

**Raising Standards
in the Ports Sector**

Quality/Standards Audit Newlyn

CONFIDENTIAL NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Seafish Report No.463

September 1995

The Sea Fish Industry Authority

Seafish Technology

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**Date: September 1995
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Summary of Main Findings

1. Fish quality ex-vessels was generally observed as good.
2. On board icing practice and standards of washing and gutting was good.
3. Fish handling onshore was sometimes poor, particularly by the grading gangs.
4. Temperature control on the market was poor.
5. The fish market meets the basic requirements of food safety legislation, but space and access is a problem during peak landings and is identified as a contributory factor to some of the poor practices that occur on the market.
6. The standard of cleaning of the market and fish boxes was satisfactory but cleaning of ancillary equipment was poor.
7. Regulations prohibiting eating and drinking on the market were universally ignored by fishermen, salesmen and buyers.
8. There needs to be better management of the use of market doors to improve temperature control and to deny access by gulls.
9. There is a need for greater communication between sectoral interests to agree standards, responsibilities and enforcement and generally for them to become more involved in the promotion of the port and its facilities.

10. There is a need for the local Environmental Health Officer to build bridges with the industry and to agree a programme of improvements with the support of the industry.
11. Merchants would like to see an improvement in the advance notice of landings and in scheduling of landings into the port.

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1. Introduction

As part of Seafish's policy of encouraging higher standards of quality and hygiene in the ports sector, a survey of landing and sale operations was undertaken at Newlyn on the 9th and 10th August at the invitation of local interests. The following notes provide a brief record of observations with regard to the standard of existing facilities, equipment and operating practices for landing and sale. The investigation extended from the fish quays, market and dock estate but excluded merchants premises and vessels.

The notes are intended to highlight any problem areas and form the basis for discussion between interested parties to raise standards where required, and to promote the Port of Newlyn.

2. Background

The increasing influence and demands of the corporate food sector and the requirements of new food safety legislation has given impetus to the need generally to raise standards of ports infrastructure, management and working practices. Conservation measures and quotas likewise require that we maximise the return from a finite resource. These demands call for rapid unloading and handling operations to be conducted under hygienic and temperature controlled conditions.

Seafish has recently conducted surveys at five other ports and found that bad practices persist and that much still needs to be done in terms of education and enforcement to meet new higher standards. This is particularly true on the auction market where the lack of a single effective authority on the ground often results in operational practices that are at odds with higher standards of quality, hygiene and efficiency.

3. Survey Results

The following notes provide a brief record of observations made on the 9th and 10th August, dates chosen to coincide with tides likely to provide good landings by the netters in summer weather conditions. It is acknowledged that the observations conducted on such a limited timescale may not be representative but are a true record and form a basis for discussion.

3.1 Quality of landings, ex-vessel

The quality of landings ex-vessel by both netters and beamers on the two nights monitored, was good in terms of intrinsic freshness quality, physical condition, temperature control, box filling and standards of washing and gutting. Temperature control by the beamers was particularly good with most fish close to 0°C. Many of the problems of poor temperature control and poor handling practice occur after landing (see Section 3.3).

3.2 Basic infrastructure

Newlyn fish market is a relatively modern structure having a concrete base supported on piles, with concrete block cavity walls. There are six doors on the quay side and seven on the rear which are at loading bay height. Access to the rear is by a public road that is often congested with traffic. Use is also made of the quay apron by road vehicles particularly after the sale for removal of fish. The roof of the market comprises corrugated sheeting that has later been insulated and underdrawn. The building is structurally sound and meets the basic requirements of Food Safety Legislation. On the quay side alternate doors are equipped with hydraulic platform lifts. The building measures approximately 103 m x 15 m and is orientated approximately north-south. Exposed steelwork and fittings have suffered from corrosion caused by the salty atmosphere and the use of dock water for wash down. There are two small refrigerated chills within the market approximately 20m² each, one of which appears not to be in use. Both are in poor condition and the waste heat from the second discharges into the market building due to the ducting having come apart from the condenser discharge, adding to the heat build up within the building. Male toilet facilities are provided at the south end of the market with public facilities (male and female) at the head of North Pier. Both facilities however are kept locked until shortly before the auction sale and are not, therefore, available for use by crews or shore gangs involved in landing and grading etc. There are no hand wash facilities in the market available to grading gangs etc. A portacabin located next to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (R.N.L.I.) station provides staff facilities (changing etc) for employees of W. Stevenson and Sons.

