

A Fisherman's Autobiography

To The Shetlands with 'Nanny' in 1937

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ABSTRACT The following autobiographical account, by Bengt Olausson, recounts his experience of his first trip to sea as a green fourteen-year-old, with his father and uncle, aboard the Swedish fishing cutter 'Nanny' in the spring and summer seasons of 1937. At that time, 'Nanny' was one of many Swedish boats going to the North Sea ling fishery. Ling is a fish of special symbolic significance to Swedes: unsalted and air-dried, it is called lutfisk and is served as a part of the traditional Christmas feast. The fish were caught on longlines, and Bengt Olausson's account is particularly informative about the preparation and use of the gear at a time when the fishermen still made their own lines, and when there were no mechanical aids other than a simple winch. The story also describes something of the social organisation of the boat: what contributions the members of the crew made to the boat's food supplies and outfit of lines, and how shipboard tasks were arranged.

The source is an undated manuscript in the archival collections of the Department of Ethnology, University of Gothenburg. The original story, in Swedish, struck me as a very rare document indeed: I had certainly never before come across such a gripping, colourful and reflective autobiographical narrative that conveyed as much ethnographic detail. In my translation, I have reorganised a number of passages and, where necessary, fleshed out a few details clarify certain points and to bring out their sociological and historical significance, while at the same time attempting to preserve the story's intimacy as a personal record of Bengt Olausson's coming-of-age as a fisherman.

I grew up in a fishing family in Skärhamn in Tjörn. When I was a boy, in the thirties, fishing was very different than it is now. Everyone in our family helped my father and my uncle to prepare their fishing gear. Our boat was called 'Nanny,' a 53-foot wooden motor boat built for my father in 1919, and skippered by my uncle Hilmer. We used Nanny to catch ling in the North Sea, off the Shetland Islands. Ling are big fish, like cod, which we caught with longlines. In 1937, I was fourteen years old, and I was going to make my first trip to the Shetlands as Nanny's cook.

The preparations for the spring fishery started in the autumn. We made all the fishing gear ourselves. Of course, we had to buy the cordage, hooks and the cork for the floats, but making a complete longline involved seven or eight families and many weeks of hard work. First, the new line had to be tarred to prevent it from rotting, which was done in the open air on the pier. A big iron pot was filled with

tar and heated over an oil stove. The tar had to be so hot that it became as thin as water. Then the pot was placed on the pier and one man stood or knelt to hold down the length of line in the pot while it was pulled through. With the help of rags wrapped round our hands, all the surplus tar was squeezed back into the pot. The oil stove was burning all the time, because when one length of line had been pulled through, the tar cooled off and had to be re-heated. Tarring the lines took almost two days to finish. Then the lines had to be hung up on poles to dry and to prevent them from getting stuck together in a tangle. They had to be separated to let air in between them. The lines were left hanging like this for a few days. When your fingers did not stick to the lines, they were dry.

Every man had his own lines, but the number each had to tar was different. Old lines could be re-tarred if they were not too worn. If an old line was replaced by a new one it had to be tarred too. Seven of the men in our crew had eight lengths of line, or 'hundreds,' making fifty-six hundreds. I was the cook, and so I had only half the usual number of lines, or four hundreds. Each man had one length of line in reserve, making eight 'spare' hundreds. Then we had a couple of so-called 'drinking lines,' each of which was three-quarters of a hundred. The fish caught on

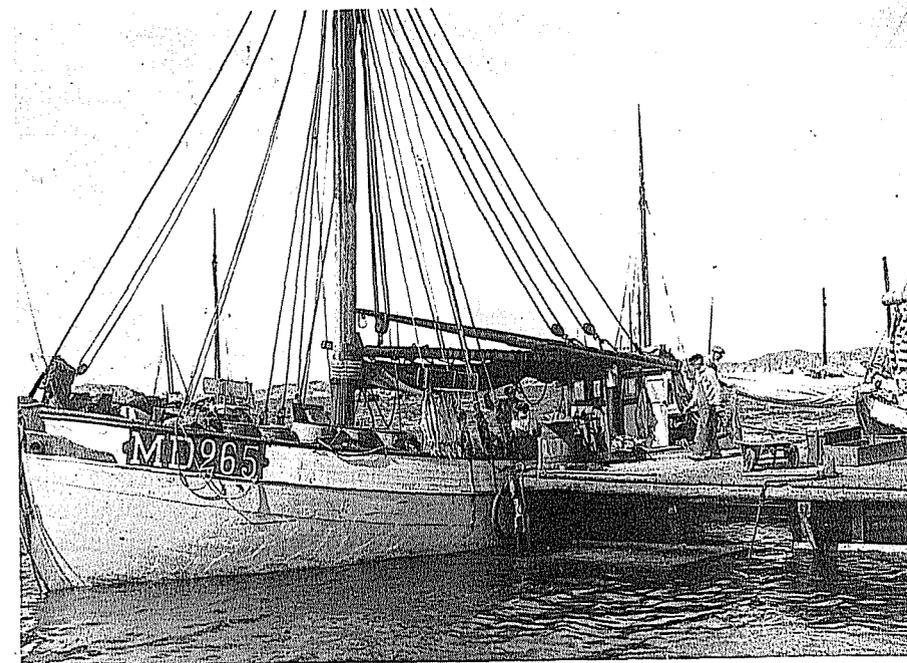


Photo 1. A boat of Nanny's type, probably at Skärhamn or a nearby port in the 1930s. Note the full suit of sails, the extra barrels of fuel lashed to the forward bulwarks, and the split fish drying in the shrouds for domestic use aboard the boat (Bildarkivet, Bohusläns Museum, Uddevalla).

the 'drinking line' were shared by the whole crew, and the money went to pay for a party after the fishing trip. The total number of lines we carried to sea was at the most seventy hundreds. Each hundred is about 200 fathoms long, so if all the lengths of line were joined together, it would be 14,000 fathoms long, fourteen nautical miles or over 25 kilometres! That is why it took nearly two days just to pull the line through the tar-pot.

Then each section of the line had to be fitted with the leaders, or snoods, and floats and hooks. Short snoods and long snoods alternated. The long ones were about a metre and a half long, and the short ones about 30 cm. The snoods were made from fine cotton marline. We made up the snoods ourselves with a machine that had a system of cranks and rollers. The cotton was bought in skeins. Before the snood-making could begin, it had to be rolled up into balls. This was done by our mother, either with a winder or by hand. My little sister and I used to help as well.

During fishing, there was no time to undo the hook from the mouth of each fish, so you used a special kind of stick to pry the fish off the hook, and most of the time it came loose. If it didn't, the snood snapped. The snood always snapped between the hook and the float. Quite a few snoods could snap every day, which meant that we had to have a good stock of them in reserve. Almost everyone in the family helped.

