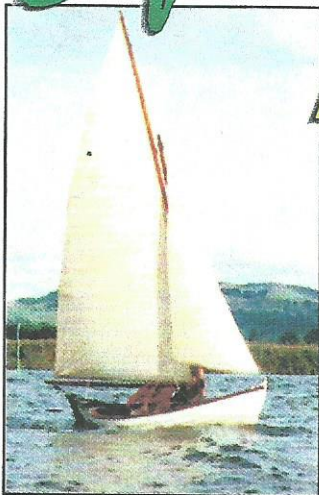


# Open Boat Cruising AROUND FIFE



**I** SUPPOSE my first essay in open boat cruising was in 1974 when, with my wife and two of our three daughters we trailed our brand new Shetland Model from Newburgh to Inverary. The boat had been collected off the Shetland ferry some days previously, the tides in the Tay that weekend were unfavourable, and we were keen to try it out. So off to Inverary we went, launched the boat and spent a couple of days sailing about, staying overnight in the youth hostel.

Since then, with a variety of different crews, the boat has cruised on the west coast, the Clyde and over to Arran - camping; the Small Isles - camping; Loch Sunart, Kilchoan and Tobermory - camping; Bunessan, Staffa and nearby - bed and breakfasting. However more cruising

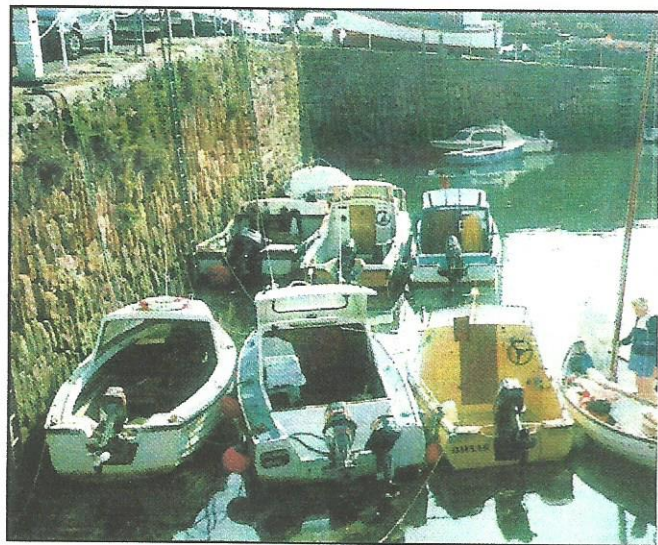
Back in 1974, Gateside sailor George Gall trailed his brand new Shetland Model to Loch Fyne, but once the tides on the Tay were more favourable, it was back to his native Fife for an ongoing sojourn of the Kingdom's famous fishing harbours

has been enacted around the Fife coast; nine times she has rounded Fife Ness. As we live in Fife and are members of Newburgh Sailing Club we can have open boat cruising with home comforts.

There are a number of small but interesting harbours along the coast of Fife. The way the cruising is done is to start fairly early, sail from whatever harbour the boat is in to the next harbour (which may or may not have been the day's objective) then take a bus back to the starting point, collect the car and drive home. A good bus service connects all the fishing villages plus St Andrews and Tayport.

## Tide Times

When cruising in an open boat you must pay strict attention to weather forecasts, tide times and tidal streams. You must be willing to



Tying up in Crail harbour.

forgo sailing when conditions are unfavourable, and you should be ready to turn back or go to an alternative harbour should the need arise.

My boat has been trailed home from Crail on occasions when weather forecasts

compass heading carefully noted. Very soon the Isle of May was hidden from view and we could hear its foghorn. Haar was indeed wreathing about us as we passed Largo pierhead.

On occasions the outboard motor is used. At one time my cruising was done without it, but rowing from the Isle of May to Crail one hot, windless day changed that. Then too there was the time, having rounded Fife Ness heading towards Tayport, that the wind was found to be right on the nose and

strengthening. Beating hard on the port tack was taking us steadily offshore, frequent tacking would

take us hours to get even as far as St Andrews, so choosing the only sandy spot on that stretch of coast, at Cambo, ashore we went dropped the sails and mounted the outboard. That way we arrived at St Andrews harbour while there was still water in it.

The Fife harbours dry out at low water. To get a reasonable length of time sailing it is best to arrange to be at sea during the time the harbours are dry. It is better to arrive at a harbour when there is plenty of water in it rather than get stuck on its muddy bottom.

Sailing on the Forth is quite straightforward with many attractive fishing villages and



suggested that it would be unwise to attempt to round Fife Ness. On one occasion when aiming to sail from Aberdour to St Monans (a distance of 21 miles) against a light south easterly wind, we were near Elie Ness when haar was seen coming in from the North Sea.

Largo was downwind, so course was altered towards it,