the documentary record, though they have subsequently been lost. Immediately to the south of Herring Fishery Score, Frost's Alley Score, though not recorded in historic documentation is depicted on Ordnance Survey mapping until as recently as 1975, before the construction of a new police station in 1979 removed it entirely. Slightly further south, two scores were identified in the documentary record by David Butcher; Henfield Score at the foot of Old Nelson Street and Lyers Score, a little further south which appears to have been located in the vicinity of the modern traffic roundabout at the intersection of Whapload Road and Battery Green Road.

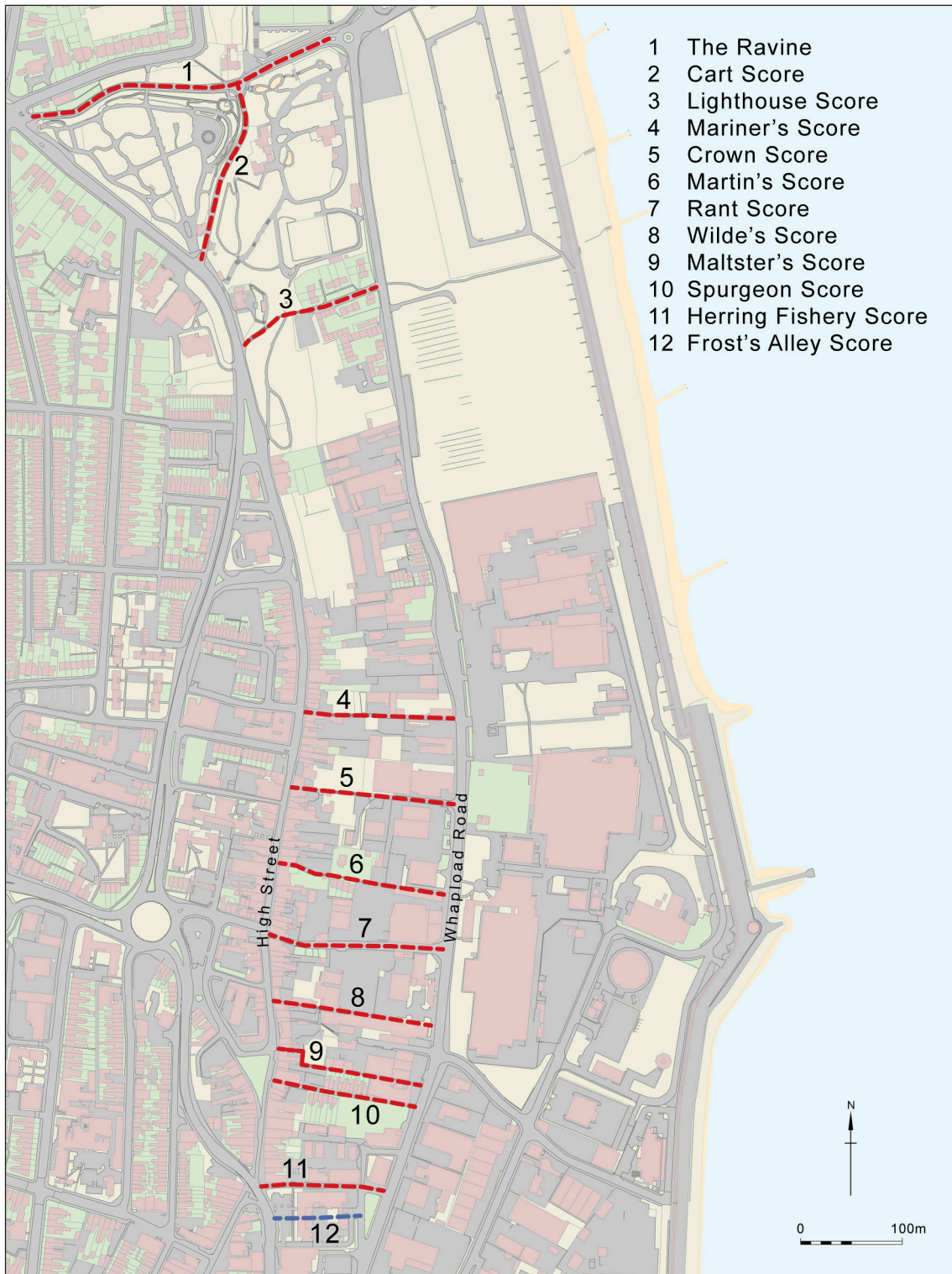


Figure 22: Map showing the route and location of the 12 Lowestoft scores. Frost's Alley Score is shown but was lost in 1979 when the new police station was constructed. © Historic England, base map © Crown Copyright and database right 2019. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900, illustration Sharon Soutar

Many of the extant scores took their names from major property owning families or public houses which could be found in their locality, or from topographical features.<sup>166</sup> The Ravine ascends Gunton Cliff, explaining its former moniker, while Cart Score (formerly Gallows Score) which wraps around Belle Vue Park and intersects with the Ravine at Whapload Road, was documented from the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and was likely always a track way for vehicles, though its former name may point to the location of the town gibbet. South of Belle Vue and Sparrow's Nest Parks, Lighthouse Score presumably records the construction of the first High Lighthouse in 1676, while Mariner's Score, formerly Swan Score, took both of these names from adjacent pubs, the *Swan Inn* and the *Three Mariner's Inn*, the latter lending its name to Mariner's Street, formerly Swan Lane. Similarly Crown Score, formerly Lion Score, took its name from public houses firstly the *Lion Inn* and later the *Crown Inn* on the other side of the High Street. It is Crown Score which is the focal point of Richard Powles 1786 depiction of the High Street (Figure 23).

Martin's Score, formerly Gowing's Score, originated as a private entry-way to Thomas Mighells' extensive property beyond and did not operate as a public score before 1720. To the south, Rant Score and Wilde's Score were named respectively for the Rant and Wilde families, the latter running beside John Wilde's residence at 80 High Street and leading down to the beach, though the seaward extent was lost to the construction of the Bird's Eye Factory.<sup>167</sup> Maltster's Score to the south, named for a maltings which once stood to the north, is one of the most interesting physically. In addition to forming a dog-leg, the western section retains 'Crinkle-crankle' walls, a decorative serpentine form of boundary wall which economises on bricks due to its form providing sufficient structural strength so as to only require coursing one brick thick. Immediately to the south, Spurgeon Score is also a post-1720 creation and may also reference the owner of an adjacent property.



**Figure 23:** Crown or Lion Score looking east towards the sea as depicted by Richard Powles in 1786.

© SA [L] 193/2/1

## The 'Lost Score'

Local tradition asserts that there was an additional score, known colloquially as the 'lost' or 'old' score, which was located between Lighthouse Score and Mariner's Score. It has variously been assumed to have been located either directly behind Arnold House (no. 4) or behind the Rectory for St Margaret's Church (no. 13). In the case of the latter, this score would have passed to the immediate south of 311 and 312-14 Whapload Road. Although, prior to the destruction of High Street buildings by enemy bombing in 1943, there was no break in the frontage of the High Street to facilitate a score, the local tradition has persisted on the grounds that the score was accessed via the Rectory and that it was only used in times of emergency, such as fire or flood of the beach area.<sup>168</sup>

Physically, there is no evidence for a former score in this area. The High Street buildings were demolished, including the Rectory house following the attack of 12<sup>th</sup> May 1943. There are no clear earthwork remains of boundaries defining a path running down the cliff below the High Street, and although there is a break in the Whapload Road frontage, it is part of the access arrangements of the buildings south of 311 Whapload Road.

The documentary record also contains scant evidence for a score between Lighthouse Score to the north and Mariner's or Swan Score to the south. As mentioned previously, 17<sup>th</sup>-century Lowestoft was recorded in detail in a manorial survey of 1618, a survey which was arranged topographically and used the scores as reference points from which to describe the ownership of the buildings on the High Street. In the northern section of the High Street, no scores are mentioned before Swan score, seemingly confirming both that there was no lost score in this area and that Lighthouse score was not thusly named until 1676.<sup>169</sup> Similarly, John Tanner's collated records of copyhold ownership compiled in the 1720s also fail to record a score in the location behind what would become the Rectory's garden. Despite being an incredibly detailed depiction which shows the newly built Rectory house, Richard Powles 1786 view of the beach with Whapload Road, the cliff and High Street beyond, also does not show a clearly identifiable score, though it is clear that a number of the High Street properties had routes of access to the beach below. The same is also true of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-century street directories which, like the earlier manorial survey, are arranged topographically and use the scores as reference points. For example, Huke's Directory of 1892, in the section detailing Whapload Road includes, 'here is Mariner's Score' and 'here is Lighthouse Score', but with no reference to a score between them.<sup>170</sup>

The cartographic evidence for a former score, or at least a route between the Rectory and Whapload Road is slightly more compelling. Published in 1832, and strangely devoid of detail with reference to the Whapload Road area, a map of the town of Lowestoft shows a straight path, with steps extending from the rear of the Rectory (labelled as the vicarage) as far as Whapload Road. This path is however unlabelled, which given the names marked against the other scores depicted, would appear to be further evidence against the existence of a score at this location (Figure 24).



Figure 24: A detail taken from the 1832 map of Lowestoft showing a path which extended from the rear of the Rectory to Whapload Road. © SA [L] Map Collection

The large-scale 1:500 Ordnance Survey map of 1884 however, does not record the same path. It records in detail the garden of the Rectory which extended down the cliff in a series of planted terraces, before becoming a flat open area entirely enclosed by a garden wall. To the south of the rectory garden, the 1884 map does show a narrow route between two properties, via another garden to the foot of the cliff, which may survive in part behind a gate leading to 297a Whapload Road. This is however not associated with the Rectory, nor is it shown as a route which directly connects Whapload Road with the High Street above, seemingly providing access only to the garden (Figure 25).

While there is no evidence to support the former existence of a score between the rear of the rectory and Whapload Road, both the 1842 tithe apportionment and the records of the 1910/11 Inland Revenue Valuation Survey provide an explanation as to where the tradition of the lost score may have originated. The access path between Whapload Road and the property south of the Rectory implied by the 1884 Ordnance Survey map was more clearly depicted on the 1842 tithe map where it is labelled as plot 946a. The accompanying apportionment denotes this plot as a 'Private Road' associated with the house and garden to the west which in 1842 were owned and occupied by Maria Caroline Hubert and Harriet Smith.<sup>171</sup> It is clear that if this path explains the origins of the lost score tradition, then the supposed score was slightly further south than speculated, not associated with the Rectory and certainly not a public right of way. A similar conclusion can be drawn from the records produced by the 1910/11 Inland Revenue Valuation Survey. Surveyed in April 1914, the plot which contained 311, 312-14 Whapload Road and the Old Fish

House, records that there was a right of way adjacent to the plot, but that it was specifically 'For a house in the High Street'.<sup>172</sup> This entry follows the description of a right of way for the residents of the Lancaster Place cottages through 312-14 Whapload Road, strongly suggesting that the right of way for the house was south of 312-14; the supposed location of the lost score. The map which accompanies the survey entries shows no path to the immediate south of 312-14 or a path connecting with the Rectory garden, but does show the path detailed in the tithe records and on the 1884 Ordnance Survey map and this is presumably the right of way described by the Inland Revenue valuer.

The tradition of the lost score likely stems from one of the formal, but private rights of way which extended between the houses of the east side of the High Street and Whapload Road. It is possible that a private route through the Rectory garden – with its steps and terraces – to the house above, is the origin of the tradition, though the documentary and cartographic evidence points more strongly to a path which extended from the rear of 14 High Street down the cliff to Whapload Road. That any of these paths between the High Street and the beach in the area south of the rectory were anything other than entirely private access routes for the High Street properties is highly unlikely, and certainly not indicated by the documentary evidence.



Figure 25: A detail taken from the 1:500 Ordnance Survey Map of 1884 showing the Rectory garden. Crown Copyright and database right 2019. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900

## SITE DESCRIPTION

### 311 Whapload Road

311 Whapload Road comprises a single, three storey structure aligned west to east which extends from the foot of the cliff but which does not have a frontage to Whapload Road. It is broadly rectangular in plan and has a footprint of 25.2 by 5.4m. There are no ancillary structures relating to 311 Whapload Road, although a short section of walling aligned north to south located to the immediate west of the north western corner of the building likely marks the remains of a predecessor building which appears on the 1:500 Ordnance Survey map of 1884. In 2019, 311 Whapload Road is grouped together with 312-314 Whapload Road and the Old Fish House and is undergoing redevelopment as residential units: the three separate buildings known collectively as Lancaster Place, taking their name from the moniker formerly applied to 317 to 321 Whapload Road. To the immediate south of 311, a break in the Whapload Road frontage leads westwards to the cliff and has been interpreted as a lost score, however this is highly unlikely to be the case (see above). No internal survey of number 311 was possible due to its on-going conversion to residential units and the brief description provided below is drawn from photographs and plans produced before the work began.

### History and Ownership

311 Whapload Road lies directly beneath the run of High Street buildings between Arnold House to the north and number 26 to the south which were destroyed during the Second World War. Unlike the northern end of the High Street, it is harder to relate the individual owners of these High Street properties to the buildings beneath the cliff, nor is it possible to identify fish houses and malt houses lost during the fire of 1645 for this part of Whapload Road. It is clear however from Richard Powles' depiction of 1786, that a small rectangular fishing building existed on the site of 311 and that it was of the standard arrangement, divided broadly in half to form an eastern and western range, the western range taller and the roofline stepping up (see Figure 27). The stepped arrangement with a taller western range may identify this building as a fish house, with fish preparation taking place in the roaring house to the east and fish smoking in the taller western range. It can be confidently assumed that this building post-dates the fire and that it was similar to the other post-fire fishing buildings being constructed of washed cobbles or beachstone and brick and roofed in pan tiles. If this is the case, the short section of walling to the west of the present 311 Whapload Road, must be a fragmentary remain of this earlier building. It is possible that this small fish house was one of two described by the Reverend John Tanner as being a copyhold property of William Rising. The Rising property was recorded in 1651 as having a 'house called a fish house, 23 feet long by 17 wide' and after 1655 as having 'two fish-houses, called the tanhouse and the vinegar house', the latter possibly a reference to the pickling of herring in brine to produce white herring.<sup>173</sup> Both of these buildings appear to have been small and possibly refer to the predecessor to number 311, a two range building approximately 8m (26ft) by 5.5m (18ft). By the 1840s, this predecessor building formed part of a larger Fish Office which also included the Old Fish House and 312-314 Whapload Road, and was occupied by Samuel Love Ward and Nelson Carver, and owned by the executors of William Cleveland.<sup>174</sup>

The earlier structure is depicted on the large scale 1:500 Ordnance Survey map of 1884. However by the time of the Inland Revenue Valuation Survey in 1914 this building was recorded as being occupied by the Gourock Ropeworks, who let it from W. J Williams who occupied one of the adjacent buildings, likely number 312-14.<sup>175</sup> The Gourock Ropework Co. Ltd had been established in Scotland in 1736 and opened premises in Lowestoft in 1888.<sup>176</sup> The company occupied two sites, the main offices and store on Battery Green Road and the manufacturing premises on Whapload Road, with the latter first listed in Kelly's directory of 1907. Though broadly contemporary, the Whapload Road manufacturing premises are not shown on the 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map of 1905, suggesting that they were constructed between 1905 and 1914, likely in 1906/7.

The Gourock Ropework Co. continued to occupy 311 Whapload Road until the company ceased operations in 1968.<sup>177</sup> Following the end of rope and sail manufacture at 311 Whapload Road, the building was used as a warehouse and store for a number of local businesses. In 1988 planning permission was granted to convert the building to form the premises of The Saddle Boutique, a short lived enterprise which passed the building on to Lancaster Place Ltd., who repaired and sold office furniture. In 1989, they received planning permission to convert both 311 and 312-314 for this purpose, including the insertion of a caretakers flat.<sup>178</sup> The possible conversion of 311-314 Whapload Road for residential use was identified as early as 1993, though planning applications submitted at the time were not successful. In 2013, a plan to redevelop 311, 312-14 and the Old Fish House was approved and in 2019, work is on-going on the conversion of 311 and 312-14, undertaken by Ark Property Services (see Figure 28).<sup>179</sup>

## Description

Prior to the conversion to residential use which began in 2018, the former Gourock Ropeworks building retained a broadly rectangular footprint 25m east to west and 5.5m north to south. A step in the northern elevation, roughly corresponding to the third bay from the east of a total of four bays, the only deviation from the rectangular ground plan. The building was of red clay brick construction of a type consistent with an early 20<sup>th</sup> century date, beneath a Welsh slate roof and was arranged over three storeys with an attic above. The ground floor appears to have originally been open-fronted to the northern, inward facing elevation. Post-war red bricks of the Fletton or LBC type have been used to under-build the southern ground floor elevation and during the on-going conversion work, redundant cast iron columns were found within the ground floor underbuilding, suggesting a former open arcade. The southern long elevation doubled as the boundary wall to the site and is entirely without fenestration (Figure 26). Each of the bays of the northern elevation (with the exception of the windowless west bay) had a broad, arched headed timber casement window beneath a flat brick arch, with a sill of dark bricks and a taking-in door at first and second floor level. The eastern gable end had a large pair of double doors to the ground floor and single light windows to the first and second floors beneath an access door and hoist to serve the attic storey. To the west, the remains of the predecessor building, consisting of c.2m of cobble, flint and brick walling survive *in situ* but not connected to the present structure. Above the surviving walls of the earlier structure, the west elevation had full width windows to the first and second floors, with a louvered opening serving the attic above.





