

28 February 2012  
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# NORTH WEST WALES

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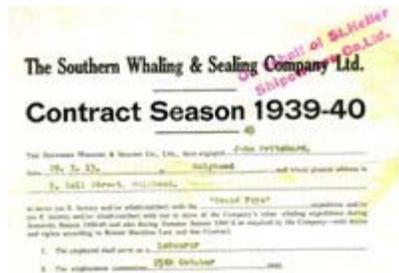
## The whale hunters

**Alan Pritchard of Holyhead** came on board the **Hysbys** at Holyhead Maritime Museum to describe the whaling expeditions which embarked from his home port, with his father aboard.



I have records of two whaling expeditions from Holyhead which took place in the winters of 1939 and 1940. A number of Holyhead seamen took part in them, including my father, John Pritchard.

Holyhead, like many areas of Britain, suffered in the depression of the 1930s; work was scarce, so two whaling companies came to recruit workers, such as those pictured above.



My father's contract (left) says that pay was to be £9/10 shillings (£9.50) a month with an allotment of £4/10 sent home to his mother per month - obviously the money was more than welcome in Holyhead at that time.

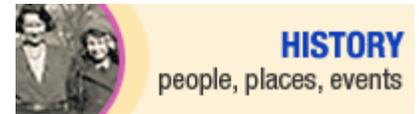
There was also a bonus at 0.182 pence for each barrel of whale oil brought back. With 170 kilos in each barrel, and 240 pence in the pound, that wasn't much.

But that pay was pretty good in those days - after a six month voyage in 1939, my father was paid off with over £100 - and to come into Holyhead with that much in 1930 was a lot of money.

It was very hard work - they talk of it romantically now, but it was harsh. They worked for 12 hours a day, and the hardest job was cleaning out the tanks. You're talking about fuel oil tanks - they were filthy, and deep in the bowels of the ship.

I remember my father telling me that on the way out to Antarctica the fuel tanks would be full of fuel, and as they used it up they'd clean the tanks and fill them up with whale oil for the passage home.

They also had to process the whales, which involved cutting up the carcasses (right). I think they're sperm whales, looking at their size in my father's photos.



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## Weather for Holyhead

	<b>Sunday</b> max 16°C min 10°C		<b>Monday</b> max 12°C min 7°C
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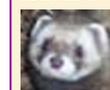
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## Tai Hanesyddol

O blastai crand i ffermydd gwledig, camwch dros

I remember him telling me about the Quislings on board the Norwegian ship - traitors to the government during the Second World War. They were targeted by the Norwegian crew because a Quisling was a German sympathiser who helped run Norway for the Germans.



drothwy rhai o dai mwyaf  
hanesyddol yr ardal

The work ceased in the early 1940s, especially when Norway was overrun by the Germans.

I know my father applied to go back to work for them in 1947, when I was two, but I have a letter saying there were no vacancies for that season.

My father continued to work on the sea, before taking a shore job which involved looking after the boats in harbour.  
*Alan Pritchard*

#### your comments

##### **Angie, Kent**

Interesting article. My husband's great-uncle was on the whalers, he originated from Holyhead. He went to live in Amlwch, his name was John Emmanuel Williams.  
Mon Feb 11 09:54:31 2008

##### **vicki Mildenhall Suffolk**

My father Bob Thomas was also working on the whalers and told us stories about what they did.  
Thu Jan 10 13:12:34 2008

##### **Jackie, Holyhead**

My grandfather Christopher Dodd Hodgson was a whaler, his picture is in the book THE ANGLESEY WHALERS, which I am fortunate to have.  
Tue Aug 28 09:59:55 2007

##### **Len Holyhead**

Denis Hodgson's father Will Hodgson who lived in 13 Maes-Y-Mor was a whaler he was away for long periods, in there house on display was a large whale tooth in the centre of the living room table.  
Mon Jan 15 09:42:45 2007

##### **Betty, Holyhead**

I'm sure I remember a girl named Winnie Thomas from (Station Street? perhaps) who was in the National School with me, about 1939, and she brought a whale's tooth to school for the class to see. I believe her father was a whaler at the time ---anyone else remember this, anyone old enough!  
Tue Oct 17 09:22:41 2006

**sharon doughty llangefni**

just read your article on the whale hunters ' i believe my grandad was working with the whailers and would love to find out more information about him and the people who worked as whailers

Mon Sep 4 10:37:45 2006

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