My little sister Majken used to sit on the kitchen sofa, where it was warm and nice, working the machine, making the short snoods. This work was done during autumn and winter evenings. Up in the loft, we had another machine, a bigger one, but the loft was cold and unheated. There my father and I had to stand up to make the long snoods. We could not sit down to make them because of their length. My father and I made about 1,600 long snoods that year.

Next, the floats had to be made, cut to shape and waxed to prevent them from becoming brittle and spoiled by the salt water. We bought the cork for the floats, and it came in rough pieces in jute sacks. The sacks were kept in the cellar until they were needed. I said cork, but it was really willow bark, not real cork. The bark was split and cut into pieces. Their appearance was not very important, but each float had to have the same lifting capacity. The lines lie on the bottom during fishing, while the floats lift the hooks upwards from the bottom so that the bait is not eaten by crabs. Moreover, the ling will be able to see the bait better, because they swim and look for food a bit above the bottom. At each end of the float a gash was cut to secure it when we tied it to the snood. Each man marked his own floats, using a stamp heated over an oil stove, to brand his initials. I used my father's stamp. Next, the floats were submerged in a pot of boiling wax. When they were done they were set out to dry.

We also made our own seagoing clothes. My mother made oilskin jumpers and dungarees from washed white flour sacks. Sometimes she used shop-bought bleached canvas. This was oiled three times with linseed oil to make it waterproof. Our sou'westers were usually bought in Norway, but they could also be made at

home and waterproofed with linseed oil. Ready-made oilskin trousers of rubber were very heavy and bulky and expensive, and we preferred the home-made ones.

Another important part of the preparations was the supply of food that each man had to provide for himself or, rather, that his mother or wife had to provide for him. The most important of these preparations was the baking of bread. This had to be done in good time, about a month before the voyage. The bread was part of each man's private supplies and he took a big sackful of bread aboard the boat. Because the amount of bread was so large, the women used to bake in teams. They rolled out the dough into thin rounds and made a hole in the middle with a drinking glass. This bread was browner in colour than the so-called 'fishermen's bread' you can buy in Swedish supermarkets these days. Next the rounds were hung on a long pole in the loft. They were left hanging to dry for several weeks until they were hard. The dry home-made bread was the best, because it kept fresh during the whole fishing trip which could last up to seven weeks. Once, we bought ship's biscuits in Denmark, but they kept for only a few days. It was so damp on board that they went mouldy and had to be thrown away. The left-over flour sacks could be used for many things. I had a small Norwegian sailing gig in those days, and my mother had made the sails from flour sacks.

There were private and common supplies of food for the voyage. Some things were provided for us 'by the boat' and other things we had to provide for ourselves. The first spring trip in April was shorter than the others; it lasted for about three weeks. Not so many supplies were needed during this trip. But the first 'real' trip started in May and lasted until Midsummer. Then we had to have food for seven weeks at sea. The usual common provisions, which we all shared, were eight sacks of potatoes, one barrel of salted bacon, and enough yellow peas, onions, margarine, sago, dried fruit and coffee. The peas and bacon were mostly for Sunday meals. Otherwise we had fresh fish and potatoes for dinner and the evening meal consisted of fried potatoes, fried eggs, bread and coffee.

Each man also had his own private supplies of food. They consisted of bread, butter and eggs. Each man had his big sackful of home-made bread. The butter was salted so as not to turn rancid. Each man also brought as many eggs he could afford. They were wrapped in newspaper and kept in big honeycomb boxes of wood to protect them from breaking. The eggs were ordered from the farms around Skårhamn the last week before putting to sea. This was done so they would be fresh, and you had to order them because of the demand. There were many boats going out fishing at the same time, and everyone wanted to take a supply of eggs to sea. The men also provided their own tobacco or snuff. Snuff was bought in big brown cartons, I think there were a hundred boxes in each carton.

Nanny also had to be fitted out. In the spring, the boat was taken to the slipway for painting: red lead below the waterline, white enamel above. When the boat was back in the water, we oiled the deck, scraped and varnished the brightwork, and painted the upperworks. Sometimes the mast and other spars needed scraping, oiling

and varnishing. Usually the wooden hoops that slid up and down the mast, holding the sails, needed work, and the sails themselves might have to be repaired before they were bent on to the hoops again, especially if the sails had been used for herring fishing earlier in the year. Like most Swedish motor fishing boats at that time, Nanny carried a full suit of sails. We had a jib, mainsail and a small triangular spanker behind the wheelhouse. The registration number was always painted on the sail. Nanny's number was MD 351, the 'MD' was for Mollösund, another fishing place nearby. When all the work was done, the boat looked neat and handsome.

Nanny was 53 feet long, the first year I was in the crew. The following year, 1938, she was lengthened to 65 feet, 12 feet longer. The lengthening was done in the Hällevikstrand shipyard. Nanny became like a new boat after the lengthening, because there was much more room on deck. The engine was a 65 horsepower Skandia oil engine and Nanny made about seven knots with it. In the forecabin there were eight bunks. I slept in a top bunk because I was a junior member of the crew. It was best to sleep in a bottom bunk where you did not have to climb to get in. The mattresses were strange and curious. They were made from bedticking which was filled with fresh straw from a farm. When you slept on the mattress for the first time the straw was not pressed down and the wooden cubicle of the bunk was hardly big enough for it. Your nose was up against the ceiling if you were lying on your back. It took about a week for the mattress to get pressed down to normal height. It was flattened down by its owner rolling on it in high seas. The bunks had shutters which could be closed in rough seas to prevent you from falling out, and a small opening was left for air to get in.

Nanny's little lifeboat was a Bohus dinghy that had been made in Orust. It was about sixteen feet long and five feet abeam. The boat was lashed to rings on the port side of the deck and there was an axe so that the lashings could be cut quickly in case of an emergency. But we used to use the dinghy as a handy place to put things like tools and rope, and if we had really needed the dinghy in an emergency, we probably would have sunk before we would have managed to get everything out.

Among the last preparations for sea were filling up with fresh water and fuel oil. The fuel tank for the engine was not large enough for a seven week trip, so we had to take about fifteen extra two-hundred-litre barrels of fuel. The barrels were lashed to the bulwarks on the deck, just forward of the shrouds. In good weather we fetched the barrels aft, and filled up the tank in the engine room below with a hosepipe. As the barrels were emptied, they were used for storing the ling livers.