Figure 26: 311 (left) and 312-14 Whapload Road (right) photographed from the east. © Paul Bradley/James Darwin

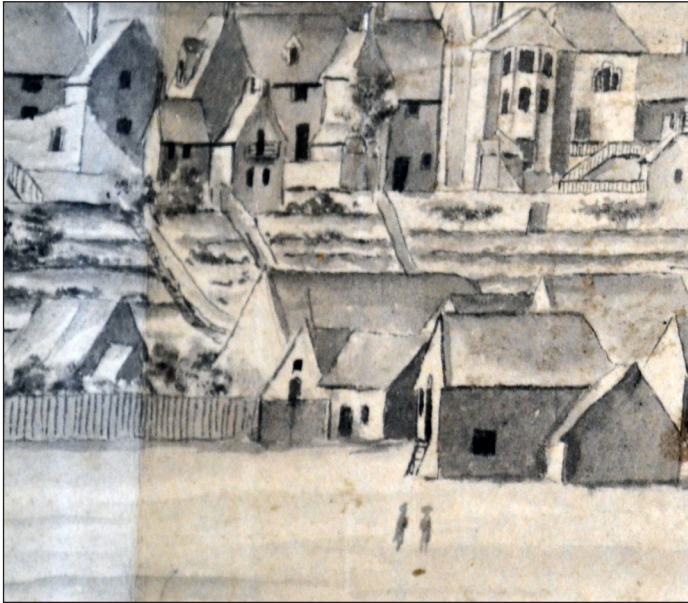
Very little comment can be made about the internal arrangements of the building prior to the closure of the Gourock Ropeworks Co. in 1968. The ground and first floors comprised single open spaces, with a staircase in the north-western corner. The stepped out bay formed an entry lobby off the yard which in turn gave access to ground floor workshop space, though both of these appear to be later alterations. The first floor was an entirely open space save for a small WC, reflecting the later use of the building for the storage of furniture. A large trapdoor at the western end may have been associated with the building's use as a rope and sail works, allowing complete ropes to be dropped down from the ropeworks to the storage area below. The second floor contained a small flat, possibly the caretakers flat added in 1989.

### 312-314 Whapload Road

312-314 Whapload Road is comprised of two distinct adjoining ranges which now form a single L-shaped building. Both arranged over three storeys, the main range extends westwards for 25.5m from its narrow Whapload Road frontage, while a perpendicular range aligned north to south extends behind 317-321 Whapload Road as far as the former light engineering works at 315 Whapload Road. The range aligned north to south appears to have been extended over several phases during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and it is likely that the two ranges operated as separate buildings. As with 311, work to convert 312-14 Whapload Road to residential units was on-going at the time of survey and no internal inspection was undertaken. A brief description of the building as it existed prior to the redevelopment is provided below and drawn from plans and a photographic survey.

## History and Ownership

As with number 311, which from the 1840s onwards was treated as part of a single property with 312-14 and the Old Fish House, 312-14 Whapload Road may have formed part of the property formerly associated with the Wilde family that at the time of Reverend John Tanner's survey of 1720-26 was in the ownership of one William Rising.<sup>180</sup> By 1786 and the depiction of Whapload Road by the artist Richard Powles, a collection of adjoining buildings are shown on the site of 312-14 facing a fish house to the east of Whapload Road on the Denes (Figure 27).



**Figure 27:** Richard Powles' depiction of the site of 312-314 Whapload Road in 1786. The small stepped structure (centre-left) to the south of the Old Fish House is the predecessor to number 311

© SA [L] 193/2/1

The crowded nature of the composition makes it impossible to draw any conclusions as to the nature of the buildings on the site, however they were clearly smaller and not arranged according to the narrow burgage plot boundaries, seemingly cutting across the grain of the landscape in much the same way as the Old Fish House, immediately to the west. They are much smaller buildings, less purposefully arranged, suggesting storage and not the integrated fish processing and smoking implied by Powles' depictions of 315, 325, 329 and 333 Whapload Road (see below). At the time of the 1842 tithe map, number 312-14 was the site of an L-shaped building surrounded by a square walled yard occupied by Nelson Carver and part of the fish office and yard owned by the executors of William Cleveland.<sup>181</sup> No comment can be made about the nature of the building, though it may well have been one of the buildings depicted by Powles 55 years earlier.

By the time of W Oldham Charles' map of 1878, the buildings which comprise the present 312-14 Whapload Road had largely been constructed. The 1:500 scale Ordnance Survey map published in 1884 shows in greater detail the same range extending westwards from Whapload Road and a second, far smaller range perpendicular to it. The map depicts these buildings as clearly separate structures with a party wall, rather than a single L-shaped building. This remained the case in 1905 when the site was depicted on the 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map, but by

the 1927 edition, the north to south range had been extended northwards, fully enclosing the yards of Lancaster Place to the east and adjoining the southern range of 315. It seems likely that the alterations to number 312-314 were coeval with the construction of the new Gourock Ropeworks sometime between 1905 and 1914 when both were recorded in the Valuation Survey as being owned by W J Williams and the site described as;

Large fishing premises comprising:

1 Large 3 story net store, (1) 2 storey (B&T), 2 Tanning coppers, (1) Corrugated Iron, B&T 3 Storey net store, Brick, Stone and tile, 2 storey store all in good condition except the last one.<sup>182</sup>

The two, three-storey buildings appear to be 311 and the east to west aligned range of 312-14, the two-storey section of the first store, the north to south range of 312-14 and the two-storey store in poor condition, the Old Fish House.

312-314 Whapload Road remained in use as a net store until the home herring fishing voyages from Lowestoft ended in the mid-1960s. Shortly afterwards, the Gourock Ropeworks Ltd. ceased their Lowestoft operation and left the Whapload Road site. As detailed above, 312-314 and 311 Whapload Road continued to be treated as a single property during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and were converted for use as warehouses for the storage of first saddles and then office furniture before planning permission was granted for their conversion to residential units (Figure 28).



**Figure 28:** Architects' rendering of 311 (left) and 312-314 Whapload Road (right) showing their proposed redevelopment as residential units. © Ark Property Services.

## Description

Prior to its conversion to residential units, number 312-314 comprised two separate structures, historically used for the preparation and storage of fishing nets. The main range was aligned east to west, with the narrow gable end fronting Whapload Road and a broadly rectangular footprint 26m by 7m. Arranged over three storeys with an attic above, the east to west aligned range stepped out to the south at its mid-point and had a canted south-western corner, presumably to ease cart access into the yard. The three-storey range was built of red bricks, beneath a roof of Welsh slate and presented an eight-bay long elevation to the south. The windows were similar in character to those of 311 Whapload Road, with arched heads beneath flat brick arches and adorned with dark brick sills. Those which light the ground floor were of a subtly different design to those of the upper floors, and matched the style of the windows of 311. This may indicate that the ground floor windows were inserted, or updated, at the time of the construction of 311 and of the extension of the north to south range. The western gable end which faces into the yard had double doors to the ground floor, likely identifying it as a storage area, while the upper storeys and the attic had taking in doors linked by an external hoist. The north to south range is of two storeys, as recorded in the 1914 Inland Revenue account, but was similarly of red clay brick beneath a Welsh slate roof. The map evidence for a northerly extension of the of the two-storey range is apparently confirmed in the fabric of the building where, prior to redevelopment, a vertical, straight joint was discernable in the brick work of the western elevation. Both phases of the north to south range had large windows to the ground floor, while the later extension was windowless to the first floor. Access to the building appears to have been via a large door on the western elevation at the point the two ranges joined.

Internally, 312-14 comprised a series of large, open storage spaces as might be expected given its historic use as a net store and later use as a furniture warehouse. The most interesting internal feature was the rows of cast iron columns at ground and first floor level of the three storey range, which supported the floors above (Figure 29). These columns match those recently identified within the under-built walls of 311 and some *ex situ* examples adjacent to 329 Whapload Road, suggesting a standard method of construction for late 19<sup>th</sup> century net stores. The second floor of the main range, as with 311, had been converted into a small flat, though it was likely that this level was originally used as a net loft for the repair of fishing nets.



**Figure 29:** The row of cast iron columns and timber beam which carried the first floor over the ground floor store of the main range. © Ark Property Services

## ‘Old Fish House’ to Rear of 312-14 Whapload Road

Variously referred to as the ‘Old Fish House’, ‘317 Whapload Road’, ‘Fish House behind 317 Whapload Road’, ‘Fish House behind 312-14 Whapload Road’ and latterly as part of the Lancaster Place development, the Old Fish House is one of the oldest surviving structures associated with the Lowestoft fishing industry. Unusually aligned north to south against the grain of the east to west aligned medieval burgage plots, the Old Fish House is situated within a stone sett courtyard, its eastern elevation 45m west of Whapload Road. In addition to its unusual alignment, the Old Fish House is distinct from the buildings which surround it due to the inclusion within its eastern façade of courses of roughly worked limestone, a building material for which there is seemingly no secular building tradition in Lowestoft. The western elevation, which is of markedly different materials and coursing, bears a date stone of 1676 which has guided the existing interpretation that the Old Fish House represents a pre-fire, likely 16<sup>th</sup> century building which was rebuilt and remodelled in 1676 as a fish house or net store. Its supposed antiquity and significance within the Lowestoft fishing industry are reflected in its Grade II listed status (NHLE 1207049) granted in 1977 and amended in 2018.

### History and Ownership

The Old Fish House is situated beneath the cliff, below the site of 10 and 11 High Street. Unlike the fish houses below 1-4 High Street which relate directly to the medieval burgage plots extending eastwards from the High Street, the Old Fish House lies across the boundary between two burgage plots, making its early history harder to chart and possibly marking it out as a different type of building. The manorial survey of Lowestoft taken in 1618 records that as many as seven dwellings were located ‘subter le cliff’, and although there is no clear way of locating where they were or how they relate to the 21<sup>st</sup> century landscape, it is significant that two of these dwellings were owned by John Wilde (d.1644), the head of the influential Wilde family.<sup>183</sup> The unusual inclusion of courses of high quality worked limestone in the eastern façade of the Old Fish House, its alignment perpendicular to the other historic fishing buildings of Whapload Road and the documented existence of dwellings below the High Street has led to the conclusion that the Old Fish House was originally a domestic building which was rebuilt and remodelled following the fire of 1645, and that elements of that pre-fire structure were retained in its fabric. Though entirely plausible, it is more likely that the Old Fish House formed part of the property recorded by the Reverend John Tanner in the 1720s as in the ownership of William Rising and described at the time as ‘an office of fish houses’. Tanner’s analysis of the copyhold records relating to that property reveal that in 1631, a ‘fish house with access for repair’ was acquired by Thomas Mighells, a member of one of Lowestoft’s major mercantile families. In 1635, the property was mortgaged to Thomas Webb and then passed to him in 1640 upon the forfeiture of that mortgage.<sup>184</sup> The property was thus in the hands of Thomas Webb at the time of the great fire of 1645, which caused Webb losses amounting to £527 3s to his fish houses and goods.<sup>185</sup> At the time of the surrender of the property by Thomas Webb to Robert Pake in 1651, the property was recorded as including ‘A house called a fish-house, 23 feet long by 17 wide, and a piece of land 137 feet long by 27 wide’.<sup>186</sup>

While this building does not correlate to the dimensions of the Old Fish House and may well in fact be the predecessor to 311 Whapload Road, it is clear that shortly after the fire, the property contained premises for fish smoking. The property passed in 1655 to Robert Brissingham, another merchant who had suffered damage to his fish house during the fire, though at £94 it was considerably less than Webb and the Wildes. The property passed to John Wilde who held it until 1682 when he surrendered it to Simon Spicer. At the time of Wilde's acquisition, the property was described as containing 'Two fish-houses, called the Tanhouse and the Vinegar House', suggesting that at least one was newly built after the fire.<sup>187</sup> John Wilde (d.1700) was born in 1637, the son of James Wilde (d.1684), the Lowestoft merchant resident at 3 High Street and recorded as suffering losses to his fish houses and goods amounting to £160 during the fire. John's acquisition of a property containing a fish house, confirms that he too was in the family trade and the date stone which survives on the western elevation of the Old Fish House appears to confirm both that the Rising property detailed by Tanner was the property containing the Old Fish House and the predecessor to 311 Whapload Road, but also that it was rebuilt by John in 1676. In addition to the date, the marker also includes the initials I M W arranged in a triangle, with the W at the top (Figure 30).

The convention in such cases is for the letter at the top to record the familial name and the initials below, those of the Christian names of a married couple. An upper case I on a date stone almost always denotes a name beginning with J, as there was no such character in the Latin alphabet, so the date stone on the western elevation of the Old Fish House records that the building was built, or largely rebuilt in 1676 by a J & M, W. The wife of John Wilde, who was the owner of the Rising property at that time, was called Margaret (d. 1698) and so it would appear that the Rising property is that in which the Old Fish House sits and that the figurative architects of its current appearance, were John and Margaret Wilde.<sup>188</sup> Whether they built anew, or remodelled an existing structure will be discussed below in the context of the surviving fabric, but that John and Margaret were so likely responsible for the work and that John was the grandson of John Wilde who owned the dwellings beneath the cliff, adds further credibility to the interpretation that the Old Fish House was remodelled from elements of an earlier domestic structure.



**Figure 30:** The date stone on the western façade of the Old Fish House, bearing the date 1676 and the initials J M W. © Paul Bradley/James Darwin

Richard Powles' 1786 depiction of the Whapload Road area confirms the existence, location and generally proportions of the Old Fish House as it survives in 2019, although other buildings in the foreground of composition restrict the view of the building, allowing only confirmation of its north to south alignment and its steeply pitched roof with coped gables. By 1842, the Old Fish House remained part of a large property occupied by Samuel Love Ward which also included the predecessor to 311 Whapload Road, suggesting that Tanner's description of the property as 'an office of fish houses', had changed little over the intervening 120 years.<sup>189</sup>

Though the 1842 tithe apportionment provides ownership details for the various Whapload Road properties, it provides scant information regarding their function, beyond recording them as Fish Offices, a generic term for a group of fishing buildings arranged around a yard. However, 19<sup>th</sup> century newspaper advertisements alerting fishermen and merchants to fishing buildings to be sold at auction, provide valuable descriptions of the various buildings. Although no specific addresses are provided, the descriptions of the buildings can allow the adverts to be reconciled with individual premises. For example, an advert in the *East Anglian Daily Times* of October 10<sup>th</sup> 1895, appears to describe the Old Fish House as part of fishing premises for sale; the Old Fish House being identifiable through the rare use of stone:

A brick, stone and tile fish office and premises conveniently situated opposite the Denes, north end of Whapload Road comprising – Salt House, Stable, Curing House, Stores, three net chambers with rope lofts and large yard with cart entrance, now occupied by Mr James Henry Fletcher.<sup>190</sup>

By 1895, the large net store, now 312-14 Whapload Road had been constructed, however the Gourock Ropework building had not been constructed to replace the earlier building on the site of 311 Whapload Road. The three net chambers would appear to relate to the buildings which comprised 312-14, while Powles depiction of the predecessor to 311 Whapload Road and the dimensions of the fish house recorded by Tanner, would appear to identify that building as the curing or smoking house. The stable and stores were likely within the various smaller ancillary structures depicted on the 1:500 Ordnance Survey map of 1884, suggesting that the Old Fish House was in fact a salt house, a conclusion corroborated by the surviving internal fabric (see below).

The Old Fish House remained part of this large Fish Office and yard into the 20<sup>th</sup> century when it was recorded in the Inland Revenue Valuation Survey as 'a brick, tile and stone, two storey store', part of a large property owned by W J Williams, a Lowestoft fishing smack owner.<sup>191</sup> It is interesting to note that in the Inland Revenue valuer's field book, the Old Fish House is noted to be in poor condition compared to the newer net stores which had been constructed around it.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> May 1943, a series of low-level hit-and-run bombing raids by German FW190 fighters, destroyed a row of High Street properties and rendered the adjoining Old Rectory irreparable. Situated less than 75m to the east, the Old Fish House also suffered significant blast damage which necessitated the underpinning

and rebuilding of the southern gable end of the building and the construction of a new roof, though it would appear that many of the pantiles used in its construction were salvaged and reused. Following its repair, the Old Fish House remained in use as a general store and warehouse until the home herring fishing voyages from Lowestoft ended in the mid-1960s. As detailed above, the Old Fish House, 312-314 and 311 Whapload Road continued to be treated as a single property during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and were converted for use as warehouses for the storage of first saddles and then office furniture before planning permission and listed building consent were granted in 2015 for the conversion of the 'Old Fish House' to form two residential live work units.<sup>192</sup> In 2019, work to convert the building had yet to commence.

## Materials

The Old Fish House – and the short sections of truncated walling which identify the location of former adjoining structures – is constructed, for the most part, of regular courses of washed cobble or beach stone, flint and red clay bricks of 17<sup>th</sup> century date. The eastern elevation includes roughly worked and squared limestone blocks laid in irregular courses, while the southern gable end has been largely rebuilt in 20<sup>th</sup> century bricks of the Fletton or LBC type. Both eastern and western elevations retain timber diamond mullioned ventilators and the 20<sup>th</sup> century softwood roof is covered in reused clay pantiles of 19<sup>th</sup>-century character.

## Plan

The building stands to the rear (west) of Whapload Road and forms the western side of a small enclosed yard with a stone sett surface. The northern elevation adjoins a large 20<sup>th</sup> century industrial building added following the partial demolition of 315 Whapload Road and the eastern elevation faces 312-14 Whapload Road, a former net store. The Old Fish House is broadly rectangular in plan and at ground floor level is divided symmetrically into three rooms, the central room of the three being smaller than those to the north and south. Each room, or compartment had its own access door and ventilator window on the eastern elevation and a single ventilator on the western elevation. An external steel staircase of post-war date on the rebuilt southern elevation gives access to the first floor, an open space lit by three mullioned ventilators to the western elevation and a pair of later openings to the eastern elevation. An attic above is accessed via an internal ladder.