Small wooden wall cabinets within the market intended for telephone use (?) appear not to be in use for that purpose, although they are used for storage of tea, coffee, mugs etc. and for electrical connection of a kettle for brewing up.

Drainage of the market floor is by a fall to a continuous interceptor drain just inside the market on the quay side. Drainage of the quay apron is by a fall to the dock. The market conforms to requirements in respect of lighting and signs prohibiting smoking, eating etc.

A box washing facility is provided at the south end of the market in a small self-contained area. Hot vapours discharge into the market when in use through open doors, but this is after fish has been removed (or should have been) from the market. The facility is barely adequate to handle, wash and store market boxes. It is also used to wash some boats and merchants boxes and space is particularly a problem with stack-only boat boxes.

With regard to the capacity of the market and its ability to cope with the volume of landings, the facility is adequate under normal circumstances. During peak landings, operations on the market become congested but are maintained by stacking of boxes. In certain circumstances fish may be delivered ex-vessel to merchants premises. There is a plentiful supply of ice to both the fleet and merchants from plants owned by the Cornish Ice Company (plate) and W. Stevenson and Sons (flake). Some merchants also have small plants for their own use. Ice is delivered by arrangement to the market in plastic skips for re-icing of fish.

The standard of cleaning of the market and of fish boxes was satisfactory but cleaning of ancillary equipment, such as weighing machines used on the market and some ice skips was poor. Regulations prohibiting eating and drinking on the market were universally ignored by fishermen, salesmen and buyers, although there was not much evidence of smoking on the market. The standard of dress was mixed. The shore grading gangs were well equipped with full-length white PVC aprons and most fishermen with oil skins. Some of the buyers and ancillary workers, however, were less suitably dressed.

Other practices that are worthy of comment are the use of the market quay for delivery of fuel oil to boats and the dumping of rubbish and gear about the harbour estate. (Note: much of which was subsequently cleared in preparation for the Newlyn Fish Festival).

3.3 Operating practices

Although Newlyn has a reasonable standard of basic infrastructure in terms of quays, market and ice plants etc., there is much that could be done to improve operating practices with regard to both hygiene and quality control. Transfers of landings from the quayside to the market are made using flatbed road vehicles in the case of beamers landing on the North Quay, and by fork lift trucks or hand pallet trucks for the netters

landing to the market. The timescales and distances in either case are short and should not expose fish to any significant risk of contamination or temperature rise (but see below). Boats use their own gear for unloading.

On receipt at the market, boxes are graded and weighed. Landings made by netters are graded by the boats crew and landings by the beamers by a shore gang employed by W. Stevenson and Sons. In both bases the operation is performed manually. Boxes of fish are placed on an upturned kit and fish graded into clean market boxes. The standard of grading appeared good but the handling in some cases was rough. On one occasion fish delivered to the rear of the market by road was being graded on the rear of the flatbed and thrown from the lorry into boxes within the market. By grading the fish off the lorry into boxes rather than removing the boxes into the market and grading there, fish remains on the lorry unprotected from temperature gain and contamination longer than necessary and throwing fish can physically damage them.

After grading and weighing the fish may be re-iced and then laid out on the market ready for sale. Not all fish however is re-iced, and that that is, does not always receive enough. Prior to removal from the market fish temperatures were measured up to 17°C due to poor icing and poor management of the use of market doors. If doors on the quayside are left open, the orientation of the market allows direct exposure of fish to the morning sun. This is particularly a problem after the sale when most of the doors are left open. Some fish was observed still on the market well into the afternoon (16.40 hrs). Leaving doors open also encourages gulls onto the market.

3.4 Organisation and management

Similar to the situation at many other ports, there appears to be a lack of organisation, control and discipline of the operations conducted on the market, contrary to the interests of efficiency and quality standards. There is a need for greater communication between sectoral interests to agree standards, responsibilities and enforcement and generally for them to be more involved in the promotion of the port and its facilities.

There is a need particularly for the Environmental Health Officer to build bridges with the industry and to agree a programme of improvements with the support of the industry.

Other issues raised by merchants were:

- a) the need for improved advance knowledge of landings;
- b) better scheduling of landings into the port; and
- c) possibly a slightly earlier start to the auction sale.

4. Recommendation

That this report is used for a round table discussion between the Harbour Authority, Industry Representatives, Local Authority and Seafish, of the problem areas and how they could be addressed both within the physical constraints of the existing ports infrastructure and in the longer term.

Space on the market place is identified as a problem during peak landings and is a contributory factor to some of the poor practices that occur on it. It is suggested that consideration might be given to better utilisation of market floor area and/or extension of the market together with the introduction of mechanised handling.