I was only fourteen the first time I went ling fishing, in 1937. It was the first trip in April, which is shorter than the ordinary trips. If we caught a lot of ling and the weather was good, the first trip might take less than the normal three weeks, but that was unusual. On this trip, Nanny had a crew of eight. The skipper was my uncle Hilmer Hermansson. The other men were Karl Albin Andreasson, Arthur Pettersson, Gustav Holmberg, Ernst Eriksson from Stockevik, Albert Larsson, my father Albert Olausson, and me, Bengt.

How I came to be on board was a story in itself. Nanny lay at home in Skärhamn by Walter Hendry's pier ready for ling fishing. The water, fuel and everything else was on board, even the sails were hoisted. The boat had been ready for a week. The men were ready for the fishing trip too, but one man was missing. There were seven men but they needed eight, and nobody was willing to cook. They had asked everywhere. That is why they had not left yet.

The men persuaded my father to take me on board as a deck-boy and cook, now that I had finished school. My teacher, Åke Arvidsson, came to our house three times that week to try to persuade my father not to take me fishing. I had a good head for studying and the teacher even offered to pay for my studies if I was allowed to go to the high school. But I obeyed my father and went fishing with Nanny. My father later said several times that he regretted having taken me out fishing at such a young age.

So, in April 1937 we set off and headed for Skagen, in Denmark, to buy fresh herring as bait and to get supplies. We bought canned condensed milk, powdered milk and margarine for frying. Tobacco was bought in hectogram packets; it was cheaper to buy it for export. When we had finished our business in Skagen we set course for Haugesund in Norway. Haugesund had an ice plant and cold storage works where the herring used for bait, which we had bought in Denmark, were frozen. We also took ice aboard. Because this was a short trip, we iced down the fish in the hold, which would keep fresh until we landed it. On the longer trips, we had to salt down the fish because the ice wouldn't last for the whole voyage. When the bait had been frozen in the cold storage works and delivered back on board, we set sail for Hålla Bank, eighty sea miles west-southwest of Haugesund.

I stood a turn at the wheel, steering a course by the compass of west-southwest-by-half-west. We were about eleven hours out from Haugesund, and we were streaming the patent log to measure the distance out to the fishing bank. We were making about seven knots with our Skandia engine. The weather was very good, and I remember that we arrived at Hålla Bank on a Thursday. Now we had to sound the bottom to find the right place to shoot the line. We measured the depth with a leadline, which ran through a guide on the rail. We had to stop the boat to sound the bottom, and we did this over and over again until we found the right place.

The lead weight had a hollow cup at the bottom, and in the cup you put a lump of tallow or butter. When the lead touched the bottom an impression was made of the character of the ground, so you could tell whether it was rocky, sandy or muddy. The sounding-line was marked along its length by bits of coloured cloth which indicate the depth. Hålla Bank had fine light-brown sandy ground. If we saw grains of this special light-brown sand in the tallow-cup of the leadline, we knew that we were in the right place. This sand was found only on Hålla Bank. The depth varied between 120 and 130 fathoms.

If it was too deep or the bottom was wrong, we continued until we found the right spot. Then the sea became deeper, and when we shot the anchor and buoy that

the end of the fishing line was attached to, we were out at the edge of the bank, at about 180 fathoms.

We found our spot late that day, and baited and set the lines. At one o'clock in the morning, the men went below to sleep until the lines had to be hauled two hours later, at three. It was my job to sit in the wheelhouse and watch the buoy marking the end of the line, to keep an eye on it and not let it get so far away that it disappeared out of sight. At three o'clock, I went forward to the forecandle and put the coffee kettle on the stove. I woke the men with cups of coffee and then they went up on deck to haul their lines.

Now it was my turn to go to sleep. I was woken again at six. Every man hauled his own 'hundreds' or sections of the line, which had been joined together end to end. At six o'clock my lines were nearly at the winch so I had to get up and haul them. The snoods were marked and the lines arranged in a fixed order so we knew exactly when it was time to haul our lines. It was now Friday and that first haul was an exceptional catch. I went ling fishing for several years after that first trip, but we never got another catch like it. The fish were big and fat, with black spots. Each of them weighed at least ten kilos, and up to eighteen. We got over eight tons that day on a single haul. If we had got the same amount on the next two nights after that, we would have filled the hold to its capacity of twenty-five tons and gone home after three days, instead of three weeks.

But things did not go that way. The fishing vessel 'Prolific' from Hållvikstrand was also fishing on Hålla Bank. The skipper, Anders Hansson, was a friend of our skipper. Both of them were members of the Deep Sea Fishermen's Union. The radio on Prolific was much better than ours, and they had heard the Norwegian weather service give a hurricane warning for this part of the North Sea. Shipping was advised to seek shelter, it said. Prolific came up to us and lay there rolling in the sea. You could almost see the keel when she rolled. Prolific's skipper called out through a megaphone: 'A hurricane is on its way. Will you follow us to Haugesund?' But our skipper shouted, 'No!' Perhaps Nanny's men thought that the storm would settle in a few days, which was common; or maybe, having got such a good catch during the night, they thought their luck would hold. 'We are going ashore,' called the skipper of the Prolific. And then they set off towards Haugesund.

The weather was calm and bright, but there was a heavy swell. If only we had followed the Prolific. On Saturday the hurricane arrived. Later we found that a wind speed of over forty metres per second, or nearly a hundred miles an hour, had been measured in Utsira. I was alone in the forecandle, right up in the bows of the boat, when the storm hit us. The men had shut me up in the forecandle, thinking to protect me, and that the storm would blow over in a day or two. But it blew at full gale force for almost a whole week, and there I was in my top bunk, trapped in it by the violent pitching and rolling of the boat. I could not get out of my bunk even for a drink of water. I was seasick and weak. The engine was running at full throttle all the time to keep the boat steady against the sea and to keep the bilge pump going.

Nobody could go out in the open. Mountainous seas were pouring over the bulwarks and sweeping across the deck. Anybody trying to get from the forecandle to the wheelhouse would have been washed overboard.

All the rest of the men were aft, in the wheelhouse and the engine room helping to steer and mind the engine. The steering wheel was connected to the rudder with a chain, and the weight of water hitting the rudder could easily have broken someone's arm. It would have been hard to get control of the wheel again if it started to spin freely. That is why two men had to hold it all the time.

While I was lying in the top bunk in the forecandle in those high seas it felt like being on a roller coaster, but worse. First a fall into the deep trough between the waves, and then my body was pressed down heavily against the mattress when the boat rose to crest the next wave. Every time Nanny slid downhill and crashed into the bottom of a trough, there was a bang in the bow like a cannon shot. I was very frightened that the planks at the stem would be sprung open by the constant pounding and the boat would go down like a submarine. We learned later that some Norwegian fishing boats that had been with us on Hålla Bank during that storm had indeed sprung planks and gone to the bottom.