## Exterior

The Old Fish House is a two-storey, three bay building with a pitched tiled roof and coped parapets at the gables. The principal elevation is to the east and faces into the yard, facing the cross-range of 312-14 Whapload Road across a setted stone yard (Figure 31). Access to the ground floor of the building is obtained via the eastern elevation, where three simple timber plank and batten doors, each of 20<sup>th</sup> century character, give access to three partitioned spaces beyond. Each of the three bays of the eastern elevation are defined by a door and a ground floor window, with the outer (northern and southern) bays, wider than that of the centre. The three



matching windows are of the ubiquitous diamond profile timber mullioned type, which proliferate throughout the smoke houses, roaring houses, salt stores and net stores of the Whapload Road buildings. They are, and always were, unglazed. Their anachronistic design, which in secular domestic structures dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, has led to suggestions that the Old Fish House was formerly a domestic residence, however, as with later examples found at 329 Whapload Road, these unglazed mullioned windows are ventilators. Turning the mullions through 45 degrees allows a through flow of air, whilst deflecting strong winds and rain, making them ideally suited for buildings where ventilation is required. In the case of the Old Fish House windows, the four timber mullions are set within oak frames beneath timber lintels and would appear to date from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century.



**Figure 31:** The eastern elevation of the Old Fish House photographed from the second floor of 312-14 Whapload Road. © Paul Bradley/James Darwin

The eastern elevation is constructed of an eclectic mix of materials, not replicated anywhere else in Lowestoft. The lower half of the façade is comprised of courses of red clay brick, washed cobbles or beach stone and irregular sized blocks of roughly cut and squared ashlar limestone. The limestone is used in the quoining of the southern end of the eastern elevation below first floor level and was likely similarly prominent at the northern end, though the intersection with the post-war engineering building added by Shenton's in 1966 has partially obscured the north-

eastern corner. The limestone blocks are of such irregular shapes – some retaining evidence of formerly being cut to form curved or arched features – that they must have been reused from another building. There is no building tradition for the use of worked ashlar among Lowestoft's secular buildings, with high quality examples on the High Street either timber-framed structures such as 36 High Street or flint and beach stone such as 80 High Street, the residence of John Wilde. If the stone were reused from a local building, it therefore likely came from an ecclesiastical building and as such, there are two possible sources. The first was the town chapel which stood on the site of the Corn Cross, now occupied by the Town Hall. Medieval in origin, it was converted into an almshouse and part of it used as a town house until 1570 when an application was made for a license so that divine services might once again be conducted. After this grant, divine services appear to have been conducted in the chapel up till 1676 when the building became too decayed to hold services.<sup>193</sup> The date of 1676, the same year recorded on the Old Fish House's date stone, may be significant if the building – which was rebuilt in 1698 – went out of use at the same time as the Old Fish House was being constructed or remodelled. However, if the eastern façade of the Old Fish House predates the 1676 building work undertaken by John and Margaret Wilde, then the stone is unlikely to have come from the town chapel. It may instead have been reused from the Good Cross Chapel, a medieval wayside chapel and shrine situated somewhere near the entrance to the later fish market. It was likely suppressed in 1548 during Edward VI's destruction of the Chantries and appears in the 1618 manorial survey as a copyhold dwelling.<sup>194</sup> If the building was partially demolished during its conversion to domestic use in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, then some of the stone may have been reused in the Old Fish House.

The first floor of the eastern façade is of far more regular coursing and appears to be of a different date to the walling below. The first floor is comprised of regular courses of red clay brick headers and trios of beach stone set within a loose mortar. This style of coursing matches exactly the extant western elevation and internal partition walls of the Old Fish House and the salt store at the western end of 329 Whapload Road, seemingly dating them all to the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Above the brick and beach stone walling, three courses of 20<sup>th</sup> century bricks of the Fletton or LBC type attest to the roof being raised and replaced following damage sustained in 1943. The first floor has 19<sup>th</sup> century timber casement windows set within brick surrounds with segmental heads which have a shallow rise to the centre. These occupy the northern and central bays, whilst a taking-in door, also of the 19<sup>th</sup> century occupies the southern bay above the timber mullioned window.

The gable end elevations reveal less about the building than the long elevations to the north and south. The northern elevation is largely obscured by the engineering building to the north which now adjoins it, though there is no evidence internally that there were previously windows or doorways which faced to the north. While not obscured, much of the southern gable end has been rebuilt following the bomb damage sustained in 1943. A concrete retaining lintel has been inserted c.2m above the yard surface and the gable end rebuilt above in it in red Fletton or LBC bricks. An external steel staircase on the southern gable provides the access to the first floor via a large door beneath a taking in door and hoist – the latter attesting to the building's most recent use as a warehouse. Beneath the concrete lintel, the southern

gable end represents a continuation of the worked limestone, brick, flint and beach stone walling of the eastern elevation, implying that if the Old Fish House was rebuilt around an existing structure in 1676, the previous building had a broadly similar footprint (Figure 32).



**Figure 32:** The southern gable end showing evidence of reconstruction following damage sustained during 1943. © Ark Property Services

The west elevation, which is entirely obscured at ground floor level by a lean-to corrugated steel industrial unit, is the most ordered and complete part of the structure and appears to represent a single phase of build, which the date stone records as being completed in 1676. The ground and first floors are symmetrical with three equal bays defined by diamond mullioned windows of a matching character to those of the eastern elevation, though the former are set further back within their openings. The western elevation, in common with the western elevation of the salt store at the western end of 329 Whapload Road, demonstrates decorative ornamentation and a high quality of construction, not normally associated with the rear façades of buildings. Given the relationship between the fish houses and the High Street residences of their owners, it can only be concluded that these western elevations were intended to be seen from the properties above.

Adjoining the north-east corner of the building, a short stretch of brick and cobble stone walling forms a double skin with the southern wall of the former Shenton's engineering building. The 1:500 Ordnance Survey map of 1884 indicates that this was the northern wall of a roughly square structure which adjoined the Old Fish House to the east, the northern wall being a party wall with the buildings which

comprised 315 Whapload Road prior to the construction of the engineering building in 1966. The square structure may have been one of the tanning coppers listed in the Inland Revenue Valuation Survey and adjoined a long, open-fronted range to the east which formed the northern range of the enclosed courtyard. This range, the concrete floor surface of which survives over the earlier stone setted surface, was a net store, similar in appearance to the open-fronted net store at Shoals Yard (Figure 33).



Figure 33: An open-fronted net store at Shoals Yard. A similar structure once adjoined the Old Fish House.  
© SA [L] 1300/72/12/16

## Interior

The interior of the Old Fish House retains a simple arrangement of three compartments on the ground floor beneath an un-partitioned first floor with attic above. The internal partitions of the ground floor are substantial and constructed of the same brick and cobble stone coursing as the west elevation into which they appear to be bonded. It would appear that the partitions and the west outer wall of the building are coeval in date, both from their matching fabric but also from the way the divisions relate to the ground floor windows of the western elevation. Each window is centrally placed in relation to the compartment it lights, and are equally spaced in relation to the partition walls. The same is not true of the eastern elevation. Here the partition walls are not bonded into the outer wall, creating a small void between the brick quoining at the eastern end of the partition and the

fabric of the outer wall. The intersection between the northernmost partition wall and the window of the central bay of the eastern elevation is also uncomfortable, with the partition cutting across the frame of the window. At some point during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, openings have been punched through the partition walls, though it was clear that originally they were discreet spaces accessed directly from the yard. Much of the brick floor surface has been covered over with concrete, though evidence of the original floor surface survives in the northern ground floor compartment. On top of each of the partition walls, six courses of modern bricks have been added in order to carry the first floor above, clearly part of a raising of the level of the first floor undertaken as part of the post war repairs which saw the rebuilding of the southern gable and the replacement of the roof and first floor surface (Figure 34).



**Figure 34:** One of the partition walls on the ground floor of the Old Fish House showing its demonstrably late 17<sup>th</sup> century fabric, the evidence for a raising of the first floor and the openings punched through in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. © Historic England, Matthew Bristow

As detailed above, the first floor surface, the attic floor and the entire roof structure were all replaced after the Second World War and as such no comment can be made about the historic internal arrangement above the ground floor. It is likely that the first floor was used for the storage of nets and that there was no net repair attic above, though again there is no fabric evidence to confirm or refute this conclusion. The open first floor and attic do reveal the fabric of the northern gable end which again matches the courses of brick headers and beach stone cobbles which comprise the western elevation and the ground floor partitions (Figure 35).



**Figure 35:** The internal façade of the northern gable end of the Old Fish House. © Paul Bradley/James Darwin

Though no historic fixtures and fittings survive in the Old Fish House, the surviving partition walls allow conclusions to be drawn about the phasing of the building and its historic use. The partition walls are part of a phase of rebuilding recorded on the date stone as being completed in 1676. They are of both a matching fabric to the western elevation and form part of coherent, symmetrical plan when viewed in relation to it. Assuming a single 1676 phase of build for all of the matching fabric, namely the western elevation, the upper stages of the eastern elevation, the northern gable (see below) and the internal partitions, it implies a substantial rebuild around an existing structure of broadly similar proportions, an existing structure which itself incorporated earlier reused fabric in the form of the worked limestone blocks. The substantial partitions, originally with a low ceiling above, would have created three small, low-ceilinged compartments, each well-lit and ventilated and each with its own entrance. Although there is some limited evidence of smoke blackening, the nature of the partition walls and the evidence for a low ceiling rule out the possibility that the building was used as a fish house after the 1676 rebuild. It appears most likely that it was a salt house, or salt store, a building type which began to appear in Lowestoft from the 1650s. Imported salt was a key ingredient in the production of red herring and was required in large quantities. Imported from the Bay of Biscay, it would have been expensive and a valuable commodity to fish merchants like the Wilde family. The salt would have needed to have been stored in a secure and well ventilated building prior to its use in the roaring houses. The Old Fish House, with its three hopper-like compartments and mullioned ventilators, fits that description. It is also no coincidence that in its construction and arrangement, the Old Fish House rebuilt by John and Margaret Wilde, so closely matches the salt house built by John's uncle Josiah at 329 Whapload Road in the years after the fire. The likely arrangement of a salt store on the ground floor, with an open net store and net or rope loft above, also seems to have been common among the fishing buildings of Lowestoft, such as at one Whapload Road fish merchant's premises which in 1908 included, 'two salt stores with two net stores above'.<sup>195</sup>

## Significance

The Fish House to the rear of 312-14 Whapload Road is one of the most significant surviving structures associated with the historic Lowestoft herring fishery. Though blast damage sustained during the Second World War and its subsequent repair has led to the loss of the roof structure and internal arrangements at first floor level, the function of the building as it was constructed, or reconstructed, in 1676 can be determined from the surviving ground floor divisions and from the documentary record. Despite its name, the building appears never to have been a 'Fish House' (common parlance for a smoke house); rather the proportions, ground floor divisions and open ventilators mark it as a salt house, or salt store. It is significant therefore not only as an early example of a specific building type which newspaper records show was incredibly numerous by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but also as the physical response to the regional events of the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century which had such a transformative effect on the Lowestoft herring fishery, namely the fire of 1645, the settlement of the long-running dispute with Great Yarmouth over fishing rights in 1663 and the granting of a license to import salt and fishing goods independently of Great Yarmouth in 1679. It is also of note that the likely owner of the Old Fish House at the time of its reconstruction can be identified. John Wilde, who is commemorated along with his wife Margaret on a date stone on the western elevation, was the son of James Wilde and grandson of John Wilde. The Wilde's were the major fishing dynasty in early modern Lowestoft, with both John Snr and James playing significant roles on behalf of the town in the dispute with Great Yarmouth. That the rebuilt Fish House formed part of a concerted campaign to rebuild the Wilde family fishing premises which were lost in 1645 is significant and provides physical evidence of the first phase of development in the Lowestoft herring fishery which would ultimately lead to such prosperity in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The strong likelihood that elements of the Fish House predate the 1645 fire and that they may represent a former Wilde family dwelling constructed of reused stone from a prominent local building, only adds to the importance of this building.

## 315 Whapload Road

315 Whapload Road is comprised of three distinct elements. Two parallel ranges of markedly different character, each presenting a narrow gable end to Whapload Road, have been truncated and combined to form part of a single industrial premises by the construction in 1966 of a large, brick light engineering workshop to the west (Figure 36). The workshop is slightly misaligned with the earlier structures to which it is now joined and its construction has resulted in considerable alteration to the former fishing buildings which once comprised 315 Whapload Road. The following description will focus on the surviving elements of the historic Fish Office, though the northern range was in a very poor state of repair at the time of survey and not completely accessible, while the southern range was not accessible at all and only a brief external description is presented below.



**Figure 36:** The twin historic ranges of 315 (north to the right), both former fishing buildings now heavily altered and linked by an engineering workshop built in 1966. In 2019 the combined premises are in use as a car repair garage. © Historic England, Patricia Payne, DP247738

## History and Ownership

315 Whapload Road is located behind and below the vacant High Street plots which were formerly occupied by numbers 6 to 9. Harder to reconstruct historically due to plot subdivision than the properties directly aligned with the medieval burgage plots east of numbers 1 to 4 High Street, some comment can however be made about the early ownership based on the accounts of 17<sup>th</sup> century copyhold compiled by the Reverend John Tanner. Tanner's list of copyhold ownership compiled in the 1720s includes one property, located between 4 High Street to the north and the Rising property - the supposed site of the Old Fish House (see above) – to the south. This property - in the ownership of the mercantile Mighells family in the 1720s – comprised 'a tenement with yard....abutting on to the High Street to the west and Whapload Way to the east'.<sup>196</sup> The property passed to the Mighells family in 1670 following surrender by Robert Smith the former owner.<sup>197</sup> Robert Smith is listed amongst those who suffered losses during the 1645 fire, losing £330 in damages to his fish houses and associated goods.<sup>198</sup> It is possible, given its position within Tanner's topographically organised list and its description as a long property extending from the High Street to Whapload Road and its ownership at the time of the fire by a merchant listed as suffering losses to his fish houses, that this property is the property which became 315 Whapload Road, though this is a tentative interpretation. If this property was number 315, the fish houses depicted on the site by Richard Powles in 1786, were likely constructed by the Mighells family, who held the property throughout the period between 1670 and the 1720s (Figure 37).<sup>199</sup>





**Figure 37:** Richard Powles' depiction of 315 Whapload Road (centre) in 1796, showing a long range aligned east to west, with a steeply pitched eastern gable end, a stepped roofline and adjoining lateral ranges extending to the south. © SA [L] 193/2/1

Powles' depiction of 315 Whapload Road in 1786 shows that at that time, number 315 did not have its distinctive arrangement of two separate parallel ranges, each with a gable end facing Whapload Road. The Powles depiction does show the northern of the two ranges as a narrow structure with a steeply pitched roof which corresponds with the proportions of the range which survives in 2019, confirming it was built no later than the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, though the pitch of the roof would suggest a 17<sup>th</sup>-century date (see below). The lateral range extending southwards from the northern part of 315 is not depicted on the 1842 Tithe map and was presumably demolished shortly after Powles' composition was produced. At the time of the tithe award, 315 Whapload Road was described as a 'Fish House and Yard' and was occupied by John Holt.<sup>200</sup> The accompanying map depicts the plan form consisting of two parallel east to west ranges defining a yard behind with an ancillary structure in the south-west corner of the plot adjoining the Old Fish House to the south.<sup>201</sup>

An advert published in the *Lowestoft Journal* of April 12 1884, may be describing the Fish Office and yard which now comprises 315 Whapload Road. The advert read:

Net chamber with store, brick built with tiled roof, now in the occupation of Mr John Capps....Net chamber with store, stable and curing house for four lasts of Herrings, brick and stone built with tiled roof to the occupation of Mr George Jenner.....A nearly new net chamber built of weather boarding with a slated roof, with store under in the occupation of Mr F Hall.<sup>202</sup>

The fishing premises of J.W. Capps are listed in Huke's 1892 Directory immediately to the north of Lancaster Place, confirming the advert of 1884 relates to 315 Whapload Road. The contemporary Ordnance Survey Map published in 1884, also shows that the fishing premises had expanded since the 1842 map and that the various ranges described in the advertisement could have been accommodated within the buildings as they existed at the time. In 1915, 315 Whapload Road was assessed as part of the Inland Revenue Valuation Survey and recoded thusly:

Brick and tile net chamber, 2 floors. Brick and tile fish office. Kippering house, 1 floor. Brick and tile net chamber, 2 flats. 3 tanning vats. Covered store open front. 2 tanning coppers. Sail

store, brick and tile, part wood (two floors). At rear of buildings, small kitchen garden. All the buildings are old and in poor repair.<sup>203</sup>

The increase in the size of the fishing premises between 1842 and 1894 is reflecting in the extensive number of buildings and range of functions being performed. At the outbreak of the First World War, number 315 was clearly a multi-function Fish Office with buildings given over to sail and net storage, net tanning and seemingly both the traditional smoking of red herring in a fish house and the production of kippers in a discreet kippering house. Given that there was no tradition for the later in Lowestoft before the 1860s, the kippering house may well have been the curing house mentioned in the advertisement of 1894. The sail store is more easily identified due to its part-timber construction which identifies it as the surviving northern range of 315 (see below). The covered store with the open front ran along the northern boundary to the site and is clearly shown on the Ordnance Survey mapping. It was likely similar in form to those at Shoals Yard and to the east of the Old Fish House.

Following the end of herring fishing out of Lowestoft in 1966, number 315 was swiftly and dramatically altered. The two main east to west ranges were heavily truncated leaving just c.9m of each *in situ*. All of the remaining buildings were demolished and replaced by a large, brick workshop built by Shenton's Light Engineering. The new workshop was not exactly aligned with the surviving remnants of the fishing buildings and is orientated closer to WSW to ENE. The construction of the workshop also saw the raising of the floor surface within both the workshop and the surviving northern range of 315. The engineering works were converted for use as a car repair garage in the 1980s and number 315 remains in use as such in 2019, with the property one of a number of Whapload Road buildings owned by Waveney Fork Trucks.

