

lemonade around the local area two or three days a week.

Messrs T Gass & Sons

(Interview with Mr Fred Gass, Skinburness Drive)

Mr Gass' father, Thomas Gass, was a blacksmith, as was his father before him, at Sea View - the smithy and cottages have long since been demolished and the Doctors Clinic now stands on the site.

The family moved from Scotland to Causewayhead originally, then moved into Silloth - probably in the late 1800's (there was a Mr James Ramsay, a general smith at Sea View in 1882). Mr Gass' brother, Jimmy, took over from his father. Mr Fred Gass' only time in the blacksmith shop was a short period when his brother Jimmy went off to the Navy in the 1914-18 war and his father was without a hammer-man. He was taken, abruptly, out of school at the age of thirteen and given a large hammer to swing.

Mr Gass can remember the occupants of the 3 cottages adjoining the blacksmith shop at Sea View, which belonged to the North British Railway Company:-

Mr Tommy Little - a railway inspector
 Mr Sam Ritchie - Tugboat engineer
 Mr George Irving - Harbour master

The work done at the Blacksmith's in the early 1900's was, shoeing horses, work for ships coming into the docks, work with builders - renewing iron ovens from houses, working with joiners, eg Wm Scott and Son, Harbour Workshop behind the Smithy, the joiners making wooden wheels and Mr Gass putting on the metal hoops. There was a lot of work for farmers, making chains, plough shares etc. The latter were visited every six months by pony and cart to get bills settled. Mr Gass also had a Railway contract.

In the 1920's they set up a Motor Engineering business, expanding by building a separate garage behind the Smithy.

English and Bennet

This was a small factory manufacturing sweets, built behind Burnswark Terrace in 1929, but it was eventually remodelled into several houses now known as Derwent Terrace.

Stronachs Shipbrokers

This firm was established in 1861. They originally had premises in Eden Street but later moved to Station Road. They had varied interests at first; they managed the Silloth Branch of the Cumberland Union Bank and the Westminster Fire, Life and Accident

Insurance Company; they were Ship Brokers and Coal and Slate agents.

Fishers of Barrow took over the business in 1968, then a Mr Gardiner of Annan took over in 1974 and formed the Silloth Shipping Company who ran their own boats as well as carrying on the business of Shipbroking for other boats coming into Silloth Docks.

Ships owned at that time:-

| | | |
|---|---------|------|
| SILLOTH TRADER | Tonnage | 880 |
| SILLOTH PRIDE | " | 740 |
| SILLOTH STAG (on charter) | " | 1100 |
| SHEILA MARIA (on charter) | " | 500 |
| CHRISTINA MARIA (privately owned - managed by Silloth Shipping Co.) | " | 600 |

The firm was taken over by Carrs Milling Industries in 1981.

Redmaynes (Plastics) Ltd

In 1948 a Lord Adams, who was working hard to bring industry to the West Coast, persuaded Redmaynes Holdings Ltd of Wigton to start up a factory in Silloth. Their first premises were the buildings where Blakes Garage (West Silloth Motors) is at present, which had previously been used by Arnisons Lemonade. They moved to their Eden Street premises in 1949/50. They manufactured rainware, hanging wardrobes, bath caps etc., from sheet plastic.

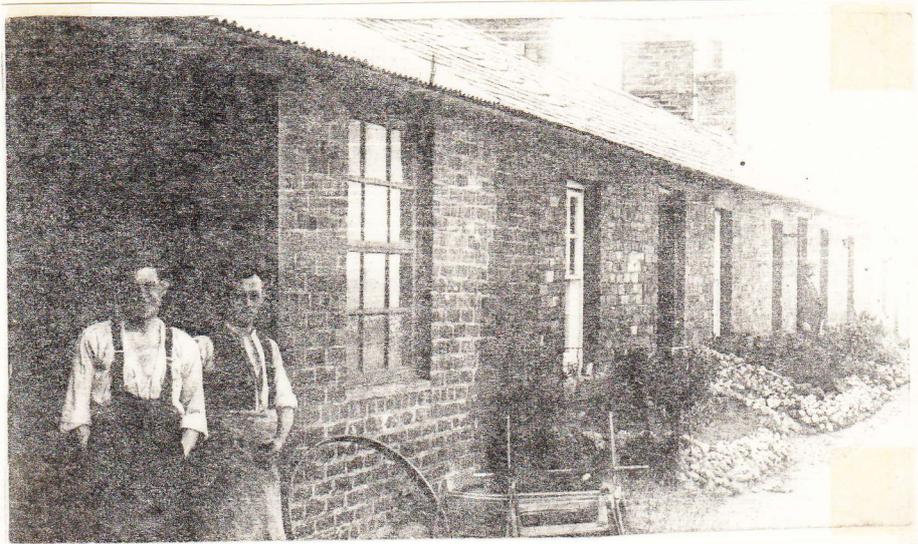
Their employees were all women, mainly sewing machinists, and they never employed more than 25. At the time of closure in October 1980 there were only 12 women employed. Mr Ernie Wood of The Crofts, West Silloth, was manager of the factory from February 1951 to July 1980, caretaking manager until October 1980.