But Nanny's planks stayed tight. My father and the other men said they soon lost sight of any other boats. Nanny lay to, bows to the wind, the men watching constantly and steering to prevent the boat broaching, or slewing broadside to the waves, which could roll the boat right over. The reefed spanker was sheeted home hard. The Skandia engine was working at full power to keep us up against the wind. I became fainter and weaker each day. The water tank was in the forecandle but I could not manage to get out of my bunk. I had no water, but neither did the rest of the men, because there was no water tank aft, only in the forecandle. Despite the forecandle being boarded up, seawater was deep over the floor, and food, empty bottles and other things floated around in it. I was still very seasick and getting weaker and weaker. From Saturday to Tuesday I heard nothing from the rest of the men. On Tuesday it calmed down a little, but it was still blowing around seventy-five miles an hour.

Suddenly the door to the forecandle burst open and my father came down the stairs. The sea gushed in after him before he managed to close the door. 'How are you? Are you alive?' he asked. 'Yes, I am, but I am very thirsty,' I said. 'Give me water!' There were plenty of empty bottles floating around in the forecandle, so he quickly filled four or five bottles from the tank. He had insisted on going to see how I was, so the men had tied a rope around him as a lifeline, because it was so dangerous to cross the open deck. All the other men had warned him not to go out on deck, but he was determined to get to the forecandle to see if I was all right. My father had to board up the forecandle again and then the men hauled him back to the wheelhouse with the help of the rope.

I got the water bottles to my bunk and I drank. But the water didn't get very far down my throat before it gushed out of me. I was too sick and weak to keep it down.

I was alone again in the forecandle. The others were still trapped aft in the wheelhouse and the engine room and could not get food or water either. The food supplies were in the forecandle as well as the water tank. My father was half drowned after having crossed the deck, but the men down in the engine room could at least be warm and dry. After this lull on Tuesday, which must have been the eye of the storm, the wind started blowing strongly again and continued on Wednesday, Thursday and even into Friday. I did not hear anything from the others during all that time.

The storm had lasted for almost a week. By Saturday the wind had gone down almost to normal. The forecandle door opened and the men came down the stairs. 'How are you? Are you alive?' they asked. 'Yes,' I said, but I was so sick and faint that they might as well have thrown me overboard, I thought. 'Well,' said the men, 'it is calming down now and we will try to get to Haugesund.' They helped me up the ladder and I looked out over the sea. The sea was still boiling more violently than I had ever seen it, and yet this was better weather and lower wind force than before. How must it have been when the weather was at its worst? The North Sea was in uproar. Normally we would not have dared to try to make any distance in a sea like this, but now we turned around and scudded towards, as we believed, Haugesund. When we approached the Norwegian coast none of the men recognized the coastline. Where are we now? they wondered. But then we saw the peak of Marstein, which stands at the entrance to Bergen. The storm had taken us that far north. From there to Haugesund it was about forty-five sea miles and it took us another seven hours to get there.

A sad scene met us when we came into Haugesund. House roofs had blown off and there were flags at half mast. Later we learned about twenty Norwegian fishing boats had gone down in the storm, most of them from here and some from Bergen. There was a big gathering of people on the pier when Nanny came in. We had been out in this storm and survived, while the crews of so many Norwegian fishing boats had perished.

Later we got to know that the crew of the Prolific, who had returned to Haugesund before the storm and had been here the whole week, had been keeping a constant watch for any sign of us, taking turns as lookouts on the highest rock in Haugesund. But during the whole week they had watched the sea, they had not seen any sign of life from Nanny and they thought that we had not made it and perished in the storm. They had begun to give up hope. The skipper of the Prolific, Anders Hansson, telephoned home to his wife and told her about the storm and said that we probably had gone down. His wife had in turn called my aunt Olga in Skärhamn, who was the wife of our skipper. Aunt Olga had put on a black dress and stockings and went to see my mother and told her what the skipper of the Prolific had said.

But then Nanny came steaming into Haugesund harbour. Returned from the dead, all those people must have thought. We came up to the pier and there was the Prolific. Anders Hansson called from a distance, 'Is the little boy alive?' 'Yes,'

answered our skipper, 'he is.' I was standing between the mast and the forecandle. Standing is not exactly the right word. I was more or less sitting, because my legs did not want to carry me. My knees pulled towards my chin. We berthed alongside Prolific and the men carried me onto the pier and laid me down on a couple of big wooden boxes. I was lying there, resting. The men tried to help me stand up and walk a little, but my knees went up to my chin with each step I took. It was impossible to walk. I had to lie down again on the boxes and after a while I tried some food. I had to eat carefully and not too much in the beginning, since I had been without food and water for so long. I was lying like this the whole day. Now and then I got up to try to learn to stand on my legs again. On Saturday night I was able to walk a little without help. There was a dance there in Haugesund that evening, and I managed to hobble that far. The Norwegian girls who worked in the cold-storage works brought a gramophone and danced to the music. They had heard about the little Swedish boy who had been out in the storm and they went home to get some sweet buns for me. I was in nice company and the girls danced to the gramophone and we all had a good time.

When I had recovered, I said to my father, 'There must be trains from here so I can go home.' It was not very pleasant to meet with a storm like that during my first fishing trip to the Hålla Bank. 'Well, we will see,' he said, 'but the weather is good now, and we will be fishing for only another week or ten days. We have to return home soon anyway. We just had supplies for three weeks this time, and we have to get the boat ready for the next fishing trip.' So, I was persuaded to go out again with Nanny.

The weather was bright and calm when we left Haugesund, a week later. I sat in the wheelhouse and steered all the way to Hålla Bank. Everything was fine again and the storm almost forgotten. But when we arrived at Hålla Bank a new storm blew up. It was not blowing as hard as the last time, but hard enough for the tops of the waves to 'smoke' or be blown into spume. We baited our lines but never got a chance to use them. We had to lash down everything loose on deck again; no more fishing during this trip. The first week of our trip we had been caught in the hurricane, the second week we lay in Haugesund, and this was the third week, which was to be used for the return trip home to Skärhamn. Now all we could do was to go back to Haugesund and wait for the storm to blow over, and then go home.

Looking back on my first trip, I still remember it all vividly. It was awful to see Haugesund with all the house roofs blown off and the flags at half mast. We had been lucky to come out in one piece after that storm. If I had had water to drink from the beginning I might have felt a bit better. But after that hurricane I became immune to seasickness. Out in the North Atlantic, west of the Hebrides or around the Shetlands, where we were fishing the rest of the season, I could stand down in the forecandle in high seas and gales juggling with the frying pan and the hot stove, amid the smoke and smells, frying potatoes and eggs for supper, when even old hardened fishermen like my uncle Hilmer had to go up on deck to vomit. But he

was tough, uncle Hilmer, because after he had been sick he came down to the forecandle and sat down to finish his meal as if nothing had happened.