## Description

In 2019 315 Whapload Road is comprised of three distinct elements, each reflecting a different phase of the evolution of the site, and which will be referred to as the north range, the south range and the 20<sup>th</sup> century workshop. The north range is of the greatest antiquity and was clearly depicted by Powles in 1786, though the steep pitch of its roof indicative of a 17<sup>th</sup> century date. Approximately 9m by 5m and roughly rectangular in plan, the external elevations have been covered in concrete render (white washed to the south and east façades) and the roof replaced with corrugated asbestos sheeting punctuated by an unglazed timber skylight. At the western end of the northern elevation, there is a clear straight division where the concrete render ends, leaving a c.0.5m wide strip of exposed brick and cobblestone coursing comparable with that which survives in 329 Whapload Road and the Old Fish House. The eastern gable end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century workshop truncates the brick and cobble stone coursing at a seemingly arbitrary point, however the straight joint with the concrete rendered north range appears to reflect a physical division between two adjoining structures, a conclusion supported by the 1884 Ordnance Survey map. The northern elevation presents a single storey façade, the result of the raising of the yard surface to the north, and had a single doorway which has since been blocked. The posts and wallplate of a timber-framed structure are visible through the cracked and damaged concrete render (Figure 38).



**Figure 38:** Part of the northern elevation of the northern range of 315 Whapload Road showing the joints between the different phases of fabric and the cracked render revealing a timber frame. © Historic England, Patricia Payne, DP247731

The eastern gable wall to Whapload Road has also been heavily altered. Beneath the whitewashed render there is evidence of two blocked openings, suggestive of a two-storey internal arrangement, while the steeply pitched roof is asymmetrical at the eaves. The southern elevation reveals a complete block work rebuild of this wall further to the north than it originally stood, resulting in the truncation of the roofline and asymmetric appearance of the gable end. This relocating of the southern wall of the north range was clearly to create a wider space between the two ranges to allow vehicular access to the workshop beyond. This space between the two ranges slopes upwards towards large timber doors in the eastern elevation of the workshop.

The interior of the north range is separated from the open space of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century workshop by a LBC brick gable of the later building supported on an RSJ frame which allows vehicular access to interior of the north range. Due to the building's poor state of repair and several stored vehicles, detailed inspection of the north range's interior was not possible, however it was clear that this part of the structure was, as the exterior suggested, originally timber-framed. The interior wall of the northern elevation, although partially obscured by later boarding, evidenced a simple timber frame structure with a sill beam carrying jowled principal posts which supported a wallplate and lateral joists, the latter with simple chamfers without stops. At the northern end of this elevation, the absence of boarding revealed a pegged door frame with simple up-braces springing from the northernmost jowled post, though only the brace to the southern elevation appeared to be part of the original structure (Figure 39).



**Figure 39:** The interior of the southern elevation of the north range showing the simple jowled posts, wall plate and doorway. © Historic England, Matthew Bristow

The floor surface of the northern range has been raised to match that of the workshop it adjoins, with the exception of the easternmost part of the building which retains its original floor surface, c.1m lower than the present floor level, giving a sense of the building's original proportions. An inaccessible attic storey carried on the chamfered joists, appears to have been part of the original internal arrangement, although no more than a cursory inspection was possible. However, sections of the eastern gable end which were not obscured by later render were visible through gaps in the attic storey, revealing historic coursing comprised of red bricks and trios of washed cobbles or beach stone. The presence of this fabric and that adjoining the western end of the timber-framed structure, in conjunction with the jowled posts, would appear to date this structure to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century and mark it as broadly contemporary with the Old Fish House and the salt house at the western end of 329 Whapload Road. The roof structure has been repaired and largely replaced using a variety of reused and mismatched timbers, while (as observed above) the entire southern wall has been demolished and replaced with modern block work.

The southern range of 315 Whapload Road has similarly been incorporated into the engineering building and forms part of the of the car garage, though unlike the northern range it was completely inaccessible at the time of survey. Arranged over two storeys, the walls are heavily rendered and white washed, masking the fabric beneath, though the assumption must be that they are of brick construction. The welsh slate roof is of the gambrel type, characteristic of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, though the building does not appear on Powles depiction of 1786 and is almost certainly of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The southern range has been heavily altered, resulting in an asymmetrical eastern gable, with the southern side splaying out at a shallower angle to adjoin the former cottages of Lancaster Place. Buildings of comparable proportions and form are known to have existed on Whapload Road and in the Beach Village and in most cases, the buildings were weather-boarded with slate roofs. Known locally as 'shods', they were primarily used for the storage of fishing gear and tackle as distinct from the storage of nets (Figure 40). The southern range of 315 Whapload Road, appears to be depicted on the tithe map of 1842, though it must have been very recently completed. It is unlikely that this range was the 'nearly new net chamber built of weatherboarding with a slated roof' detailed in the *Lowestoft Journal* advert of 1895, though it may well have been built, or have been in use as, a net store. Examples survive in North America of gambrel roofed smoke houses, which may identify the southern range as the 'kippering house' noted by the Inland Revenue valuer, though this seems less likely. With no internal inspection possible and original features likely removed by the 1966 conversion, no firm conclusions can be reached as to the exact function of the southern range.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century engineering workshop which extends for 51m WSW of the twin historic ranges of 315 Whapload Road, is a large, rectangular brick built structure constructed around a steel frame (Figure 41). The long elevations are unlit, with light provided by two rows of skylights which punctate a corrugated metal roof. A row of small openings towards the western end of the northern elevation, sit awkwardly in relation to the yard surface, suggesting that the raising of the yard surface was not coeval with the construction of the workshop. Comparison between the alignment of the workshop and the historic Ordnance Survey mapping confirms

that the workshop is not directly aligned with the twin ranges it adjoins. However the 1884 1:500 scale map suggests that this change in alignment may be historic as the northern range of 315 Whapload Road also changed alignment from broadly east to west to ENE to WSW, before once again straightening to define the northern boundary of the property.



**Figure 40:** The gambrel roofed storage building which formed part of Goulby's fishing premises in the 1950s. Newspaper content courtesy of the Lowestoft Journal and Archant Library



**Figure 41:** 315 Whapload Road from the north-west. The much altered timber-framed north range is visible (centre) and the large workshop of 1966 adjoining to the west (right). © Historic England, Patricia Payne, DP247736

## 317-321 Whapload Road

317-321 Whapload Road, formerly Lancaster Place, comprises a single structure fronting Whapload Road which adjoins the main range of 312-14 Whapload Road to the south and the southern range of 315 Whapload Road to the north. It is now associated with the latter, though originally comprised a short terrace of three separate dwellings. No internal access was possible during the survey, nor was access the rear of the building available and the following description is restricted to a short history of the property and description of the plan and principal elevation.

### History and Ownership

The terrace of three cottages known as Lancaster Place makes its first appearance in the documentary record on W Oldham Charles' 1878 map of Lowestoft and Kirkley (Figure 42). In 1842, the site was occupied by a garden and fish house, the latter possibly extant at the time of Richard Powles depiction of Lowestoft giving a likely date of the 1850s or 1860s for the cottages' construction.

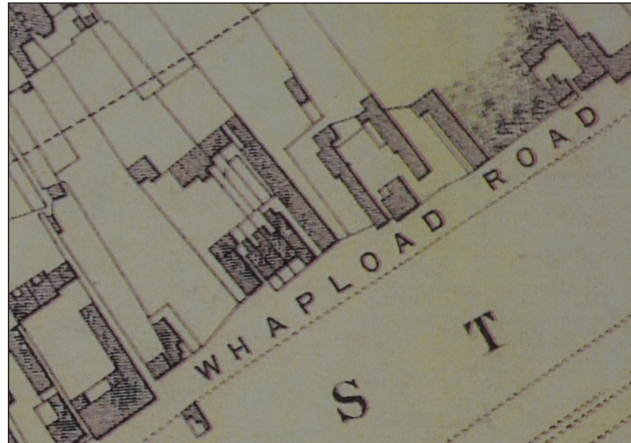


Figure 42: The Lancaster Place cottages as depicted on W. Oldham Charles' 1878 map of Lowestoft. © SA (L) 1067

There is no known documentary evidence that identifies the builder or owner of the cottages at the time of their construction, though the occupations of the tenants listed in Huke's directory of 1892, namely a railway carriage examiner and a boat owner, suggest that they were built for more affluent members of the industrial working class.<sup>204</sup> It has been reported locally that the cottages once bore a date stone which read W F 1864, giving a date for their construction and suggesting that William Francis, a rope and twine maker, was the builder.<sup>205</sup> By 1914, when they were recorded for the Inland Revenue Valuation Survey, the cottages were owned by W J Williams, the owner of the fishing premises behind the cottages which comprised 311, 312-14 Whapload Road and the Old Fish House. The valuation survey reveals that each cottage had three bedrooms, two sitting rooms, and an outhouse to the rear, with the northernmost cottage (321) benefitting from an additional hall and larger rooms. The entry in the survey for 312-14 Whapload Road also reveals that the tenants of Lancaster Place were afforded access through the adjacent net store as part of their tenancy.<sup>206</sup>

Following the end of the Lowestoft herring fishery in the 1960s, the associated buildings of Whapload Road were, for the most part, converted to commercial and light industrial use. In 1966 the former cottages became part of Shenton's Light Engineering Works in 1966 (latterly a motor garage), at adjacent 315 Whapload Road and in 1985, a successful planning application was made to construct a light engineering building to the north of the cottages between them and the north to

south range of the 312-14 Whapload Road. This resulted in the demolition of the outhouses which had been redundant since Lancaster Place ceased to have residents in the 1960s.<sup>207</sup> At that time, Lancaster Place was owned by Nigel Evans who let the then industrial units to local companies under the moniker of the Lancaster Place Enterprise Community.<sup>208</sup> Ironically, the former cottages of Lancaster Place do not form part of the Lancaster Place redevelopment and in 2019, they remain vacant and inaccessible.

## Description

The three cottages which comprise Lancaster Place, were heavily altered in 1966 when they became part of the Shenton Light Engineering Works at the adjoining 315 Whapload Road. Internally they were gutted and the Whapload Road façade heavily altered, removing the likely ground floor arrangement of a door and single window to each cottage, although the three equally spaced casement windows of the first floor retain the sense of the three dwellings which were once there (Figure 43). The 1914 Inland Revenue valuer's account describes the cottages as being of brick with tile roofs. This too has been changed and in 2019, the former cottages are rendered and whitewashed with a corrugated asbestos cement roof replacing the pantile roof recorded a century earlier. Hugh Lees' account published in the annual report of the Lowestoft Archaeological and Local History Society shortly after the cottages were converted to form part of the neighbouring engineering works, recalls that the northernmost cottage (number 321) once had the date stone detailed above. That 321 is also documented as having slightly bigger rooms and an additional hall, possibly indicates that 321 was the residence which William Francis built for himself.



Figure 43: 317-21 Whapload Road, formerly a row of three terraced cottages called Lancaster Place and probably built in 1864. © Historic England, Patricia Payne, DP247737



## 325 Whapload Road

In 2019, very little remains of the once extensive fishing premises which formed the property now numbered as 325 Whapload Road. Another Fish Office which predates the depiction of Whapload by Powles in 1786, number 325 was heavily altered between 1893 and 1926 when an aerial photograph recorded a substantial rebuild of the eastern part of the building and a significant raising of the roofline. All but this eastern section of the building was demolished after 1972, with the remaining structure becoming a vehicle repair garage. At the time of survey the building was inaccessible and only a brief description of the exterior will be provided below.

### History and Ownership

325 Whapload Road lies within the medieval burgage plot which extended eastwards down the cliff from the rear of 4 High Street; Arnold House. In the 1720s when the Reverend John Tanner conducted his survey, 4 High Street – which then comprised two tenements on the east side of the High Street and an upper, middle and lower yard which extended as far as a brick wall to the Denes – was owned by John and Susanna Arnold. A century earlier in 1618, the manor roll recorded that this property was owned by Robert Brissingham.<sup>209</sup> Brissingham died in 1623 and the property passed to his daughter Margaret and in turn to her son Robert upon her death in 1642. The property must have contained a number of fish houses as Robert is named amongst those who suffered losses in the fire of 1645, with his fish houses sustaining damage amounting to a modest £94 and John Brissingham (presumably a relation), losing £10 in goods.<sup>210</sup> Robert Brissingham retained 4 High Street until 1662 and he, like his neighbour Josiah Wilde, may have acted quickly to rebuild his lost fish house. The property briefly became part of the Wilde family's fishing empire in 1662 when the property came into the hands of James Wilde, however he only held it for a matter of days before it passed to the Coe's and by marriage on to the Arnolds. While Robert Brissingham was possibly the builder of the fishing premises, the remains of which survive today as 325 Whapload Road, the 1884 1:500 Ordnance Survey map reveals that 325 occupies a different alignment to numbers 333, 329, and 315, being aligned as it is, closer to true cardinal east-west than the other buildings. This may suggest that this building is not contemporary with those built by the Wildes and that it was built by the influential Arnold family. What is clear is that by 1786, when number 325 was depicted by Powles, it was an extensive building which extended from Whapload Road to the foot of the cliff. The angle of Powles' composition means that 325 Whapload Road is the most clearly depicted of any of the fish houses (Figure 44).



Figure 44: 325 Whapload Road as depicted by Richard Powles in 1786. © SA [L] 193/2/1

Powles' representation of 325 Whapload Road suggests, in common with numbers 315, 329 and 333, that number 325 was comprised of a series of adjoining but separate structures, with the three parts which extended westwards from Whapload Road, sharing a single roof and the westernmost structure having a significantly higher roof creating the distinctive step up in the roofline. A century later, the 1884 1:500 Ordnance Survey map appears to confirm that Powles' depiction was accurate, showing as it does four separate, adjoining structures with variations in their widths and alignments. While the Powles depiction gives little clues as to how number 325 was being used during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, it is clear that a different process was being undertaken in the western part of the building. The increased height and absence of windows would appear to mark it out as a smoke house, while the remaining ranges likely provided space for storage or nets, roasting of the fish and storage of salt. A large taking in door and an attic window on the eastern gable would also appear to confirm first floor net repair and storage in the eastern half of the building. Powles' inclusion of a wall defining the eastern extent of the yard obscures the ground floor of number 325, though it is almost certain that each of the structures had its own ground floor entrance on the southern, yard side elevation.

Recorded in 1842 as part of the computation of tithes, 325 Whapload Road remained in the ownership of the Arnold family, with the Reverend Richard Aldous Arnold of Ellough parish owning both 325 and 329 Whapload Road and letting them out.<sup>211</sup> The structure would have remained broadly similar to that depicted by Powles throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. A photograph taken from the Denes looking across the net drying racks in c.1893 shows 325 Whapload Road with the characteristic steeply pitched eastern gable end and no obvious alterations to the roofline (Figure 45).



**Figure 45:** The Whapload Road fishing buildings from the North Denes in c.1893. Number 325 is shown prior to significant alterations which raised the roofline of the eastern part of the building. To the south, the twin ranges of number 315 are shown prior to the alterations wrought in 1966, while the building in the right of the composition is the ropery of Gowings ropeworks. © SA [L] 1300/72/15/17

Recorded as part of the 1910/11 Inland Revenue Valuation Survey, 325 Whapload Road appears to have remained largely unaltered prior to the First World War. Owned and occupied by Henry James Mewse – a boat owner likely descended from the Mewse family of merchants who lost goods in the fire of 1645 – number 325 is described as:

Brick and tile two storey net chamber. Brick and wood lean-to, paved and drained, net store over same. Yard, tanning copper – 2 vats. Part of the net store goes over adjoining old property, property to north on first floor.<sup>212</sup>

The valuer's description demonstrates that by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, 325 Whapload Road was used solely for the preparation and storage of nets and that no fish preparation or smoking was taking place in any of the structures which comprised it. It is also interesting to note the description of the north to south range which joined it to 329 Whapload Road clearly suggests that this range joined number 329 at first floor level, above an older property. This presumably references the western salt store (see below).

The description does not imply that the building had been substantially altered physically, however alterations had certainly been made by 1926 when the Whapload Road buildings were photographed from the air by Aerofilms Ltd. This image (see Figure 3), shows that the eastern part of the structure had been heavily altered, with several metres of new brickwork added above the previous roofline and the roof itself replaced by a roof with a far shallower pitch. It is likely that the majority of the windows in the southern elevation also date from this period.

In common with the other former fishing buildings of Whapload Road, 1966 marked the end of the use of number 325 for fishing related activities. The building as photographed in 1926 was depicted on the 1972 Ordnance Survey map, but shortly thereafter all but the heavily altered eastern range were demolished. The increased height of the eastern range ultimately prevented its demolition, as it allowed the structure to be repurposed for the repair of trucks and large vehicles. Following the conversion for the repair of large vehicles, number 325 was altered to form a large, open structure, its western gable opened up beneath an RSJ lintel to form a wide point of access. Shortly after, a corrugated asbestos cement garage was added to the western gable which remains extant in 2019 (Figure 46).

In 2000, the gates and outer wall which survive to the south of number 325 were added by then owners, LEC Marine who let the property as the 'Beach Garage'.<sup>213</sup> However, by 2008, the building was little used and a successful planning application was made to demolish number 325, replace it with 14 apartments and two houses, and to convert 329 Whapload Road into four dwellings. Despite the granting of this permission, no progress has been made on the development.<sup>214</sup>



**Figure 46:** The remains of 325 Whapload Road including the later garage, looking across the yard from the south west itowards number 329 in 2019. © Historic England, Patricia Payne, DP247733

## Description

In 2019, only about 15m of the eastern section of number 325 survive, and in such a heavily altered state as to prevent any interpretation of its historic use. The western gable end has been remade in 20<sup>th</sup>-century brick and the eastern gable has been rendered, largely obscuring the alterations to the fabric, though there is a hint that that the brickwork of the ground floor is of a different character and date to that above. The first floor of the southern elevation is punctuated by four simple window openings of early 20<sup>th</sup> century character and the whole elevation has been whitewashed, obscuring the character of the brickwork, though some or all of this elevation must have been rebuilt in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The northern elevation, which faces 329 across a small yard area, provides the clearest indication of the substantial changes made to the structure in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The lower half of the building is formed of regular courses of red clay bricks laid in English bond and rendered in a preservative coating of tar. It is interesting to note that this surviving section of historic coursing is entirely absent of the washed cobbles and flint which characterise the other fishing buildings constructed after the fire of 1645. This would seemingly support the conclusions that 325 was both built at a later date than 315, 329 and 333 Whapload Road, and that it had no connection with the Wilde family, whose post-fire buildings present a structural homogeneity. Above the top of the last course of red bricks (likely the original height of the eaves), 29 courses of stock bricks laid in Flemish bond carry a shallow pitched roof of clay pan tiles and attest to the

raising of the roof height. Two openings punched through the earlier ground floor coursing recall the two phases of alteration in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The opening to the west is of early 20<sup>th</sup> century character and has subsequently been in-filled with LBC bricks, while the opening to the east sits beneath a metal lintel and is accessed via a sliding door, part of the building's arrangement as a vehicle repair garage. No internal inspection of the building was possible, however it should be noted that no evidence of original fixtures and fittings could be observed through the ground floor sliding door and that a vehicle inspection bay had been inserted into the floor surface, presumably during the 1980s.