At one time Redmaynes wanted to expand their premises into the Playing Field area. The local Town Council was agreeable but the County Planning Department said that 'that area was earmarked for a bus station', (!?), and permission was refused. So Redmaynes expanded their factory at Penrith instead.

Dinkware Ltd (now the Fisherman's Cove)

This firm was established in London in 1946 and the factory at Silloth began working in 1948 in the building which was formerly the old Vicarage. Childrens rompers, dresses, underwear, ladies nightdresses, pyjamas and underwear were made here. The workforce varied from 30 - 80 girls, working as cutters and sewing machinists. The numbers employed varied greatly because of the seasonal demand of the products. The factory continued until the mid 1970's, with a greatly depleted workforce, finally closing because they could not compete with manufacturers from abroad.

Mr Jimmy Gass, Blacksmith, SeaView





Fishing

In an official survey of 1649, after the 'union of the crowns', there are records of some boats fishing off Skinburness. In 1680 some bailiffs notes recorded 'one fisherman at Silloth'.

The fishing industry has never employed many men in modern Silloth, but it has been the only employment for at least five families in the town since the beginning of this century.

The Baxter family moved to Silloth, by boat, from Annan, in 1914. The tides were easier at Silloth for the fishing boats to come in and out of the docks, making fishing trips shorter. The bay on which Silloth stands was deep and the coast approachable at almost all states of the tide. At Annan they usually had to stay out for 10 hours because of the tides.

When the Baxters came to Silloth there were two boats fishing out of Silloth:-

The 'Pursuit' sailed by a Mr Woodhouse whose family came from Morecombe in the early 1900's.

The 'Victory' sailed by Mr Billy Harris who also worked on the railway.

The Baxter's first boat was the 'Lizzie' which the father and two of his four sons (Jim and Ab) fished. Their second boat, the 'Foam', which was built at Annan was fished by Mr Jim Baxter and his sons Jim Jnr and Ab Jnr after him. Their third boat, the 'Venetia' was fished by Mr Ab Baxter.

The boats were under sail, which they made and repaired themselves as well as their nets. Then the Baxter family were the first to put engines in their boats so they could fish farther afield - as far as Maryport. They fished for shrimps from March to October and for other fish such as plaice and cod the rest of the year. In the early days fish were very plentiful - not today.

After the Baxters other fishermen followed from Annan; an uncle, Mr Woodman in the 'Britannia'; Mr George Irving in the 'Ada', he became the pilot for boats coming into Silloth Docks as well as fishing. Later, again from Annan, came Mr Billy Wilson, Mr Billy Irving and Mr Jim Irving.

In the summer, as well as fishing, the fishermen gave pleasure trips in their boats from Silloth Sea Front; the men building the landing stage themselves.

Trips to Annan were 5/- (five shillings) return

Trips 'round the bay', 9d (old pennies) adults, 6d children

In 1926 eight Silloth fishermen approached the local Council requesting that the boats that took out pleasure trips should be licenced to regulate sailings and this was agreed. The landing stage was still standing in 1935 but trips ceased during the Second World War and never resumed.

Mr Ab Baxter, Lawn Terrace, fished full-time until 1940 when he became a pilot for Silloth Docks until his retirement in 1967 - still fishing in his free time. Local fishermen have always been