When we returned to Skärhamn again, we unloaded the ling on Emil Pettersson's pier and began to prepare for the season's main trip, which lasted from May to Midsummer. All the food for seven weeks had to be got aboard, along with all the other necessary supplies, including the barrels of extra fuel for the engine. All the tools and gear were stowed. The big marker buoys were lashed to the shrouds. Salt, to preserve the ling, was taken on board. The tanks were filled with water and fuel. The day came when every-thing was ready, and the sails were hoisted. We were going first to Smögen to buy bait, and then to Skagen to complete our supplies. From there we would sail to Haugesund for the freezing of the bait and after that to the Shetlands.

It used to be a solemn occasion when the fishermen set off in these small boats, because many of them met a watery grave out there. The Swedish flag was flying at the stern. The flag was hoisted and lowered three times at departure. All the families were gathered to wave goodbye, and they watched us closely all the way out from Skärhamn harbour until we were out of sight. Every leave-taking was the same.



Photo 2. Smögen in the 1930s, showing boats crowding the pier to unload fresh fish (Bildarkivet, Bohusläns Museum, Uddevalla).

In Smögen we bought fresh mackerel for bait. About three tons was the minimum amount for fishing. There were many boats looking for mackerel and sometimes we had to lie in Smögen for two days before we could get enough. The mackerel had to be gutted and washed, which took time as well. Some of the mackerel were salted in barrels, but as bait they did not catch much ling. The best bait was the fresh mackerel and it was packed into boxes with ice before the freezing in Haugesund. On some trips we had to go to Kristiansand in Norway to get enough mackerel. When we were finished in Smögen we set a course for Skagen to complete our supplies of food. Then it was off to Haugesund. We stayed there for about a day and a half until the freezing was done. The frozen mackerel kept for about two weeks, and when it was finished we had to use the salted mackerel for bait. With salted bait we only got half as much ling as with the fresh bait.

When everything was ready in Haugesund, we set a course for the Shetlands. It took a few days to reach the fishing grounds. Then the hard work started. Fishing, snatching a little sleep, and more fishing day in and day out for seven weeks in a continuously rolling, skewing and pitching workplace. Ling fishing has always been considered the hardest kind of fishing, even with modern aids. During the last



Photo 3. A Swedish crew working on deck, at sea, in the 1930s. The crew includes a boy of about Bengt Olausson's age. The equipment suggests that this boat is a trawler; the fish appear to be cod (Sjöfartsmuseet, Göteborg).

few years it has become increasingly difficult to find enough men willing to do this kind of work, and to get a big enough crew. The boats get smaller due to complicated European rules, as a result of increased fishing restrictions. But the decrease in ling fishing is mostly due to the difficulty of getting crews. Fishermen don't want to be at sea for such a long time with all the hard work that ling fishing involves. Moreover, the crew has to be experienced. You don't become a ling fisherman overnight. In 1980 there were only three Swedish ling fishing boats: 'Britta' of Skärhamn, 'Shetland' of Mollösund and 'Sandö' of Grundsund. As a comparison, the first year I went ling fishing, in 1937, there were about seventy.

When Nanny reached the grounds to the west of the Shetlands, before the lines could be set, we had to look for the right depth and bottom with the leadline. The banks were slanting outwards and the normal practice was to set out the lines in a depth of 120 to 130 fathoms with the last line set in 180 to 190 fathoms. First the lines had to be baited. Each man baited his own lines and this was done in the following way: in an empty line-tub the line was wound up on a roller at one end. At the other end the baited hooks were laid down one at the time in parallel rows after each other. It was important that each float was laid down above its respective hook. If the floats were laid wrong, the lines could get tangled or the hook might get caught in your hand when the lines were shot overboard. On deck each man had his own line-tub; small blocks were fixed to the deck to keep the line-tubs in place during rough seas. A funny thing happened to me once when I was sitting by the mast on my tub baiting my lines. Nanny nosed into a really deep trough and when she rose again my tub jumped out of its wooden blocks and I slid on the tub along the whole length of the deck, from the mast to the wheelhouse.

Each man had eight hundreds. I had half, four hundreds, because I took care of the cooking as well. This makes altogether sixty hundreds. If we joined them all end-to-end in one 'link,' it would be about twenty-five kilometres or twelve sea miles long, or about the distance between Mollösund and Lysekil, as the crow flies. Every hundred had about sixty hooks and the total for the whole link, including the 'drinking hundred,' came to about 3,690 hooks. In bad weather we could set out a smaller link, but the sixty-hundred link was the normal length. When the whole link was baited and shot, we had two or three hours of rest before the lines had to be hauled aboard again. At the normal line length of sixty hundreds, each man's hundreds were linked together to one single link in the following order:

Gustav Holmberg	1	9	16	24	31	39	46	54
Ernst Eriksson	2	10	17	25	32	40	47	55
Albert Olausson, father	3	11	18	26	33	41	48	56
Albert Larsson	4	12	19	27	34	42	49	57
Arthur Pettersson	5	13	20	28	35	43	50	58
Karl Albin Andreasson	6	14	21	29	36	44	51	59
Hilmer Hermansson, uncle	7	15	22	30	37	45	52	60
Bengt Olausson, myself	8	--	23	--	38	--	53	--

Because I was also the cook, I had only four hundreds, and my hundreds were set out every second time. The link was made up in this way to avoid unreasonable work for each man. Imagine if the men had to haul all their eight hundreds in one go! That is 1,600 fathoms, or 3,200 metres of line! This is why each man's lines were tied together in this alternating pattern. The floats on the lines were marked with each man's initials so they knew in good time when it was time to haul in their lines. In this way, the men could take brief turns with the different work operations: shooting, hauling, unhooking and gutting the fish and 'steering' the lines. To 'steer in' the lines meant that during the hauling of the lines, the boat was held against the sea with the rudder so that the line was at the right angle to the winch. I myself, despite being the cook, had to steer in the lines many times. The skipper could not stand in the wheelhouse steering all the time; he had his own lines to take care of as well as other things to do. We took turns with the different operations.

There was another way of doing things, called fishing with 'stubs.' It involved more work, but gave better results. The fishing was done twenty-four hours a day without rest. It was done by connecting two hundreds from each man into one link of sixteen hundreds, a little over three sea miles long. Four of these stub links were made up and set and hauled in rotation, in a non-stop sequence. Just as soon as one stub was shot, another was hauled in. There was no break or rest. Between shooting and hauling, the baiting, cleaning and salting of the ling continued. Fishing with stubs was very hard work, but the catch was much bigger. Each man had a spare hundred kept in reserve, but it was only set out if a line had snapped, was worn out or had become entangled.