## 329 Whapload Road

In common with the all of the buildings on Whapload Road, the numbering of the extant structures is problematic and inconsistent, due to numbers not being adopted for postal purposes until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and not consistently applied thereafter. 329 has generally been the number applied to the large three-storey former fishing building which extends for c.40m east to west from the Whapload Road frontage and which forms the major part of this description. Also included are a smaller former fishing building, aligned east to west and located c.3 m south of the main range, and a large prefabricated concrete garage on the same alignment further to the west. The large warehouse at the western extent of the site which was constructed in the 1960s and extended in 1975, and the adjacent brick-built offices added in 1983, are separately numbered as 327 Whapload Road and are not described in this report.<sup>215</sup> For the purposes of this report, the long range will be referred to as 329 Whapload Road, with the smaller buildings described separately as ancillary buildings.

## History and Ownership

329 Whapload Road occupies a site which originally formed the eastern extension of the medieval burgage plots behind 2 High Street. In width, the extant building is a little over one perch (5.02m) wide and it is likely, given that medieval burgage plots were laid out in multiples of perches that the current footprint of the building corresponds to the boundaries of the medieval burgage plot in which it sat. The Reverend John Tanner's list of Lowestoft copyhold property owners, compiled between 1720 and 1726, records that for much of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, 2 High Street was owned by the influential Wilde family and that within the boundaries of the property was a malt house and fish house, though under different ownership.<sup>216</sup> In 1635, Josiah Wilde and his wife Elizabeth acquired the fish house and in 1637 the malt house, reuniting them with the High Street property in January 1645 upon the death of Josiah's father, John.<sup>217</sup> Later that year, on the 10<sup>th</sup> March the great fire swept through the town causing losses to his fish house and malt house amounting to £400 and a further £218 in lost goods.<sup>218</sup> It has been assumed that the effects of the fire, combined with the on-going dispute with Great Yarmouth over fishing rights, meant that the Lowestoft fish houses lost during the fire were not rebuilt immediately. However, an inventory taken at the time of Josiah's death in 1656 suggests he was quicker to undertake rebuilding of his fishing buildings. His inventory records a 'Salthouse: 7 vats, 6,000 speets, 72 swills (small baskets for washing fish) and 1

weigh (ton) of salt', in addition to a warehouse, yard and mathouse.<sup>219</sup> The western end of 329 Whapload Road as extant in 2019 comprises a roughly square room formed of thinner walls and separated from the rest of the building by a solid brick and stone wall that extends from the ground to the apex of the roof, and which was clearly once an external wall (see below). This section appears to have originally been a standalone structure onto which the rest of the building was added and it is highly likely that it is the salt store recorded in Josiah's inventory. The courses of alternating brick headers and triples of washed cobbles or beach stones, match identically the fabric of the Old Fish House behind 312-314 Whapload Road, also believed to have been built as a salt store and also associated with the Wilde family (see above). A date stone of 1676 with the initials J M W on the western elevation of the Old Fish House' dates this fabric to 1670s and associates it with the Wilde family. However, the conclusion that the small salt store at the western end of the present building also dates from the 1670s may be false and it may in fact date from the late 1640s or early 1650s as implied by Josiah's inventory. It is of course possible that the salt store is earlier still and predated the fire, but this is less likely.

Josiah's wife Elizabeth died in 1658 and the property passed to their son Thomas Wilde who surrendered number 329 in 1663 to a Thomas Wilde of Yarmouth. Thereafter, 2 High Street and the associated fishing buildings changed hands regularly, moving between the Wildes of Yarmouth, the Wildes of Lowestoft and the Mighells family before 1719 when Mary Hayward was bequeathed the property in her husband's will.<sup>220</sup> It is unclear when the main range of 329 was added to the salt store, though it was clearly before Richard Powles' depictions of Whapload Road in 1786 (Figure 47). It is likely that the main range was not added before the end of the dispute with Yarmouth in 1663 or the granting of port status in 1679 and that the additions to the building date from the late 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> century, and may be the work of John Hayward who owned 329 from 1693 till his death in 1719.<sup>221</sup>

At the time of the Lowestoft tithe award in 1842, the fishing premises west of Whapload Road had again become separated from the High Street property above, with number 329 located within the former burgage plot of 2 High Street and the smaller fishing building within the burgage plot of 3 High Street, detailed in the tithe apportionment as the same property. Described as a 'Fish Office', the property was occupied by John Gall and owned by the Reverend Richard Aldous Arnold, rector of nearby Ellough parish.<sup>222</sup> At around the time that 329 Whapload



**Figure 47:** 329 (centre) and 333 (right) Whapload Road as depicted by Richard Powles in 1786, showing the buildings extending westwards from Whapload Road to the base of the cliff © SA [L] 193/2/1

Road was recorded in the tithe apportionment, the structure itself was added to in the form of a timber gallery along the western half of the southern elevation and in the form of adjoining north to south ranges at the western end of the building. These ranges joined number 329 with number 325 to the south and number 333 to the north creating enclosed yards. The range joining 329 with 325 Whapload Road adjoined the old salt store, blocking off its external entrance and likely resulting in internal first-floor alterations to connect it with the rest of the building. By 1892, and recorded in Huke's Directory of Lowestoft, 329 Whapload Road was in the possession of Thomas Richards, a fish salesman – a middle-man who sold the fish to merchants at auction on behalf of the fishermen – who also owned two sail drifters and was using number 329 as a store, presumably indicating that internal changes had been made to the building and that fish smoking was no longer taking place within it. It is possible that Richards was responsible for some of the internal alterations to the building and the reusing of ships timbers to support a raising of the roof. Further detail is provided by the entry in the field books of the 1910/11 Inland Revenue Valuation Survey. Listed as being owned by the executors of Thomas Richards, who had died in 1895, number 329 was occupied by James Pye Fothers and was described as 'A brick and tile 2 storey net store'.<sup>223</sup> Additionally there was a net tanning copper and two vats which presumably referred to a large tanning tank which fronted Whapload Road to the south of main range.

329 Whapload Road remained in use for the storage and preparation of nets throughout the golden years of the Edwardian herring fishing industry, the inter-war period when the fishery struggled to regain its former prominence and in its final years after the Second World War, until the home herring fishing voyages ceased altogether in the mid-1960s. Following the end of herring fishing at Lowestoft, number 329 was put to use for storing items for east coast holiday makers to hire. In the early 1970s, the building was owned by the Coastal Cycle Company, who hired out bicycles and prams. In October 1975, planning permission was granted to erect a prefabricated storage building of the 'Kenkast' type adjacent to the main range of 329, a structure which remains extant in 2019.<sup>224</sup> Shortly afterwards, 329 Whapload Road was acquired by Fenland TV Hire Services of Skegness, who in 1978, converted the smaller building to the south into a caretakers flat, workshop and reception area and who continued to run their business from number 329 until the late 1980s.<sup>225</sup> By 1990, 329 Whapload Road was being operated as 'Seaside Hire Services', presumably catering primarily to the holiday makers staying in the caravan park at the north end of the Denes. The building went out of use in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and in 2008, a successful planning application was made to redevelop the site, along with 325 Whapload Road for residential use.<sup>226</sup> No progress was made on the development and in 2019, the building is owned by Waveney Fork Trucks and is vacant.

## Materials

329 Whapload Road is a mass-walled structure constructed, for the most part, of courses of washed cobbles or beach stone, and local red bricks, rendered in a preservative coating of tar. The building is roofed with unglazed clay pantiles with characteristic interlocking S profiles and the roof is carried on simple softwood

trusses and rafters. The windows are similarly for the most part softwood, although some of the earlier diamond mullioned ventilators are constructed of oak. Internally, the ground floor has a stone sett surface while brick subdivisions have been inserted and former openings filled in with breeze blocks. Alterations to the internal plan through the addition of new levels brought about by changes in function have resulted in the insertion of softwood joists, floor boards, stairs and wall panelling. The surviving fish hanging racks, or loves used in the smoking of herring are also of softwood. Of particular interest are the *ex-situ* braces in the second floor loft which appear to be reused ships' timbers (see Figure 60).

## Plan

329 Whapload Road is a broadly rectangular building aligned west to east and occupying a footprint 40.7m (134ft) long by 5.7m (18.7ft) wide. The exceptions to the rectangular plan being the eastern façade of the building which is not perpendicular to the long elevations, rather, obliquely tracking the line of Whapload Road, and a slight difference in the widths of the eastern and western halves of the building, creating a step of c.0.3m (1ft) at roughly the mid-point of the southern elevation. As extant in 2019, the building is arranged over three storeys and clearly subdivided into a number of separate internal spaces (Figure 48).

On the ground floor, the building is comprised of three main parts. The eastern section which extends westwards for 17m (55ft) from the gable end fronting onto Whapload Road and which includes a small western compartment created by the later insertion of a staircase; a central section, also 17m (55ft) in length, but subdivided into three broadly equal, square chambers formerly linked by openings in the brick partitions; and a roughly square western section, 4.5m by 5.1m and separated from the central section by a wall of different fabric than the other partitions. The staircase, accessed from the courtyard to the south and positioned at the western end of the eastern part of the building, gives access to the first floor, a broadly continuous open space which extends the length of the building. Partitions, which in the central part of the building match the position of the ground floor brick partitions, below have also been used to create a first-floor stair lobby and an eastern vestibule, likely a later office area. The division between the western and central sections at first-floor level is, as at ground-floor level, a solid wall of brick and beach stone, through which a doorway has been punched to connect the western section with the rest of the first floor. The eastern section of the first floor plan, into which has been inserted a toilet cubicle, also houses a softwood stair ladder which gives access via a trapdoor to the second floor loft above. The loft area extends for the eastern gable to partition which aligns with the division between the eastern and central sections at ground-floor level. Beyond this western division, joists and partial floor surfaces have been inserted above the first floor rooms of the central section. These floors are c.0.75m lower than the floor surface of the eastern loft section indicating that the second-floor loft did not formerly extend as a single space along the length of the building. The truncation, but retention of the timber smoking 'loves' in the compartments of the second floor west of the loft and the lack of skylights in this section of the roof, suggests that this area was likely only used for storage.



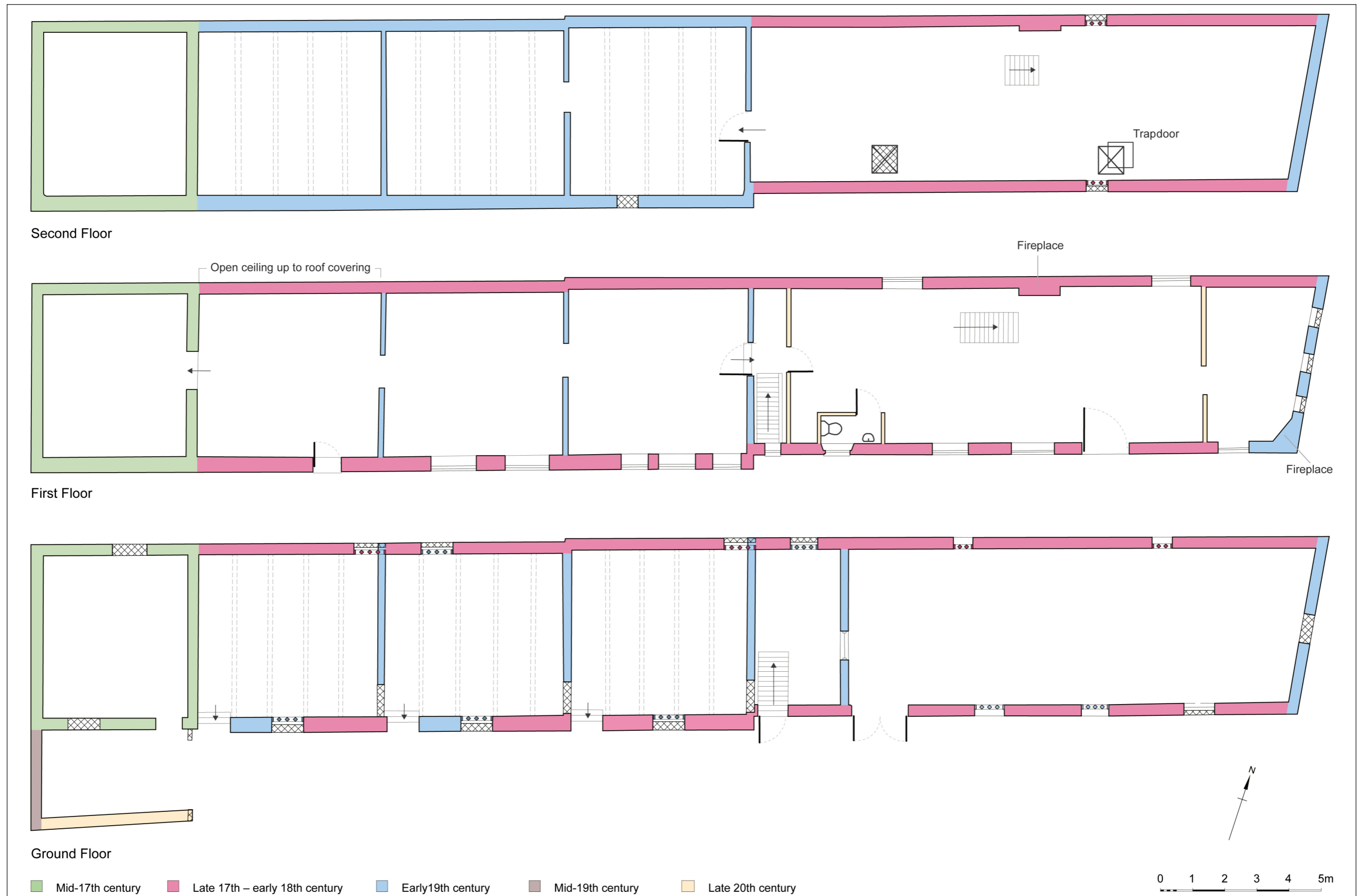


Figure 48: Plan of 329 Whapload Road showing the extant arrangement of the internal rooms within the three storey layout. © Historic England, illustration Sharon Soutar

## Exterior

In common with the other extant and documented Fish Offices on Whapload Road, number 329 was served by an adjacent courtyard with the long southern, principal elevation looking onto the courtyard and the northern elevation marking the boundary of the plot. The southern elevation is comprised of three clear sections; the western salt store (an earlier free-standing structure) and the main long range which is divided in two at its mid-point and demarked by a slight step in the footprint and a change in the roof height which increases from east to west (Figure 49). The nature of the wall construction is apparent from the exterior as for the most part the building has been painted in a preservative coat of tar to protect it from the corrosive effects of the sea air. It is likely that the tar, the principal by-product in the manufacture of town gas, came from the Lowestoft gasworks which were located to the south-east of Whapload Road. Beneath the coating of tar, it is clear that the eastern half of the main range is constructed of irregular courses of red brick and beach stone cobbles which extend to the eaves of the pantile roof, suggesting that the proportions of the eastern half of the building are broadly as originally constructed. By contrast, the western half of the main range has clearly been more significantly altered or repaired. The lower half of the building has been covered in a thick cement render, masking the fabric behind, while beneath the eaves, c.2m of regularly coursed bricks attest to a raising of the roofline, or substantial repair in the 19<sup>th</sup> century which is confirmed by a number of redundant internal corbels beneath the current tops of the wall which must have marked the original line of the eaves and carried the trusses of a previous roof structure. Given the depiction of the building by Powles in 1786, showing the roofline of the western half stepping up from the roofline of the eastern half, it would appear that the fabric change is evidence of repair rather than alteration and is likely associated with improvements to the internal arrangements of the herring smoking bays (see below).



**Figure 49:** The southern elevation of 329 Whapload Road in 2018. © Historic England, Patricia Payne, DP232211

The windows, doorways and openings of the southern elevation also attest to regular and significant alteration during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The eastern half of the southern elevation appears to once have had a broadly symmetrical ground-floor façade, with single doors within flat, brick segmental arches, at its eastern and western ends. These doorways would have once given access to the large ground floor room at the eastern end of the building, however 20<sup>th</sup>-century alterations have seen the eastern door in filled and replaced by a window and the western door repurposed to access stairs to the first floor. Access to the ground-floor room was latterly gained via a pair of wooden doors. These appear to have replaced a timber, diamond mullioned ventilator opening, one of three such openings on the southern ground floor elevation of the eastern room. These openings appear anachronistic, recalling the unglazed timber windows of the 13<sup>th</sup> century in which the timber mullions were turned through 45 degrees to produce a diamond profile which served to deflect light and wind. In the context of fishing buildings in Lowestoft, they appear to have been the standard design adopted to provide light and ventilation, whilst also deflecting wind. They are ubiquitous amongst the buildings of Whapload Road and their appearance is consistent regardless of whether they were being used to ventilate a fish preparation area or 'roaring house' as here, a salt house, or with internal shutters to control the levels of smoke in the smoke house. As a result, they are difficult to date, though in this case would appear to be early 19<sup>th</sup> century. At first floor level, the windows are a more eclectic collection of different shapes and sizes. All set within flat brick arches, two larger, centrally located windows with modern frames appear to be contemporary and correspond to an opening depicted by Powles, while two smaller windows to the west appear to be later and associated with the insertion of the staircase and a small bathroom on the first floor. A large taking-in door with a hoist above would appear to date from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. There is no evidence of an attic dormer depicted in the 1790s, however a blocked skylight suggests that an attic storey continued to form part of the internal arrangement of the building after the 19<sup>th</sup>-century alterations. A small blocked ventilator above the hoist would also appear to confirm this (Figure 50).

