

SEVERN PROJECT

Fishing on the Severn Estuary 2 – Net fishing



Sources: This lesson looks at net fishing on the River Severn. It uses photographs from Gloucestershire Archives collection reference D4764/4/31.

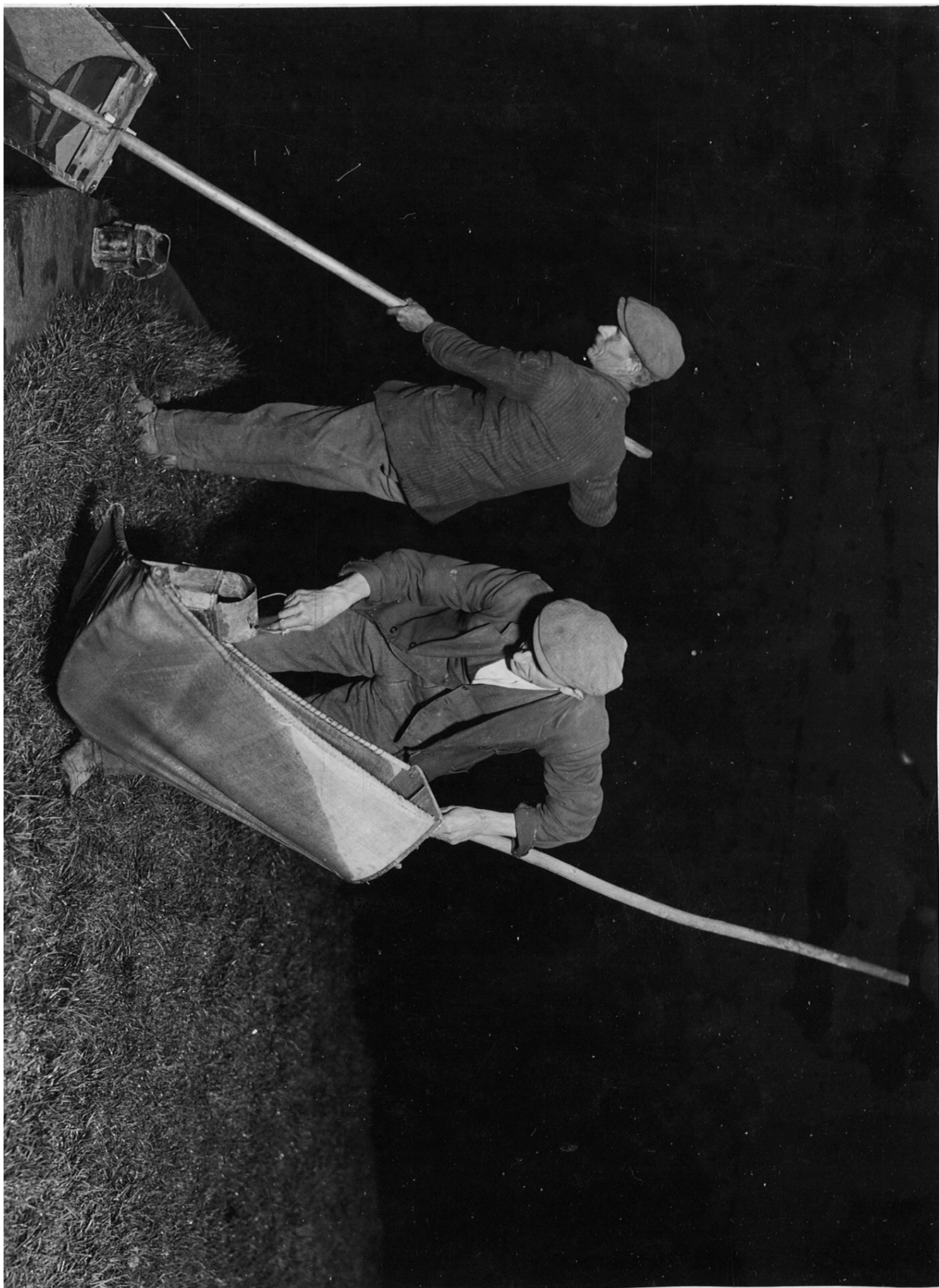
Background information: Net-fishing has been used on the upper and middle reaches of the Severn Estuary since the Mesolithic period, approximately 10,000 years ago. There were three main techniques used: Elvering, Lave-net fishing and Long-netting.

Photograph 1 - Elvering: Elvers are baby eels and they are caught as they migrate upstream from the sea on large tides in the spring. Elvering takes place at night on the river from Tewkesbury to Rodley with fishermen using a special net with a very fine mesh. Elvers were once eaten in large numbers by Gloucestershire folk, especially the poor but are now expensive to buy, costing £15 a kilo. Most elvers caught are exported to Japan and Europe, but stocks are declining due to overfishing.

Photograph 2 - Lave-net fishing: A lave-net is a triangular shaped net fixed to a Y-shaped frame that is used to catch salmon. Lave-netting takes place at low tide on the middle reaches of the estuary. It was a solo fishing method that required fitness and good local knowledge of the river. The fisherman would wade out into the shallows as the tide ebbed and wait until he spotted the 'run' of a fish. This was a line of ripples that appeared when a fish moved from shallow to deeper water. The fisherman would then run to get in front of the fish and dip the net into the water to catch it. Lave-netting was a selective fishing technique because small fish could be released unharmed. In this photograph, the fisherman is standing on a rock that marks a parish boundary.