The setting out of the lines was done by hand. Nowadays plastic floats are used instead of willow bark and there is a metal fairlead on the stern for shooting the link. In my days, each hook had to be cast by hand. It was a dangerous job, and you had to have deft fingers when shooting the lines. Mostly it was my father, Albert Olausson, who shot the lines, and sometimes it was Arthur Pettersson. But, first, the marker buoy to which the anchor rope was attached was set at sea, and then the anchor, which was connected to the link, was thrown over the side. The buoy had a pole on top, with a red flag during the day and an oil lamp at night, so we could see it more easily. At the bottom end it had a length of chain to make it stand straight up in the sea. The buoy was an awkward thing to handle. It was about four metres long and you had to be careful when it was thrown overboard or hauled in, because it could easily pull you over the side if you caught it wrong; you used the swell to help you get it aboard, and often it was easier to handle when big seas were running. When the anchor reached the bottom, the shooting of the lines started.

The lines were placed in a stand astern, on the starboard side. Two men worked in a team. Nanny would be going at half-throttle, about three or four knots. One man set out the line-tubs in the right order, and tied together the line hundreds. The lines were tied together by the ear band, a spliced loop in each end of the line. The

line was spread out and another man cast the hooks one by one as the line ran out. The hooks were picked from left to right from each row in the tray, and the floats were above each baited hook. When the line had run out enough, the float was lifted, and was thrown with a jerk of the hand. Then the same was done with the next hook and float. You had to be quick and sure-fingered when picking and casting the hooks and floats. When the whole link had been shot, another anchor and buoy was attached and thrown over the side to mark the end of the link and to keep it in place, stretched out along the bottom.

We fished most nights, reckoning to finish setting the lines around one o'clock in the morning. The others went down to the forecabin to sleep until about three. During the fishing none of us got much rest. I myself was always at the helm between those times watching the marker buoy. We never anchored while fishing and the engine was always running, except when we went ashore sometimes in the Shetlands or the Hebrides to get fresh bait.

It was important that the engine was attended to, once every few hours. The engine had a reservoir for the lubricating oil, and there was a drip-feed system with a crank-wheel regulating the flow with every revolution. You had to open the lid of the reservoir and fill it from a can of oil. There was a handle on the crank-wheel which sometimes had to be turned a few times to prime the lubricating system. Once



Photo 4. Longlines arranged in their tubs (Yrkesfiskaren).

the engine had been stopped, and had got cold, starting it up again was complicated because there was no electric starter motor and you couldn't turn it over by hand. The cylinder had to be heated up with a blowlamp, the valves were set and then it was turned over with compressed air or with an explosive cartridge fired into the cylinder. The air tank always had to be charged with enough pressure. We had to check the gauge constantly. Seven or eight kilos of pressure was usual, but the fittings leaked a little. With less than three or four kilos of air pressure the engine would not start. The engine was kept running day and night for weeks on end, and was never stopped at sea. Since it was a compression-ignition Diesel with just one very large cylinder, it knocked loudly every time it fired and the noise carried right through the boat. Tonk-tonk-tonk it went, so slowly you could count each revolution. When we came into port and stopped the engine, there was an eerie silence. It was as if someone had died, we used to say. Sometimes it could be difficult to sleep in port because of this strange silence. We were so used to hearing the engine knocking all the time.

The propeller had variable-pitch blades, which was handy when we were laying-to, watching the buoy. It wasn't necessary to use the throttle. A turn of the propeller-control wheel in the wheelhouse and Nanny was going forward slowly, the propeller biting the water. If we wanted to drift for a while, we threw the propeller blades into neutral pitch, and when we were far enough away from the buoy, we turned the propeller-control wheel again. If you wanted to, you could make the boat lie almost still. You adjusted the steering wheel and the propeller pitch, and, if it was blowing, you increased the engine revolutions a little.

About three o'clock, I would go down to the forecabin to put on the coffee kettle and call the men who had been sleeping for only a couple of hours. After coffee it was time to haul the lines. Then, around three-thirty, it was my turn to go to bed, and around six my lines were next in the sequence and I had to go up on deck to haul them. We took turns with the different chores. One of us would be unhooking the fish and then arranging the lines in the tubs. Then the next man would take over the unhooking and somebody else would be cleaning the fish, hauling the lines, and stacking and salting the fish in the bins down in the fish-room. There was a kind of circular movement between the different chores. I had to cook as well as do all the other normal deck chores.

If you stood at the stern of the boat and looked down at the line while it was being hauled in, you could see the white belly of the ling shining in the deep for a while before the fish reached the surface. When the fish came up from the deep they were 'blown up,' that is, their bellies had been forced out through their mouths like balloons because they were hauled up faster than they could adjust to changes in the water pressure. They didn't resume their normal appearance until they had been lying on the deck for a while. When the ling came aboard, they were pulled along by the line which was being hauled through the winch, and before the fish had slid too far across the deck you had to be ready to get it off the hook. You slipped the

aired now and then to prevent the livers fermenting and splitting open the steel barrels. Since the livers were going to be boiled down to make lamp-oil, it didn't matter that they were contaminated with Diesel fuel.

When we gutted the fish, our faithful seagulls got their reward. Day after day they stayed close to Nanny. They were kittiwakes, timid and beautiful birds, smaller than ordinary seagulls, with shiny black eyes and black feet, real deep-sea sailors that you never saw near land. But when the fish were being cleaned and the entrails were being thrown overboard, they completely changed their nature and became very aggressive and fought over the fish guts. For the most part they stayed at a distance, but the bravest of them sometimes perched on the dinghy up in the bows. They sat there, watching us working on deck.

When the fish had been gutted, they were thrown down into the fish-room, where a couple of other men salted them and stacked them in the bins. First a layer of salt was put into the belly of the ling and then salt was sprinkled on top. The fish were arranged in the bin so that they lay in alternating directions, and when one layer was done, salt was sprinkled over it with a scoop, and the next layer was started.

Two bins were always filled at the same time, one at the port side and one at the starboard, so that the cargo was evenly distributed and the boat did not heel over. As the fish and salt settled, the bins had to be filled up continuously as the layers sank. When a bin was full with ling there was room for more on the top after a while. The ling we caught was salted immediately. We caught fresh ling only during the last week before returning home, if we had any ice.