The ground-floor façade of the western half of the southern elevation is similarly symmetrical. It is divided into three equal bays, each with a single door and diamond mullioned ventilator. Above the ground-floor openings, a row of 17 sockets, 80mm by 200mm in size indicate the former location of a timber gallery. This was a common feature amongst the fishing buildings of the east coast, especially on net stores where the gallery provided a space to hang nets to dry after tanning or after use. In the case of number 329, the gallery appears to have also been used to facilitate the charging of the smokehouse with herring. Herring smokehouses were traditionally charged from the top down, with the rows of 'loves' from which the herring hung on their spits, doubling up as ladders to reach the upper parts of the smokehouse. The presence of first-floor doors indicates that access to the smokehouse was also gained via the gallery. Three small mullioned ventilators beneath the eaves of the western half of the main range are clearly contemporary with the use of this part of the building as a smoke house, while the casement windows of the first floor are likely a later insertion after the building had been converted from a smokehouse to a store.



Figure 50: The southern elevation of the eastern half of the main range of 329 Whapload Road. © Historic England, Patricia Payne, DP247728

The western section of number 329, as mentioned above, is a separate and earlier structure believed to be a salt store, onto which the main range was added to the east. Its exterior walls are thinner than those of the main range and the brick and beach stone coursing, more regular. Alterations are evident to the external brick jamb of the door at the eastern end of this structure, though the internal face of the jamb appears to be contemporary with the walling around it. The same is true of a blocked mullion ventilator, suggesting that was the original arrangement of the building. A lean-to corrugated steel shed adjoins this western structure to the south, obscuring the first floor above, beneath inserted courses of red bricks that indicate the roof of this western building had been raised. Despite this and being formed of matching pan tiles, the roofline is not continuous with the main range to the east.

The western elevation of 329, formed of the western elevation of the earlier salt house, is the only external elevation which has not been coated in tar. It has no openings and is formed of courses of red brick headers and triplets of beach stones set in a loose mortar (Figure 51). The checkerboard effect is highly decorative and the coursing identical to that found in the western elevation and internal partitions of the Old Fish House, also likely to have been built as a salt store. This is suggestive of a broadly contemporary date, but also reinforces the Wilde family connection of those responsible for the reconstruction of these fishing premises. It is also noteworthy that the most decorative façades of these buildings both face west, suggesting that they were intended to be seen from the High Street dwellings, further reinforcing the connection between the fishing buildings and the owners' residence. Both the 1842 tithe map and the 1884 Ordnance Survey map show an additional square structure to the west of the salt house. No physical evidence of this structure remains on the western elevation and its function cannot therefore be determined. It is possible that it contained a tanning copper for treating nets and that it was replaced by a larger vat which was constructed adjoining the smaller fishing building during the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see below).

The northern elevation of 329 Whapload Road formed the boundary wall of the site and as such has far fewer openings. There are no doors and only a pair of blocked ventilators beneath the eaves of the western half of the main range which would have acted with those on the southern elevation to control the smoke in the smoke house. A pair of equally spaced mullioned ventilators in the eastern half of the main range lit and ventilated the roaring or rousing house, while a pair of equally spaced casement windows with modern frames lit the first floor space, though it is possible that these were a later insertion. A plain, square red brick chimney emerges through the pantile roof of the eastern half of the building, and there is no evidence for skylights or artic dormers on the northern elevation.

The eastern elevation of the building appears to have experienced the most alteration and it is difficult to establish a chronology for it. The eastern elevation is not perpendicular to the long elevations and is aligned broadly NNE to SSW rather than north to south. The topographical depictions of the building don't appear to show this and so, when combined with the different brick quoining of the south-eastern corner and the variations in the internal fabric of the eastern elevation, it would appear that it has been rebuilt. It is possible that the oblique angle of the eastern elevation was the result of changes in the alignment of Whapload Road, as the current elevation tracks the line of the road, though whether this is coincidental or the result of a

road improvement scheme is unknown. The present arrangement of three windows beneath flat brick arches at first floor level and a taking-in door for the attic appears to date from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although the window frames are modern replacements and there has been substantial repair and recent brick infilling making firm conclusions difficult. A square chimney of London stock bricks on the south-eastern corner of the building may be a later addition or further evidence of significant alteration and repair to the eastern elevation.



**Figure 51:** The western elevation of 329 Whaplod Road, originally the western elevation of stand-alone salt store, probably built before 1656. © Historic England, Patricia Payne, DP247730

## Interior

As described above, 329 Whapload Road is divided into a number of clearly defined internal spaces, each with evidence for different processes associated with the catching, preparation and smoking of herring. Each of these spaces will be described in turn and evidence for their original function discussed.

On the ground floor, the largest of these spaces originally comprised the whole of the eastern half of the main range, although the western end has subsequently been truncated through the insertion of a brick wall, creating a stairwell. The eastern ground floor room is otherwise devoid of internal divisions and is for the most part featureless (Figure 52). The stone sett floor surface is cambered in from the north and the south meeting in a central gully which exits the building via the eastern elevation. The internal faces of the walls suggest that the northern wall, as might be expected, is largely original, formed as it is of irregular courses of brick headers, stretchers and beach stone. The southern wall has far less of this coursing and there is greater use of regular courses of red brick laid in an irregular bond. These bricks are of the same character as those used to form the inserted partitions in the western half of the building suggesting a coeval and substantial phase of alteration, probably in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The east wall has clearly been rebuilt as suggested above. The fabric of this wall is not bonded into the north and south long walls and there is evidence of truncation to the south wall suggesting that at the time of the rebuild, the eastern elevation was realigned and ceased to be perpendicular to long elevations. The 20<sup>th</sup>-century block work infill in the centre of the east wall also indicates the former location of an eastern ground floor entrance implied by the brick infilling on the external elevation. The space is ceiled by the first floor surface above, comprised of simple machine cut softwood joists and floorboards which are clearly a more recent replacement. Alterations to the fabric of the walls have masked any evidence for the height or even existence of a first floor, though Powles depiction of first floor windows implies there must always have been one at the eastern end of the building.



**Figure 52:** The ground floor of the eastern part of 329 Whapload Road looking west towards the inserted brick partition which forms the later stairwell. © Historic England, Patricia Payne, DP247720

The numerous large and un-shuttered ventilators, the absence of internal divisions and the cambered sett floor surface with a drainage channel suggest that this part of the building originally a roaring or rousing house. The herring would have been transferred to this space from the boats to be roared or roused, a process which involved heaping them in piles on the stone floor, covering them in salt and regularly turning them with wooden paddles for a period of five or six days (see above). When this process was completed, the salt would be washed from the herring, usually by placing the fish in wicker baskets and plunging them into tanks of water before they were hung through the gills on wooden spits ready for smoking.

Beyond the inserted stairwell, the western half of 329 Whapload Road is divided into three equally sized, broadly square rooms. The divisions are not contemporary with the construction of the building as evidenced by their being formed of regular courses of red bricks and not being bonded into the outer walls (Figure 53). In fact the division between the easternmost of these rooms and the rousing house cuts across a ventilator window in the north elevation. This implies that in its earliest phase, the long range of 329 Whapload Road comprised a single open space.



**Figure 53:** The eastern square compartment of the western part of 329 Whapload Road, showing the later dividing wall, the in-filled doorway and the ventilator partially blocked by the dividing wall. © Historic England, Patricia Payne, DP247721

The inserted brick divisions appear to date from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and created three sealed bays, each with their own external access door and each interconnected with the neighbouring bays via doors in the partition walls, subsequently in-filled. Brickwork matching that of the partitions has been used around the windows of the southern elevation and to form the walling between these windows and the door openings suggesting that the southern windows and doors were inserted at the same time as the partitions. A conclusion seemingly confirmed by the symmetrical external appearance of the rooms or compartments of the western half of the building. The coursing of the outer walls in the three western bays is slightly different



from that of the eastern end of the building, with cobbles used almost exclusively and less use of red brick. In all three of the square bays, the beach stone is heavily smoke blackened, as are the stone sett floors and elements of the timber frames which form part of the first floor surface. This floor, like that of the roaring house is a relatively recent softwood replacement, however, supporting the floor joists from below are a number of substantial and heavily smoke blackened timbers running laterally across the bays, which are bonded into the outer walls. In the westernmost of the three bays, the upper surface of these timbers retain sockets to receive studs or down posts which were pegged into the horizontal timbers. These down posts would have been the central vertical spar of the loves or horizontal racks which the spits of salted herring were hung from. The central spar would have extended from the apex of the roof as far as the lateral timbers which survive in the three ground-floor bays. The height above the floor surface of these lateral timbers, which in effect marked the bottom of the fish hanging racks, corresponds with the contemporary description of the arrangement which stated, 'The distance from the tails of the lower tier of herrings to the floor is about seven feet'.<sup>227</sup> The lateral timbers in all three bays correspond directly to the remains of the loves which survive above and it is clear that they once extended from the ground floor bays right up to the apex of the roof and that they were truncated to facilitate the insertion of a first floor and a partial second floor. Also related to the smoking process, is a surviving timber shutter in the central square bay of the western part of the building. It is *ex situ* but matches the adjacent ventilator and would have been used to seal the bays during the smoking process and then removed following the initial smoke to allow the bays to clear and the fat to drip from the herring before the fires were rekindled to complete the smoking (Figure 54). These would have been open fires set directly onto the stone sett floor surface and all three bays show evidence of such. In the westernmost of the three bays, the floor surface has collapsed and sunk, possibly the result of the repeated kindling and extinguishing of the fires.



**Figure 54:** The central of the three ground floor smoke bays showing the smoke ventilator and associated shutter. © Historic England, Patricia Payne, DP247722

The surviving fabric of the three rooms which comprise the ground floor of the western half of 329 Whapload Road clearly identifies them as smoke bays or compartments. Originally an undivided space, dividing walls which rise from the ground to the apex of the roof were inserted, most likely in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to create smaller compartments, each with direct access. This appears to represent an attempt to both increase the efficiency of the smoking process through more precise control of the smoke, but also to accommodate catches of smaller size, allowing smoking in batches confined to the compartments.

On the first floor of the western half of the main range, the brick partition walls continue, extended to the apex of the roof creating three equal, three-storey compartments. The partition walls are of the same 19<sup>th</sup>-century red bricks and are clearly of a single phase of build. Within the partition walls, where they have not been obscured by later panelling, the timber loves have been integrated into the brick coursing to provide the end rack for each smoking compartment (Figure 55).



**Figure 55:** The central first floor compartment looking east towards the eastern compartment. Within the whitewashed brick partitions, the timber loves remain visible, set into the brick courses. © Historic England, Patricia Payne, DP247714

The reconfiguration of the western end of the building from fish smoking to storage has seen the removal of the loves at first floor level and the addition of timber panelling to the walls. As with the ground floor arrangement, the three compartments are linked by openings, however unlike the ground floor, these have clearly been punched through at a later, most likely post-war date. Labels above the doorways for prams and deckchairs suggest that this alteration relates to the use of the building for the hire of holiday essentials. In the westernmost first floor compartment, a taking-in door of 19<sup>th</sup>-century character would appear to relate to the lost gallery, while two casement windows in the easternmost compartment and a single timber door appear to have been inserted after number 329 had ceased

being used as a smoke house. The central compartment retains a pair of very short casement windows which may have originally been ventilators for the smoke house. Above the first-floor compartments, a second floor has been partially inserted at a later date, comprised of a mixture of sawn softwood beams, reused telegraph poles and *ex situ* timbers. It retains a full floor above the eastern compartment, a partial boarded floor above the central compartment and no floor in the western compartment, where the loves are clearly visible and remain *in situ* above (Figure 56).



**Figure 56:** The western compartment looking west into the salt store. The partially inserted second floor can be seen with the remains of the smoking loves surviving above. © Historic England, Patricia Payne, DP247715

At second floor, or attic level in the western half of 329 Whapload Road, the brick partitions are again clearly visible and as with the first floor, have smoking loves integrated into them. Openings have again been punched through the partitions to link the attic level compartments, but this is similarly a later alteration. In all three compartments of the attic storey, the loves of the smoke house survive *in situ* and largely complete. The smoking racks or loves have centres which are 1.2m apart, allowing for the placing of standard 4ft spits of hung herring between them. Each love comprises three vertical struts – the central one intersecting with the apex of the roof – into which trenches have been cut to receive the horizontal members which have been pegged into place. In addition to providing the racks to hang the spits of herring, each love also acts as a roof truss, with the outer vertical struts adjoining a principal rafter into which the horizontal members are also pegged (Figure 57). These rafters sit on a wall plate, from which vertical posts with trenches to receive the horizontal members would have extended to the bottom of the loves at ground floor level. These have since been removed, though one may survive, reused to support the inserted first floor in the central ground floor compartment. One such vertical side post did survive *in situ* at 333 Whapload Road and was photographed before that building was demolished (see Figure 68).



**Figure 57:** The eastern smoking compartment at attic level looking west showing the rows of *in situ* smoking loves, the brick partition walls, roof structure and the way in which the loves have been truncated at a later date. © Historic England, Patricia Payne, DP247702

In addition to the numerous surviving carpenters' assembly marks scratched into the timbers of the loves; there is physical evidence for the removal of the frames below the attic storey level. The vertical struts of each of the rows have been cut down level with the wall plates and machine cut softwood beams have been inserted laterally, joining the vertical struts and retaining the structural integrity of the remaining racks. It is clear from the way the roof was constructed that the loves could not

have been removed entirely when the western half of the building was converted from fish smoking to storage, as they were integral to the roof structure. Further evidence of the former use of this part of the building can be seen in the form of blocked ventilators, part of the system of controlling the smoke within the smoking compartments.

While the western half of the building historically comprised a series of smoking compartments or curing chambers, the first and second floor of the eastern half of the building had a different function. The first floor of the eastern half of the building, although much altered in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century to serve as the offices of the hire services business, appears to have been a first floor net store. Although little physical evidence remains within 329, comparative examples such as Shoals Yard to the north, indicate that first floor net stores were divided into wooden pens into which the dried nets could be bundled, with a single access corridor along the length of one side of the building (see Figure 11).

At the eastern end of this half of the building, located on the first floor of the southern elevation, a taking-in door and hoist also confirm that this part of number 329 was used solely for storage. A trapdoor in the ceiling above, adjacent to the taking-in door also points towards the storage of nets, with the nets being repaired in the attic above by the Beatsters who would drop the repaired nets through trapdoors to the floor below where they were assembled and stored prior to use. Two fireplaces, one in the northern wall and one in the south-eastern corner of the building, provided warmth for the women engaged in the delicate work of net repair. The fire place in the south eastern corner of the building may well post-date the end of the herring fishing industry and be associated with the creation of a small office at the eastern end of the building (Figure 58). A small toilet next to the inserted stair well is certainly a late 20<sup>th</sup> century insertion.

The attic storey is accessed via a trap door and a softwood timber ladder in the centre of the first floor storage area. It is similarly a large open space, measuring 17m by 5m between the eastern gable end and a partition wall separating it from the western half of the building. The partition wall opens onto a floor level c.1m lower than the floor of the attic storey, which was inserted above the westernmost smoking compartment forming a quasi-mezzanine level (Figure 59). The attic was originally lit by two skylights, the western one now entirely blocked. Powles' 1786 depiction of number 329 suggests that an attic storey was part of the late 18<sup>th</sup>-century internal plan, though lit by an attic dormer – for which no physical evidence survives – rather than by skylights. Beneath the eastern skylight, a floor hatch connects the attic with the first floor space below, identifying this space as a net loft. The arrangement of a well-lit attic storey for the intricate work of repairing the nets, linked via a hatch to an assembly and storage floor below, matches John Dyson's contemporary description almost exactly: 'When they had finished, the Beatsters dropped nets through the floor to the 'Ransackers' who assembled them, putting on the "norsels"'.<sup>228</sup>



**Figure 58:** The office created at the eastern end of the first floor which dates from the building's use as a holiday hire business. © Historic England, Patricia Payne, DP247707



**Figure 59:** The attic storey net loft looking west towards the partition with the former smoke bays. The floor hatch is to the left with the skylight above and the trapdoor and ladder to the net store below, to the right. © Historic England, Patricia Payne, DP247704

The evidence for a raising of the roof level and construction of the new roof that exists externally, is replicated in the interior of the net loft. The collars of the roof structure, which is for the most part obscured by boarding, are of 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century softwood and are certainly a latter addition. There is also evidence to suggest that the addition of c.2m to the height of the building in the form of new courses of bricks, has resulted in structural instability and for the northern and southern walls bowing outwards. The net loft attests to this in the form of four opposed pairs of curved down-braces, connecting the lateral beams of the attic floor with the brick work of the northern and southern walls. On first appraisal these appear to be reused from an earlier roof structure, but the proportions and the slots cut into them for adjoining timbers, suggest that they are not reused braces, but are most likely reused ship's 'knees', the curved bracing timbers used in boat construction (Figure 60). Though this is not uncommon in coastal East Anglia, no other examples are known amongst the fishing buildings of Lowestoft.