Photograph 3 – Long-netting: Long-netting (a version of seine-netting) was practiced from Tewkesbury to Rodley. The net consisted of a 100-200m long net with floats on the top and lead weights on the bottom. A team of 4 men and a punt were required to fish the net. To set the net, one end was held by a 'debut man' on the shore while two others would row out into the river on the punt, paying out the net as they went. As the punt and net drifted downstream the debut man would walk with it. To close the net, the punt would row quickly back to the riverbank and pass the open end to a 'muntle man'. The debut man and muntle man would then haul in the net being helped by the boat men. It was very effective way to catch the main species of river fish (salmon, trout, eel, flounder, mullet, Allis shad, Twaite and lamprey) were caught.

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Learning Outcomes - To know that a historian asks questions such as who, what, when, why, where, how, to discover information from a source . To discover what historical information can be learnt from a photograph. To be able to interpret information from a photograph in a range of ways. To be able to chronologically order a sequence of events.

Pose a series of questions to elicit investigation and discovery of the facts: What is happening? Who are the men? What are the objects in the picture? What is their purpose? What are they made from? Was it in the present or the past?

Dramatic interpretation: How do you think the men use the objects? Who are they? Where are they going? Where do you think it took place? What are the men thinking about? Who else might have been there? Are they happy?

Children could:

- Draw a story board of the sequence of events for all the fishing techniques.
- Imagine what it was like to work on these traps – think about what you might see, feel or hear. Act out the various methods.
- Think about what would happen if the traps caught no fish? What if they caught a lot of fish? How might this affect the man's future or his family?
- What might have happened when laws to conserve fish stocks were imposed? What might the fishing communities have done to make a living?
- Creatively improvise these situations

Curriculum links: KS2

Historical, geographical and social understanding: Essential knowledge 1b, 1c, 1d; Key Skills 2a, 2c, 2d; Cross-curricular studies 3a, 3b, 3c; Breadth of learning 4a1, 4b4, 4c2, 4d2, 4d3, 4d4; Curriculum progression M1, M4, M6, M7, M10;

Understanding the arts: Essential knowledge 1a, 1b, 1c; Key Skills 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d; Cross-curricular studies 3b, 3c; Breadth of learning 4a1, 4a3, 4a5, 4c1, 4c3, 4c4, 4d1, 4d2; Curriculum progression M1, M2, M3, M4, M6, M7, M8, M9;

Links with: Understanding English, communication and languages; Understanding physical development, health and well being.

A&DT: Look at the photographs from a composition point-of-view. Are they good photographs? What would improve them? Would they be better in colour? Discuss the technology being used in both capturing the image and the fishing techniques.

Children could:

- Recreate the pictures in colour, using everyday colours but also unusual ones.
- Recreate the picture in different ways: i.e. collage, paint, charcoal, pastels.
- Make models of the nets being used.
- Try to make nets. Research the techniques using the Internet.

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- Think about the technology being used. Would modern materials be better suited? What advantages or disadvantages would there be?
- Many fish caught in the Severn were smoked to preserve them and several smokehouses still survive on the river (i.e. at Minsterworth). Investigate how these structures work. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this and other methods of preserving fish and food.

Curriculum links KS2:

Historical, geographical and social understanding: Essential knowledge 1a, 1c; Key Skills 2a, 2c, 2d; Cross-curricular studies 3b, 3c; Breadth of learning 4a1, 4d4; Curriculum progression M1, M10, M10;.

Understanding the arts: Essential knowledge 1a, 1 b, 1c, 1d; Key Skills 2a, 2b, 2c; Cross-curricular studies 3a, 3b, 3c; Breadth of learning 4a1, 4a2, 4a3, 4b1; Curriculum progression M1, M2, M3.

Scientific and technological understanding: Key skills 1a, 1c, 1d, 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d; Cross-curricular studies 3b, 3c; Breadth of learning 4a1, 4b1, 4b2, 4b3, 4b4, 4c1, 4c2, 4c3, 4d1, 4d2,; Curriculum progression M1, M2, M3, M4, M5, M10, M12.

Links with: Understanding English, communication and languages; Understanding physical development, health and well being; Mathematical understanding.

Citizenship: Why are there only men in the pictures? Where might the women be? Would women have a role in this type of industry? Are these men wealthy or poor? What is their social class? None of these jobs survive commercially today – why not?

Children could:

- Research the decline in the fishing industry. What changes have created this situation?
- Look at the different ways that people catch fish around the world. What might happen in the future?
- Research the sorts of jobs and industry behind this scene:
- Fishing gear – Forestry, net-making, metal working.
- Men - cloth making, tanning, shoe-making, metal working (belt buckles, buttons), clothing industry, hat-making.

Curriculum links KS2:

Historical, geographical and social understanding: Essential knowledge 1a,1b, 1c; 1d; Key Skills 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d; Cross-curricular studies 3b, 3c; Breadth of learning 4a1, 4b4, 4c2, 4d1, 4d2, 4d3, 4d4; Curriculum progression M1, M4, M5, M7, M9, M10.

Links with: Understanding English, communication and languages; Understanding physical development, health and well being.