When we were out at the Shetlands or in the North Atlantic, we saw nothing but sky and sea. Fishing continued day after day, weekdays and Sundays. In early summer the birds had their breeding season around the Shetlands. There were big bird rookeries there and sometimes, when we got close to land, the cliffs were white from roosting birds. Thousands of birds were continuously circling the cliffs. The gulls, gannets, fulmars and terns followed us constantly day after day. On the other hand, we seldom saw other boats. We sometimes went for weeks without seeing another boat. Now and then a big British trawler might pass by, on its way to Iceland. In those days they were coal-burners and the smoke could be seen at a good distance. Sometimes they came close when passing. They were probably a little curious about who we were: a little white Swedish boat out in the middle of nowhere. It was very seldom that we saw other ling fishermen from Bohuslän near us, even though there were about seventy boats fishing for ling in those days and of those more than ten were from Skärhamn. It just shows how big the sea is.

Normally we reckoned to catch about twenty-two tons of salted ling, and then there was the fresh ling we caught during the last week which, if we were lucky, would fill Nanny to her capacity. Our supplies were enough to last for seven weeks. Sometimes the trip could be shorter, five or six weeks, if the weather was good and if we came across a lot of fish. Occasionally we went ashore at Lerwick in the Shetlands to get fresh bait. We also went ashore at Scalloway on the west side of

the Shetlands, and at Stornoway in the Hebrides to get bait and ice. The ling preferred fresh mackerel to old salted bait.

Once, when we were fishing with the salted mackerel as bait, the ling weren't biting and we had gone closer to a coral reef to try to catch them, but when we hauled the lines there were sharks on every hook! They were small sharks, called dogfish. There were tons of them, and we were up to our knees among hundreds of the wretched things slithering all over the deck. It was not very pleasant. The worst was their razor-sharp teeth that gnawed all the snoods to tatters. Luckily we had enough short snoods with us to mend the lines and make them complete again. We thought we would try to trade the shark for fresh bait in Lerwick, but we did not think we could sell them. We went to Lerwick with all this shark on deck, packed them into boxes and put them up for auction. We didn't know that people in some parts of Britain like to eat dogfish or 'rock salmon,' and we were astonished that the catch sold so easily. We bought fresh mackerel for bait and had a bit of money to spare. When we got out to the banks again we got a good catch; the ling liked fresh bait. So the sharks brought us good luck, in spite of all the extra work they caused us.

Another time we went ashore at Lerwick to get bait, together with the 'Elsy' of Kyrkesund. In Lerwick there were herring salt-houses and girls were standing there in long rows, wearing heavy aprons, gutting and salting the herring into barrels. The girls lived in red-painted barracks and each room had bunks in tiers of three or four along the walls. They had to use ladders to get up to their bunks in the evenings. I think these girls travelled from place to place during the season to salt down herring all over Scotland and the east coast of England. When they had finished their work in the evening, they enjoyed it when we Swedes came to visit and they offered us tea. I have a funny memory from one of my many visits to Lerwick. I remember that the skipper of the Elsy was with us when we went to visit the girls. He was wearing wooden clogs and he could tap dance and play the drumsticks at the same time. He was tap-dancing and tapping the sticks along the cobbled streets of Lerwick while we were taking the girls home. They were laughing as much as we were.

Another memory from the Shetlands was when we were fishing together with several other boats. This was unusual. Among the boats there was a small fifty-footer from Grundsund. I am not sure of its name. None of the men on board was under sixty or seventy. Because of this the boat was nicknamed the 'Old Folks Home.' But everybody thought it was great that these old men were still ling fishing in the Shetlands. You had to have quick hands and everything had to be done fast in ling fishing. There wasn't much time for taking it easy. When the other boats had caught about twenty tons of ling, the 'Old Folks Home' used to come home after six or seven weeks with about twelve tons, which was not bad going for pensioners. They unloaded their ling on Johan Olausson's pier in Skärhamn. 'We are waiting for the "Old Folks Home",' they used to say when we came in there to unload.

Despite the playful name for the boat, we all admired them because we thought they were real tough old boys.

When we were fishing I had to do all the different jobs along with the rest of the men: baiting, shooting, hauling, unhooking, gutting, salting down in the fish-room, and steering in the lines. When the rest of the men were down in the forecastle sleeping, it was my duty to stand in the wheelhouse on my own and watch the buoy. Moreover I had my cooking chores. Cooking was not something you could do with your left hand while you were doing something else with your right, and so my job was harder than the adults, even though I was only fourteen.

Around nine o'clock I made breakfast. It consisted of boiled eggs, coffee, bread and butter. Before boiling the eggs I first had to ask each man how many he wanted. It usually varied between one and three. Worst was my uncle Hilmer. When I asked him, 'I'll take eight,' he would answer. He had a big appetite. Eight eggs for breakfast every day! When everyone had said how many eggs he wanted, I used a pencil to mark them with each man's initials. Each one had his own eggs; they were not part of the common supplies. I put the eggs into a string bag and submerged it into boiling water. I used a big copper kettle for the eggs, but it could be filled with



Photo 6. Fish merchant's piers, probably at Skärhamn, 1920s or 1930s. The split ling are held open by wooden splints while they are drying. If it rained, the fish would have to be covered with tarpaulins or taken into the sheds (Göteborgs Historiska Museum).

water only half way or the water would spill over the side with the motion of the boat. When the eggs were boiled, I lifted out the string bag and dipped it into a bucket of cold seawater to let the eggs cool. We had to be careful with fresh water. We only had one tankful and it had to last for six or seven weeks.

We had a big oil stove and boiling the water did not take long. The stove had adjustable fiddles to keep the saucepan, kettle and the frying pan in place in rough seas. When the eggs were done I went up the ladder and called to the men, 'You can come down and eat now!' The benches around the table had lockers under them, where we kept our drinking glasses, plates and cutlery. We took out our own bread and butter. I distributed the eggs and coffee among the men. Breakfast was the same every day. Dinner was about one or two o'clock, and it could vary. Everything depended on how the fishing was going. Most of the time we had fresh boiled ling and potatoes. I washed the potatoes in a little sawn-off barrel on the deck. We used up a twelve-litre bucket of potatoes daily. I used a stiff brush to scrub them, and then whisked them around in the bucket. Then they were emptied into another bucket and lowered down the forecastle ladder. The galley was next to the steps. There was not much room for cooking. On Sundays we used to eat yellow peas and bacon for dinner. On Saturday night I cut the salted bacon into pieces and left them to soak together with the peas. On Sunday I boiled the bacon and peas. For dessert I made sago pudding with dried fruit. After dinner we went up on deck to bait and set the lines. The men slept a little longer on Sunday morning, but I had to cook, so there was not much sleep for me.

In the evening, around seven or eight, depending on the fishing, I made supper. I fried potatoes, onions, eggs and bacon. I also made coffee. The potatoes I fried were the remainder of the bucketful I had scrubbed that morning. The potatoes were fried in a special way, almost mashed. I used a big iron frying pan and every time I turned the potatoes I mashed them, then I added a few drops of coffee to make the potatoes look brown.