**Figure 60:** Reused ship's 'knees', repurposed in the attic net store of 329 Whapload Road. © Historic England, Patricia Payne, DP247706

The attic storey also retains a pair of opposed timber mullioned ventilators, both with their shutters and both blocked with courses of 20<sup>th</sup> century bricks. These are harder to explain, as although they might support the earlier assertion that number 329 was originally a single large smoke house, devoid of internal divisions and that they predate the current internal arrangement, they appear to be set within the courses of modern bricks which evidence a raising of the roof level. It is most likely that they simply provided ventilation for the attic during warm weather and thus further identify the diamond mullion ventilator as an all-purpose design which was used unchanged between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Returning to the western end of number 329, the separate structure, which documentary evidence suggests was built by Josiah Wilde before 1656, was a salt store and it forms the earliest part of 329 Whapload Road. Internally, the salt store or salt house comprises an open space 5m by 4.5m. On the ground floor there is no evidence that the structure was formerly divided into bays or hoppers and in this regard is therefore not directly comparable with the Old Fish House behind 312-14. A pair of opposed windows in the north and south elevations – both now blocked up – appear to have been of the diamond mullioned ventilator type and are set within the washed cobble and brick coursing which would appear to confirm them as original features. While the external evidence for the entrance into the salt store suggests that the opening is not original and has been inserted, internally, the brick quoining forms part of the regular coursing of brick and cobble and the quoins have been worn to a curve over time, suggesting the outer fabric change is a repair rather than evidence of a newly inserted opening. Otherwise, the ground-floor space is devoid of features and is ceiled by a later softwood floor to the space above, the timber beams supported by scissor bracing. In the space above, there are similarly no features of note, other than to observe that the partition between the salt store and the rest of 329 Whapload Road was formerly an external wall comprised of the same cobble stone and brick coursing as the rest of the salt store and the northern and western elevations of the Old Fish House. As mentioned above, an opening has been punched through this wall to connect the first-floor space to the rest of 329. The southern and western walls of the salt store have been lined in modern block work, creating a double skin with the brick and cobble walls beyond. In the south-western corner of the first-floor space, partially obscured by later panelling, a lintel and jamb of a timber window frame survives set within original fabric (Figure 61). This fragmentary survival and its position relative to the current floor surface confirm that the salt store was originally arranged over two floors and that the current floor surface is higher than its predecessor. This conclusion is seemingly confirmed by the external evidence for a raising of the roof height above the salt store. This window was likely blocked during the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the lateral range connecting 329 to 325 to the south was added. Remnants of this range survive at ground floor level attached to the salt store and enclosing a late 20<sup>th</sup>-century garage.



**Figure 61:** The south-western corner of the first floor of the salt store showing later block work walls and the fragmentary survival of an earlier window frame set within original brick and cobble coursing.

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## Ancillary Buildings

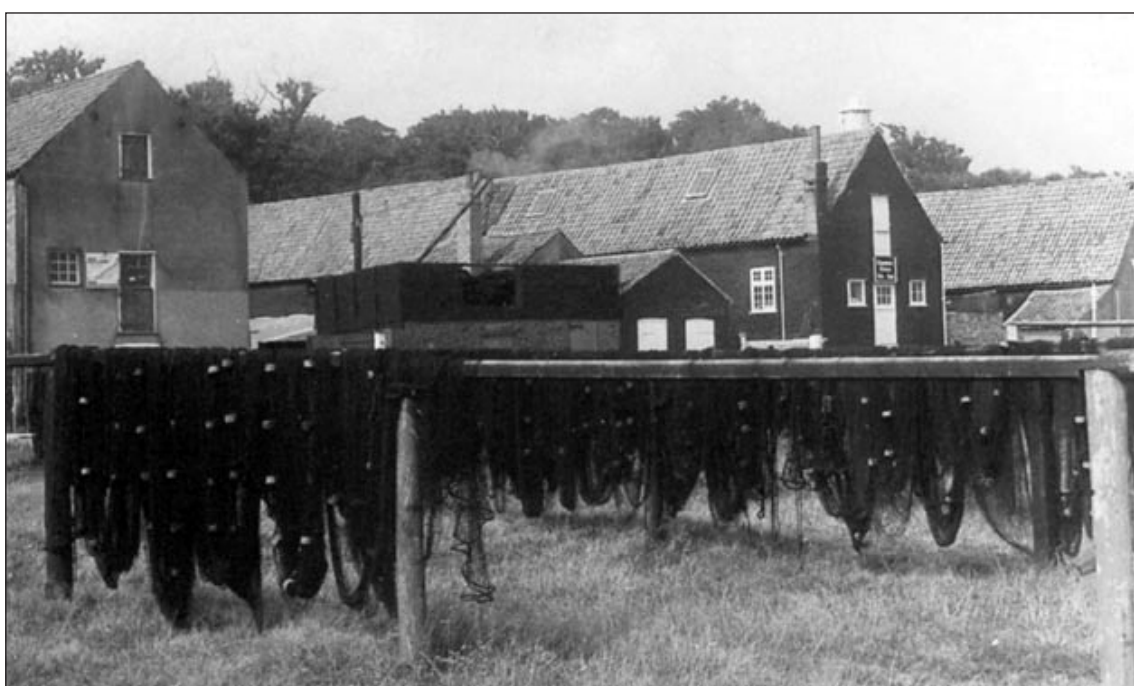
Immediately to the south of the main range of 329 Whapload Road and similarly presenting a narrow gable end onto the street, is a small and much altered former fishing building which, despite its diminutive proportions, also retains the stepped roofline of the majority of the Whapload Road buildings. This ancillary building sits within the boundaries of the burgage plot of 3 High Street and is thus the successor to the fish houses lost by John Barker and James Wilde during the fire of 1645. James' property passed to him upon the death of his father John Wilde in 1637 and likely passed to James' son John, also born in that year, upon James' surrender of it.<sup>229</sup> It is probable that John's acquisition of the property behind 3 High Street coincided with his acquisition of the Old Fish House. Combined with Josiah's ownership of number 329 and James' brief ownership of the property behind number 4, this comprised a Wilde family block of rebuilt fishing premises at the northern end of Whapload Road.

The building which survives to the south of number 329 was not depicted by Powles in 1786, or on the 1842 tithe map, a tall two-storey building with its long elevation to Whapload Road, appearing on the site in both cases. The present structure is constructed of washed cobbles and red clay brick, but of more regular courses than neighbouring 329 and is of a demonstrably later, 19<sup>th</sup>-century character. Originally a broadly rectangular structure, the north-western corner of the building is curved and over-sailed with a stepped brick jetty to facilitate a later raising and a standard hipped roof to sit above the curved corner. The curve is surely motivated by the main entrance to the site being sited between the main range of 329 Whapload Road and the smaller fishing building, the curve facilitating easier passage of carts and goods through the narrow space into the yard formed between numbers 329 and 325 (Figure 62).



**Figure 62:** The smaller fishing building to the south of 329 Whapload Road with its distinctive curved north-west corner. © Historic England, Patricia Payne, DP247735

The southern elevation of the smaller fishing building shows signs of considerable alteration. Above the 18<sup>th</sup>-century courses of washed cobble, c.1m of regular brick courses confirm the raising of the roof height at the western end of the building. These courses are punctuated by a row of small joist sockets implying the former existence of an adjoining structure. Similarly, the eastern half of the structure has also been heavily altered with concrete used to create a parapet above the original eaves line of this part of the building. A photograph taken from the Denes in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century identifies the adjoining structure as a large cutch tank for tanning the nets (Figure 63). Similar to that which survived at the Shoals, though far larger in size, the tank itself sat atop a square brick structure adjoining the older fish house. Its size and the attendant building, may identify it as the 'steam tannery' listed in Huke's 1892 directory as in the ownership of Benjamin Butcher, though this may have been at 333, which by 1914 was owned and occupied by the Butcher family.<sup>230</sup>



**Figure 63:** 329 Whapload Road photographed from the net drying racks on the Denes in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The large cutch tank adjoining the smaller fishing building to the south can clearly be seen.  
© Malcolm White ([www.maritimelowestoft.co.uk](http://www.maritimelowestoft.co.uk))

Internally, there is no evidence for the historic use of the smaller fish building, as the 1978 conversion to form an office and caretaker's flat has removed all the original fixtures and obscured all of the fabric. It is clear that the conversion was substantial and that the entire northern elevation was rebuilt at this time. During the post-war period, the yard surface between 329 and 325 Whapload Road was also raised significantly. Number 329 and its ancillary buildings sit c.1m lower than the yard surface to the south, while it is clear from the remains of 325 and 315 Whapload Road that the original yard surface was once lower. A long, prefabricated 'Kenkast' storage building was added to the immediate south of the smaller fishing building in 1975 and this survives in 2019, also at the level of the original yard surface.

## Synthesis and Significance

Although heavily altered in several phases between the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, 329 Whapload Road represents the most complete example yet identified of a pre-industrial Lowestoft Fish Office. Preserved within its broadly 18<sup>th</sup> century shell are the remains of the internal fixtures which, prior to the 1860s, facilitated the production of smoked red herring, the mainstay of the Lowestoft fishing industry. It is also highly significant that 329 Whapload Road retains, integrated into the main structure but clearly once distinct, the earliest known purpose built salt house or salt store in Lowestoft. Almost certainly the salt house recorded in the inventory of Josiah Wilde compiled following his death in 1656, the small, square western range of 329 Whapload Road is the earliest known surviving post-fire fishing building in Lowestoft and is highly significant. It is also of significance that the nature of the structure's walling and the presentation of an ornate and decorative western façade towards the High Street properties above, correlates directly with that of the Old Fish House behind 312-14 Whapload Road. Both structures were constructed by the Wilde family in order to store salt, the former by Josiah, the latter by his nephew John and they formed the earliest parts of a substantial Wilde fishing concern. From the western salt store, 329 Whapload Road was extended eastwards, creating the footprint which survives today. This extension probably post-dates the settlement of the dispute with Great Yarmouth and possibly the granting of port status in 1679, and as such can likely be attributed to John Hayward who owned number 329 between 1693 and 1719. Although of broadly similar fabric (brick and washed cobble or beach stone coursing), the ranges east of the salt house are different being both more irregular and less ornate. This further supports the conclusion that the majority of the structure depicted by Powles in 1786 is later than the salt house and that it was not the work of Wilde family, whose distinctive wall coursing remains in both the Old Fish House and the salt store of 329 Whapload Road.

The surviving partitions within the ground floor arrangement of number 329 suggest that the structure depicted by Powles was a largely open and undivided space, likely a large smoke house to the western half of the building as defined by a higher roof line, and a net store and loft to the eastern half as suggested by the attic dormer in Powles' composition. In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the building appears to have been given its brick subdivisions which remain *in situ* in 2019. Indicative of improvements in the technique of producing red herring and evidencing a technical move towards the industrial smoke houses of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the brick sub-divisions created three equal sized smoking chambers. Each smoking chamber could be sealed off and accessed via its own entrance, or could be connected via doors through the partition walls. Smaller compartments would have afforded greater control of the smoking process and allowed small batches of herring to be smoked, resulting in an additional efficiency. The brick partitions extend up to the apex of the roof and form an integrated part of the loaves, the wooden racks from which the spits of herring were hung during the smoking process. Small smoking bays, filled with rows of loaves spaced between 90cm and 120cm apart which extended from the apex of the roof to a level about 2m above the floor surface exactly match the description of a Great Yarmouth red herring smoke house described in 1837 (see above) and as such the survival of this arrangement is extremely rare.

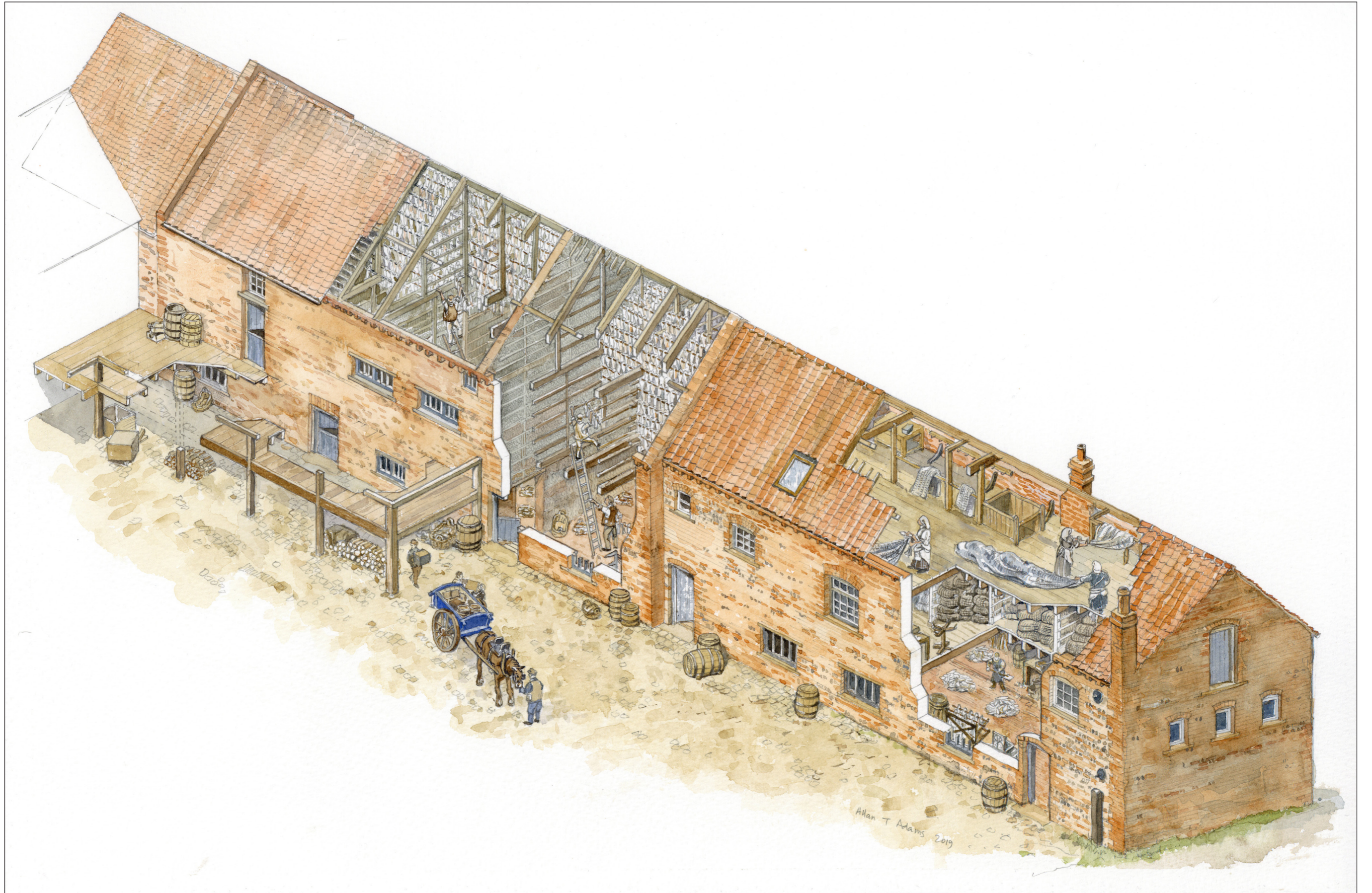
Also matching the 1837 description is the roaring or rousing house which occupied the eastern half of the ground floor of number 329. An essential part of the fish smoking process, roaring or rousing the fish in heaps of salt prior to a lengthy smoke, distinguished red herring from other methods of preserving the fish. The process could take place on any dry, brick or stone surface, but the 1837 description implies that by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century it took place in a discreet part of an integrated building, which had areas set aside for the different stages of the smoking process. The 1837 description states that; 'a red-herring-house is usually divided into five parts'.<sup>231</sup> The ground floor of 329 Whapload Road was, as with the contemporary description, divided into the western salt house, three smoking compartments and a large roaring house. Therefore, although later alterations have removed some of the smoking lofts in favour of inserted floor surfaces, the arrangement of the building at the time of the 1842 tithe award can be clearly understood and directly compared to contemporary descriptions of pre-industrial smoke houses.

From the 1860s onwards, with the ever increasing influx of the Scottish herring fleet and a shift away from the production of red herring towards the production of kippers and pickled white herring, the traditional Lowestoft Fish Offices were gradually converted from the multifunctional arrangement described above, to large net stores and net repair lofts. At 329 Whapload Road – although later changes make this far from certain – it appears that before the 1860s, all of these processes were accommodated within a single building. The western half of the building east of the salt store comprised a smoke house, divided into three compartments and occupying the full height of the building, while to the east the large roaring house occupied the whole of the ground floor space. Above the roaring house, Richard Powles' 1786 depiction implies there were two further storeys, a first floor space lit by a large window and an attic lit by a dormer. This arrangement is highly suggestive of a first-floor net store with an attic above for the repair of nets by female Beatsters. This matches the current arrangement of the eastern half of Whapload Road, and though the current fixtures date from the period after fish smoking was no longer taking place in the building, it would appear that at the height of the pre-industrial Lowestoft herring fishery, the Lowestoft fish offices were multi-functional buildings which housed all of the processes associated with the catching and preservation of fish; from the repair, preparation and storage of drift nets, to the storage of the precious salt and roaring of landed herring to the final production of red herring following a lengthy, controlled smoke (Figure 64).

329 Whapload Road, as the sole known surviving example of this kind of multi-functional, pre-industrial Fish Office is highly significant within the fragmentary physical remains of Lowestoft's herring fishery. That so many of the internal fixtures have survived two separate phases of conversion and alteration, makes number 329 rare, not just within the context of Lowestoft, but within the context of the whole East Anglian fishing industry.

**Figure 64 (right):** A cutaway reconstruction by Allan T. Adams of 329 Whapload Road as it may have looked around 1850. The landed fish are roared or roused in heaps of white salt in the eastern half of the building, while on the floors above, nets are repaired and prepared ready for sea. The western half of the building houses three smoking compartments which extend up to the apex of the roof, while a gallery provided access to the upper rows of smoking loaves and an additional space to dry nets.

© Historic England, Allan T. Adams



### 333 Whapload Road

With the exception of a small fragment of upstanding wall, which once formed the north-western corner of the building, the fishing premises which comprised 333 Whapload Road have been completely demolished. Like its immediate neighbour, 329 Whapload Road, number 333 was a long, narrow, two and three storey building extending westwards from Whapload Road to the base of the cliff. An important part of the complex of post-fire fishing buildings on Whapload Road, its history will be detailed below along with a brief physical description drawn from a photographic survey conducted by the RCHME in April 1986.

