Fish Roads

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One of the great claims to fame of the drovers is that they undertook a huge journey from the hinterlands of Scotland to the great cattle market of Smithfield near London but many fish traders and people associated with the fish industry would undertake a similarly lengthy journey. Girls and young women of a fishing family who were not yet attached to a man were often employed in the gutting industry, they would stay on shore and wait for the catch to come in and, once it was landed, their job was to gut the fish and make them ready for transporting as quickly as possible.

However, shoals of fish moved around the country according to the weather and the seasons and so the fishing fleets would travel around the British Isles as well. As the fleets moved their way around the country, the gutting girls would make their way around the country's coastline waiting at every place where a catch was due to be landed to gut the fish.

The actual routes that these women travellers used are not recorded but they are likely to have been paths and roads that have since been taken into the road network. There are a number of other routes associated with the fish trade that have not been taken into the road network though and they are routes used by traders of fish.

These would primarily have been used by cadgers, who were fish traders taking the fish from where they were landed to where they could be sold at most profit, which tended to be places far inland. Some, like the great Herring Road from Dunbar, where the fish were caught, to Lauder, where the fish were sold, were, at 35km, very long indeed. In the days before freezers, the fish would either be salted or smoked in preparation for the journey so that they could be preserved for the journey. It is therefore no coincidence that salt pans were often nearby busy fishing industries such as Prestonpans in East Lothian and St Monans in the East Neuk of Fife.