On our spring trips, our friends in the Prolific usually kept company with us. But, while the other boats stayed in the North Sea around the Shetlands in the summer, we often went further out into the Atlantic. Around the Shetlands we got about 150 ling per day and we thought this was too little. We had to catch enough ling for our families to live on. We all had loans and overdrafts that kept us in debt, and things were difficult in Bohuslän in those days. The ling fetched only about twenty öre per kilo in 1937.

We rounded Sumburgh Head, at the southern end of the Shetland Islands, went North of Orkney and out to the North Atlantic to a place called Flannan. It is about forty sea miles west of the most northern point in the Hebrides. Nanny was only 53 feet long, the first time we went to Flannan. The other boats did not want to come with us, so we went there by ourselves. It was risky to go so far out at sea in these small boats. For one thing, if anyone got seriously sick or hurt, it might take two or three days to get help. All we had was a small first-aid kit containing plasters, gauze

bandages and things like that. It was important to stay healthy. In spite of being careful, we often cut ourselves on the hooks or even on the sharp teeth of the ling. It was not possible to wear gloves and our hands got cut, swollen and torn. Sometimes your hands were too sore to button up your jumper or trousers. The old men had a recipe for this. We dipped our hands into a barrel of brine. This prevented them from becoming infected, said the old men. The pain made you hop round the deck with your hands between your knees until the worst had passed. It helped, because afterwards we could move our fingers normally again. We did this after meals or at break times up on deck. But it did not take long before your hands were stiff and swollen again.

When we were lying there in the North Atlantic sometimes whales came up to breathe before they dived again. I particularly remember one time, it was Sunday and we had as usual our meal of peas and bacon. We had baited and set the lines. I was the only one awake, the others were down in the forecabin. I was on deck washing the dishes. Suddenly I heard something strange and I wondered what on earth is that? It was a big whale. He came up alongside the boat and spouted like a steam geyser right up in the air. He was much bigger than Nanny and lay quite still spouting water. It came pelting down on the deck like rain. The rest of the men came quietly and slowly up on deck. Nobody dared frighten the whale away. He could have crushed Nanny with one sweep of his tail if he had been annoyed. Finally the whale spouted a last time before diving and we could breathe freely again.

We fished for twelve days at Flannan, and the fishing was very good. We had been ashore at Stornoway, on the east side of Lewis, to buy fresh bait. By the time we had used it up in our last week of fishing, Nanny was laden with as much fish as she could carry. We had caught 37.5 tons of ling: 22 tons of salted ling, and twelve tons of fresh ling, which we had caught the last week, and over three tons of halibut and other fish. We had to use the supply room to store the ling below deck. The cargo hold was full and the supplies were as good as finished anyway. It was time to go back to Skärhamn.

My father set our course for the long voyage home. It would take a whole week. The tide tables said that we would be going with the current through the Pentland Firth, so we decided to take this way home. We had never gone this way before; usually we went north of the Orkneys. It was the same when we went from the Shetlands to Flannan or to some other bank in the North Atlantic, we always took the route around Sumburgh Head. The Pentland Firth is notorious for its strong tidal currents, which can run at up to eleven knots. We entered the Firth at five or six in the morning. There was a bit of a morning fog and we did not see much, only bare cliffs. The British trawlers were familiar with the currents of the Pentland Firth and they stayed close to land, where the current was weaker. We stayed in the middle of the sound and passed through at a good speed. When we passed through the fishing grounds around the Shetlands we came across several boats which had remained there, among others the 'Argo' from Skärhamn. They had caught only

eight to twelve tons of ling, but with 37.5 tons aboard, Nanny looked like a freighter carrying stone from the granite quarries at Rixö, the way she was so low in the water. When we had said good-bye to the other boats at the Shetlands we set a course homeward.

When we approached the Norwegian coast, we headed for Bergen to sell the livers to the tryworks there. The tryworks was on an island called Feiö in the Bergen archipelago. On this island there was also a plain little graveyard, where Swedish fishermen were buried. It dated back to the time when the lines were set and hauled from open boats. Many fishermen were killed in those days through accidents. One wave could swamp the boat and drown the men. The older men in Nanny's crew told me that their fathers and forefathers had put up simple wooden crosses and stone cairns in memory of their drowned comrades here on this little island.

When we had sold the livers to the tryworks we went directly back to Skärhamn. We arrived on a Sunday afternoon and there was a big gathering to greet us when Nanny came into the harbour. People saw that Nanny was low in the water, which meant work for many of the people ashore. We berthed at Walter Hendry's pier. First we unloaded the fresh ling and the fish-girls started to work on them immediately. The ling were slit open, the back bone was cut out and then the fish were opened out. Wooden sticks were stuck into the ling to keep them stretched flat and then they were hung to dry on stages in the open air. Unsalted, air-dried ling was called 'lutfisk.' Every Swede knows that lutfisk is a part of the traditional Swedish Christmas feast. But not many of them know where these special fish are caught, or how.

A couple of men were down in Nanny's fish-room throwing the ling up onto the deck. The whole catch was unloaded by hand without mechanical help. Down in the fish-room they put a couple of barrels on top of each other to reach the hatch. They worked at the bins on both sides of the boat, port and starboard. Three or four fish were brought up at a time to a man standing on the barrels and he threw them up on deck. When the salted ling came up on deck they were hit a couple of times against the bulwark so that the thick layer of Mediterranean salt would come loose before throwing them up onto the pier for weighing on the scales. If the loose salt wasn't knocked off, the buyers, standing on the pier watching the unloading, would object. The ling was weighed on the scales to make up hundred-kilo lots, and then it was moved to the buyers' piles on the pier. Then the fish-girls put the ling to soak in water until the following day so it would soften enough to be split open. Then it was salted down in big round wooden barrels and left for a few weeks. After that it was taken from the barrels, rinsed off and sold as 'kabeljo.'

When ling fishermen returned home the children gathered on the pier because they knew that there were sweets to be had. We used to bring them Balta stars and candied sugar. Balta stars were white or pink. They could be star shaped, round or heart shaped. We bought them in the village of Baltasound on the island of Unst in the northern Shetlands. The candied sugar sweets came from Norway. Sometimes

we bought biscuits in the Shetlands. They were unsweetened biscuits in a jar and did not taste very good. The jars they came in, on the other hand, were very nice and it was mostly because of the jars that we bought them.

When the unloading of the ling was finished, the preparations for the next trip started and after a week of rest we were on our way to the Shetlands again. We made three trips that season. Our earnings for all three trips were 1,800 kronor per full share. I had three-quarters of a share, and so I got 1,200 kronor for five months' work. These days, in Sweden, a skilled workman might earn that much in a day. But things were different then.

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