#### History and Ownership

333 Whapload Road occupied a site which constituted the eastern extension of the medieval burgage plot behind 1 High Street. Its long, narrow footprint with a width of approximately 5m (or one medieval perch), likely reflected the boundaries of the plot and it is possible that fragmentary earthworks to the west may be remains of the same boundary. The Reverend Tanner records in his list of copyhold property owners that a 'messuage' or property which extended from the High Street eastwards to Whapload Road, with yards and fish houses, was acquired by Thomas Betts in 1598 and that having passed through the hands of the Burgis family, it was acquired by James and Elizabeth Munds in 1632.<sup>232</sup> James Munds was a merchant and fisherman and his fish houses, or smoke houses, appear to have been the source of the fire which swept through Lowestoft in 1645. Although not as significant as the losses incurred by his neighbour Josiah Wilde, Munds is recorded as suffering losses to his fish houses, malt houses and goods amounting to £258 10s, though his High Street property was undamaged.<sup>233</sup> James Munds died in 1669 and his property passed to his son Samuel, a merchant with a wide range of business interests which included maritime trade, farming and brewing.<sup>234</sup> It is unclear whether James had begun the reconstruction of his fishing buildings before his death or whether it was the work of his son who held the property for 40 years until his death without issue in 1709.<sup>235</sup> The property remained in the hands of the Munds family, who were variously described as mariners and merchants, and at the time of Tanner's survey, was held by Samuel's widow, Jane Munds.<sup>236</sup> Whether the fishing buildings were rebuilt by James or Samuel, the new fish houses were certainly complete by the time of Richard Powles depiction of the Whapload Road area in the 1786. Number 333 stands out from the other fish houses due to the elaborate Dutch gables which adorned the eastern gable end and the change in roofline at the building's mid-point (see Figure 47). Stylistically, this adornment is consistent with dating from the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and its addition to the rebuilt fish houses sets the Munds family apart from the other mariners and merchants of Whapload Road. That number 333 remained in the same family for nearly 80 years, may also explain the decision to rebuild at what must have been a greater expense.

At the time of the Lowestoft tithe award in 1842, 333 Whapload Road was described as a Fish Office and was owned by Ibrooke Richmond and let to William Saunders, though this pattern of sub-letting appears to have changed by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century

when Thomas Butcher was listed as the owner and occupier of a 'Brick and tile 2 storey net store and loft [with] lean-to tanning copper, 2 vats, small store'.<sup>237</sup>

Like neighbouring 329, there is no reference in the Inland Revenue Valuation Survey to smoke houses, curing sheds or salt houses, suggesting that by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the production of red herrings in the traditional Lowestoft fish houses had ceased. Also, as with number 329, 333 Whapload Road also continued in use a net store and net repairing chamber throughout the inter-war and immediate post-war years prior to the end of herring fishing out of Lowestoft. The building experienced little change or alteration during the 1970s, but by the 1980s it had fallen into a state of disrepair and Waveney Council issued a dangerous structures notice. The then owner, Mr C V Smith, applied unsuccessfully for Listed Building Consent to partially demolish the structure which had been listed in April 1985, only receiving retrospective consent following the collapse and demolition of the eastern end of the building.<sup>238</sup>

The case gained national attention shortly afterwards when the journal *Building Design* reported the efforts being made by the Suffolk Preservation Society to save the building, highlighting its historical significance and the high quality of its herringbone brickwork.<sup>239</sup> A further application to demolish the building and replace it with an industrial unit was rejected in May 1989, before a fire in September of that year led to the building's complete demolition a month later.<sup>240</sup> In 1994 a successful planning application was made to construct a car show room, which was converted to a roofing contractors store in 1996, in use as which it remains in 2019.<sup>241</sup>

## Description

Of the Fish Offices, or fishing premises which occupied the northern part of Whapload Road, number 333 was perhaps the finest example and its loss most keenly felt. It was constructed by the Munds family to replace their fish houses destroyed by the fire of 1645 which could have originated there. Both Richard Powles and a postcard of 1874 (see Figure 5) show number 333 with ornate Dutch gables, characteristic of the later 17<sup>th</sup> century. This adornment had been removed by 1926 when the building was photographed from the air by Simmons Aerofilms (see Figure 3). Powles suggests that the southern elevation housed a lean-to building, confirmed by the 1884 Ordnance Survey map to be open-fronted and therefore almost certainly a net store of the type which existed at the Old Fish House and the Shoals.

The ornamentation suggested by topographical depictions continued in the walling of the building, which like the western elevations of the Old Fish House behind 312-14 Whapload Road and neighbouring 329 was comprised of ornate courses of red brick headers and washed cobble beach stones. However, unlike number 329, this ornate brick and cobble coursing was used throughout the building giving a pleasing checkerboard appearance to the northern elevations and eastern gable exposed following the collapse of the eastern section of the building in 1985 (Figure 65).





**Figure 65:** The remaining range of 333 Whapload Road from the north east in 1986 following the partial collapse and demolition of the structure the year before. © Crown Copyright. Historic England Archive, BB98/00898

The use of the ornate brick and cobble courses, in addition to further emphasising the quality of the building and the investment of its builder, also appears to confirm a single phase of build, unlike neighbouring 329 which was extended westwards from the salt house that was constructed first. This would appear to mark 333 Whapload Road as the first of the large Fish Offices constructed after the fire. The fabric of the external walls is a near exact match with that found in the large roadside barn at nearby Herringfleet, which is believed to date from 1653 (Figure 66). Given the extent of his losses, it would be highly significant if James Munds was able to build such a high quality building so soon after the fire. Above the checkerboard walls, number 333 was roofed in clay pantiles, the roof steeply pitched, consistent with a 17<sup>th</sup>-century date. To the northern elevation, diamond profile mullioned ventilators corresponded to those found at the Old Fish House and number 329, further supporting the conclusion that they were a ubiquitous unglazed opening found throughout the buildings of Whapload Road.



**Figure 66:** The barn at Herringfleet, to the north-west of Lowestoft. Believed to have been constructed in 1652/3, the stylistic similarities may date 333 Whapload Road to the 1650s, confirming it was the work of James Munds and not his son Samuel. © Historic England, Matthew Bristow

The collapse of the eastern section of the building prior to the generation of a photographic record means no comment can be made on its appearance or function; however given the overall similarities with neighbouring 329 and Powles' depiction of first-floor windows, the assumption has been made that it was similarly home to a roaring or rousing house on the ground floor, with net storage above. The western range, in common with other Whapload Road buildings of the late 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, was higher than that to the east creating the distinct stepped roofline. A photographic survey taken in 1986, when the entire structure was believed to be at risk of collapse, showed *in situ* smoking loaves and significant smoke blackening throughout the building. Although in a state of considerable dereliction, photographs taken at ground floor level also show evidence of compartmentalisation, through the insertion of brick partition walls (Figure 67). This directly replicates the development of 329 Whapload Road and implies that the creation of small smoking compartments from a formerly open smoke house was part of an industry-wide improvement rather than the innovation of a single merchant.



**Figure 67:** The ground floor of 333 Whapload Road looking east. Amongst the rubble, it is possible to discern the lower stages of brick partition walls which defined compartments lit by diamond mullioned ventilators. © Crown Copyright. Historic England Archive, BB98/00901

As with number 329, the first floor appears to be a later insertion built onto the lateral joists which supported the lower levels of loaves or smoking racks. The floor insertion similarly would have formed part of the conversion from fish smoking to net tanning, repair and storage which took place at many of the Whapload Road Fish Offices in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This process was certainly complete at 333 Whapload Road before the Inland Revenue Valuation Survey when it was described simply as a net store with loft. The photographic survey includes interior views of the first floor which show an open space, well lit by 19<sup>th</sup> century casement windows which have been cut into earlier fabric. The courses of brick and washed cobbles show evidence of extensive smoke blackening, whilst adjacent to later timber panelling, a vertical side strut with trenches to receive horizontal racks survived *in situ* (Figure 68). These timber would have formed part of the rows of loaves in the smokehouse, receiving the horizontal timbers which intersected with a central vertical strut extending from the apex of the roof to the base of the racks at ground floor level (see above).



**Figure 68:** Interior view of the first floor of 333 Whapload Road looking north showing evidence of smoke blackening and the vertical side strut of the former fish smoking racks. © Crown Copyright. Historic England Archive, BB98/00905

Above the inserted first floor space was a similarly inserted attic level reached by a ladder and mentioned in the Inland Revenue Survey of 1910/11. As with number 329, smoking loaves remained in situ and similarly formed part of the roof structure acting as rafters and supporting trenched purlins, although unlike number 329 the roof structure also included lateral collars (Figure 69). Further similarities with

number 329, came in the form of partition walls which divided the attic space. These retained smoking loaves built into the walls marking these as the upper stages of the partition walls which had been inserted at ground floor level and clearly formed a reconfiguring of the internal space to create small, smoke bays. All of the timber work photographed at attic level prior to the demolition of the building was heavily smoke blackened and it is clear that that although 333 was converted to a net store with net loft above, it was constructed as a smoke house and that - given the numerous similarities - it was probably arranged more or less exactly as 329 Whapload Road was.



**Figure 69:** The attic storey or roof space of number 333 Whapload Road. Beneath the pantiles, smoke blackened loaves, survived *in situ* evidencing the building's former use for fish smoking. The central vertical strut had been cut down and the horizontal racking removed to allow the insertion of a first floor. © Crown Copyright. Historic England Archive, 92/E/26

## DISTINCTIVENESS AND SIGNIFICANCE

The run of former fishing buildings which comprise 311 to 333 Whapload Road survive in 2019 as a slightly forlorn collection of light industrial buildings, the majority of which have stood vacant for some time. They are something of an outlier in the landscape of north Lowestoft, less successfully put to commercial and industrial use than the buildings to the south, nor successfully converted to residences as with the fishing buildings to north. Attempts at reuse have resulted in major alterations which have changed the historic character of the buildings and masked their significance. Their relation to the beach area of the Denes, with its rows of former net drying racks, with the herring fishery and the historic High Street houses looking down from the cliff above remains clear, and the historic grain of the landscape remains strongly apparent despite the later changes. The relationship between the former fishing buildings and the High Street above is one of the distinctive elements of these former fishing buildings. Constructed within the plots of the tenements of the eastern side of the High Street — their proportions constrained by the boundaries of the medieval burgage plots which extended from the High Street down the cliff the beach — the former fishing buildings are distinctive in their appearance. They are disproportionately narrow — around 5m in width as dictated by the width of each burgage plot which in this case appears to be a single perch — in comparison to their length which extends from Whapload to the foot of the cliff. The proportions and broadly east to west orientation ensure the preservation of the historic character of the cliff and North Denes area and retain the buildings' context in a landscape which has undergone much change. The alignment of the Whapload Road fishing buildings, once believed to create the ideal draught to ensure a superior smoke, matches the alignment of the 11 historic scores which link the beach with the High Street above. The scores combined with the surviving fishing buildings occupying the former medieval burgage plots, give north Lowestoft a distinct physical character, fossilising in the contemporary landscape, routes and boundaries of far greater antiquity.

The former fishing buildings which now comprise 311 to 333 Whapload Road are also significant as they represent the physical response to and evidence of, three major local and regional events which ultimately shaped the Lowestoft herring fishery and drove the expansion and development of Lowestoft in the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The first major event, the great fire of 1645, may have started in the fish house of Samuel Munds, roughly in the former location of 333 Whapload Road. The fire swept southwards, devastating the fish houses, malt houses and storage buildings of Whapload Road and causing huge losses to the fishermen and merchants of north Lowestoft. Attempts to swiftly recover from the fire were no doubt retarded by the on-going and bitter dispute with Great Yarmouth over fishing rights and the oppressive practices of the Burgesses of Yarmouth to ensure their supremacy over their nearest neighbours. The final resolution of the centuries old dispute in 1663 and the certainty that resolution gave the fishermen and merchants of Lowestoft, acted as a catalyst to rebuild and reconstruct the lost fish houses along Whapload Road. If the resolution of the dispute gave certainty, the granting in 1679 of a licence to directly import salt and fishing equipment to Lowestoft without having to bring such materials in via Great Yarmouth and the coast road, gave the men of Lowestoft the ability to dramatically expand their fishery. This can be most

clearly seen in changes to the interests of Lowestoft merchants before and after 1700. Between 1600 and 1699, only 33% of Lowestoft merchants recorded were engaged in fishing or fish curing, a figure which near doubles to 64% between 1700 and 1730.<sup>242</sup> The historic Whapload Road fishing buildings therefore represent a physical response to these key local events. The susceptibility to destruction by fire of the former timber smoke houses, led to their reconstruction in brick and local cobble stone, whilst the much improved economic prospects brought about by the resolution of the dispute with Great Yarmouth and the granting of port status, encouraged the Lowestoft merchants to rebuild on a larger scale creating the distinctive long, multipurpose buildings, the last vestiges of which remain at the northern end of Whapload Road. The ability to directly import larger quantities of white salt, resulted in the appearance of new building type on the Lowestoft landscape, the salt house, of which the Old Fish House behind 312-14 Whapload Road and the western range of number 329, are two of the earliest examples and certainly the only two known to have survived. The buildings also document the story of the expansion, decline and ultimately end of the Lowestoft herring fishery through their arrangement and later alteration. The former fishing buildings attest to Lowestoft's specialisation in the production of smoked red herring over pickled white herring throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and refinements in that process which created multifunction buildings such as 329 Whapload Road. Similarly, the numerous additions and expansions to the fishing premises demonstrate how the Lowestoft herring fishery remained on an upward trajectory until the First World War. The conversion of many of the former smoke houses to net lofts and net tanneries from the 1860s onwards is also a direct physical reflection of the changing nature of the industry, with the influx of the Scottish herring fleet changing the dynamic of the way in which Lowestoft's herring fishery functioned. The requirement to quickly salt and then smoke fish landed on the beach in fish houses situated adjacent to the Denes, became less pressing following the construction of the harbour and the fish market, while a burgeoning home market for more lightly smoked herring, such as kippers and bloaters, produced in large quantities in newly built industrial smoke houses, quickly overtook the foreign market for the heavily smoked red herring. The conversion of the Whapload Road fishing buildings to light industrial and commercial use also documents the end of the Lowestoft herring voyages in 1966.

311 to 333 Whapload Road are also significant as they represent the physical legacy of three of Lowestoft's major mercantile families. Reconstructing the ownership history of the individual properties has shown the influence of the Wildes, the Mighells and the Arnolds in rebuilding the Lowestoft fishing industry after the fire. Of particular significance is the direct familial connection between the remodelling of the Old Fish House by John and Margaret Wilde in 1676 as a salt house and the construction by Josiah Wilde of a new salt house between the fire of 1645 and his death in 1656. In addition to both reflecting the importance of securely storing the valuable salt, they are constructed of identical and distinctive brick and cobble coursing, with the most ornate and elaborate façade, that which faced west, to be seen by the occupants of the houses on the High Street. That both survive as evidence of a concerted effort by the Wildes — Lowestoft's most celebrated family following their contribution to the resolution of the dispute with Great Yarmouth — is of high regional significance.

## The Lowestoft Fish Office

The Whapload Road buildings are significant as the last surviving block of historic fishing buildings and as the only surviving example of a pre-industrial Lowestoft Fish Office. As used in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Fish Office was a general term for a single fishing premises or concern, set around a yard containing a number of adjoining or related structures, each housing different processes for catching and curing herring. In Lowestoft, prior to 1860s and the changes to the industry brought about by the Scottish voyages to the East Anglian herring grounds, and the industrialisation of herring smoking, the Lowestoft Fish Office was more often than not a single, multipurpose structure in which the various processes were conducted in different parts of the building. The consolidation of net preparation, net storage, salt storage and fish smoking within a single building (or multiple structures with the appearance of a single building) built within the confines of the medieval burgage plots, gave the Lowestoft Fish Office of the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries a very distinctive appearance. Aligned broadly east to west as dictated by the medieval plot boundaries, the buildings occupied all of the available flat ground afforded to each plot, extending from the foot of the cliff to the Whapload Road frontage. The principal range presented its eastern gable to the sea, facing the extensive expanse of the Denes where the fleet of sail drifters would land the catch during the autumn herring season. The Fish Offices appear to have conformed to a standard arrangement with a roaring house for fish salting occupying the eastern half of the building with net stores and a net repair loft above. The western half of the buildings contained the smoke or curing houses. Greater height was required in the smoke houses to accommodate the rows of loaves above the open fires and so, the western half of the buildings appear to have all been taller, giving the Lowestoft Fish Office the distinctive stepped roofline so evident in Powles' depiction of 1786 and in the surviving structures. The Fish Offices mostly faced inwards into yards created between the long ranges and extended the length of the Denes, tracking the High Street above and leading the antiquarian Suckling to muse that, 'had they been placed in a more compact form, would have been sufficient of themselves to have formed a considerable town' (Figure 70).<sup>243</sup>

The Fish Offices reflected local vernacular traditions, being built of local red bricks and washed cobbles. They represent a distinct, local response to the circumstances which allowed the Lowestoft herring fishery to recover and ultimately flourish following the fire of 1645, but also demonstrate the expansion of the industry and refinements to the process of producing smoked red herring. The Fish Offices as they stood in the 1860s, prior to the major changes to the Lowestoft fishery brought about by the Scottish voyages, represented the end of that development which had seen the Fish Office evolve from the single range to the entirely enclosed yard. The end of the home herring voyages around 1966 and the conversion of many of the former Fish Offices to light industrial use has resulted in the removal of much of the historic character of Whapload Road. Entire Fish Offices have been lost, notably 333 Whapload Road and the vast majority of numbers 315 and 325. However, number 329 survives, one of the last survivors of an entire building type, the pre-industrial Lowestoft Fish Office, containing within it one of, if not the, first fishing building reconstructed after the fire of 1645. A testimony to an industry which sustained and developed Lowestoft for over 600 years.





Figure 70: Reconstruction painting of the Denes, Whapload Road and the cliff as it may have looked during the 1850s. © Historic England, Allan T. Adams.

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