



NORTH TYNESIDE
COMMUNITY
INDEPENDENTS

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Chronicle Live

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Fishing heritage

Cullercoats village was founded in 1539. At that time, it was mostly dependent on fishing. Cullercoats land was passed to Thomas Dove from the Deleval family in 1644. In that year fisherman Richard Simpson rented the land and was given permission to fish with one boat and was also permitted to build and repair the boat on the land in partnership with Dove.

The natural harbour at Cullercoats helped the village grow and attracted many artists, including the famous Wilmslow Homer. Homer painted the fisher women of Cullercoats during his 18 months stay in the village.

Along with its watchtower, the Dove marine laboratory and the lifeboat station, Cullercoats past historic charm is still visible despite a lot of development in the area. This includes the fishing boats that sit on the land next to the Queens Head pub. They serve as a reminder of what Cullercoats once was, a fishing village. In its 'Visit North Tyneside' tourist information, the council highlight the past fishing industry and how tourists can still see small fishing boats in and around the bay.

However, the recent dispute with the council over the boatyard could see these boats disappear. This would be the end of what is left of an almost 500-year-old history of fishing and repair in Cullercoats. The council claim that the boatyard was never intended for maintenance and repair, yet that is exactly what was insisted on by Thomas Dove centuries ago. The fisherman has argued if they do not keep the boats safely maintained they will not be able to retain their commercial fishing licences from the Government.



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The council complains that the boatyard is overgrown with weeds and littered with derelict vessels. The fishermen as tenants of the Council and pay a licence fee which requires the council to maintain the land. The fisherman allege that the council have failed in this responsibility for the past 10 years.

There is also concern about the newly revised tenancy licences which the fishermen are being pressed to sign by the council. The tenancies would put them in a position where they could no longer comply with their commercial fishing licence obligations, as they could not maintain their boats on the land.

Thomas Dove knew the answer for the village. Fishing is an integral part of Cullercoats' rich heritage. In 15 years Cullercoats will be celebrating its 500-year foundation as a fishing village. How devastating it would then be to find a fishing village without fishing boats.

Sincerely,

Cathy Davis

North Tyneside Community Independent



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