

Great Brehat



Norman Cull Great Brehat



Penney Premises at Great Brehat. Checking the cod trap. Marvin Friesen Photo. Contributed by Alonzo Pilgrim

From Ireland Bight to Great Brehat

Norman Cull's great grandfather was Able Cull of Ireland Bight. Norm recalls, "My great grandfather Able died when his appendix burst. At that time they lived in Ireland Bight and he was in his early 40s. His wife (a Patey) was left with a large family...ten children. She married Matthew Dean and Matthew Dean brought his new wife and her ten children to Great Brehat. There were Deans already living there. Matthew and his new wife took care of her ten children (who kept their father's surname) and four children of their own, with the surname Dean. Aaron Cull was one of Able's sons, and Aaron had Uriah, who became Norm's father.

Norm cried to go fishing

Norm Cull remembers that even before the age of nine he cried to go fishing with his father. Uriah finally relented and Norm's mother made him rubber clothes out of flour sack material dipped in linseed oil. He loved to be in the boat, but the smell of linseed oil made him sick, though Norm didn't let that stop him.

He was nine years old when he was allowed in the trap boat, and his job then was to hold on the cut (the angle of the twine from the boat to the side of the trap). His father always said, 'Now, my son. If you're so good as a thole pin, you're okay.' The thole pin, usually a foot in length, was stuck in the gunnel of the boat and the net was pegged to the thole pin to keep it fixed while

hauling up the nets. His father meant that if Norm was as good as a thole pin at holding the net in place, then he could work aboard the boat.

Norm fished in the 1960s as part of a crew, and in the 1970s started fishing on his own. There were five men in his crew. He remembers that during the fishery there were many times they brought in massive hauls of fish. A good summer might be measured by a yield of 30 or 40ⁱⁱ quintals or 30,000 lbs of fish. The best summer in his recollection yielded 630 quintals of shore fish.



Norm Cull at his home in Great Brehat

Local names

Lion Point on the map was always called Point Razy by local fishers.

Top fishers in Great Brehat

The two top fishers in Great Brehat were Aaron Cull and Albert Penney.

The Draw System

The Draw System was implemented in 1957 or 1958. Uriah Cull had been chairman of the Draw Committee for a time and in later years Norm became chairman of

the Fisheries Committee. Alf Ollerhead was the fisheries officer when the Draw System was in effect.

Notes

Norman Cull performed with “Folk of the Sea”, a group of fishermen from Newfoundland who sang at the Roy Thompson Hall in Ottawa. He also was part of a play entitled, “Bound in the Shallows”.

Norman Cull tells the story William Cull, who allegedly killed the last Beothuk woman.

http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cull_william_6E.html

Trap berths in Great Brehat

1. Line Head Cove. Prime. Fished by Aaron Cull. This was considered the best trap berth in Brehat. Norm's grandfather Aaron claimed this berth (prior to the Draw System) and he built a shack nearby at Lancey Carie (L'anse au Carré, meaning Square Bay). The night before he put out his leader, he'd go to the shack and spend the night, so at daylight he'd be first at the berth. Nobody was ever able to get that berth from him; he always beat them to it. Two people from Brehat tried to get it from him one time. They left Brehat at midnight and rowed out to Line Head Cove, and when they got there it was pitch dark, so they tied on their leader and as they rolled it out, they felt their paddles hitting something. One fellow said to the other, 'The paddles is hitting something B'y; there's something here.' So they looked down, and there was Aaron Cull's leader already in place.
2. Sam Carter's berth. Prime. Fished by Sam Carter and Fred Carter, his father. There is a story that Fred Carter was drowned while out sealing. A shoal of ice broke and the boat swamped. Sam couldn't swim a stroke, and there was Fred in the icy water, a gun-shot away. Sam, who had never swam a stroke in his life, jumped into the icy water, swam to his father and dragged him back to the boat. They brought him aboard a second boat and rolled him over a barrel to squeeze the water out of him. When they got halfway home, Fred said, 'Boys, try to put something over my head; it's cold.' They brought him home and tried their best to revive him, but he died of hypothermia.
3. Gull Cove Shoal. 2nd draw. Fished by the Noble family.
4. Gull Cove. Prime. Various fishers.
5. Lancey Carie Rock (L'anse au Carré, meaning Square Cove). Prime. This was considered the 2nd best prime berth in Brehat. Fished by the Penney family.
6. White Point. This was considered the 3rd best prime berth in Brehat. Various fishers.
7. George Rowe's Rock. Fished by the Carter family.
8. The Islands. Prime. Fished by the Penney family.
9. Hauling Cove. 2nd draw. Fished by various fishers. This was where local fishers hauled up seals; the land sloped to the sea. It wasn't a cove, but that's what they called it.

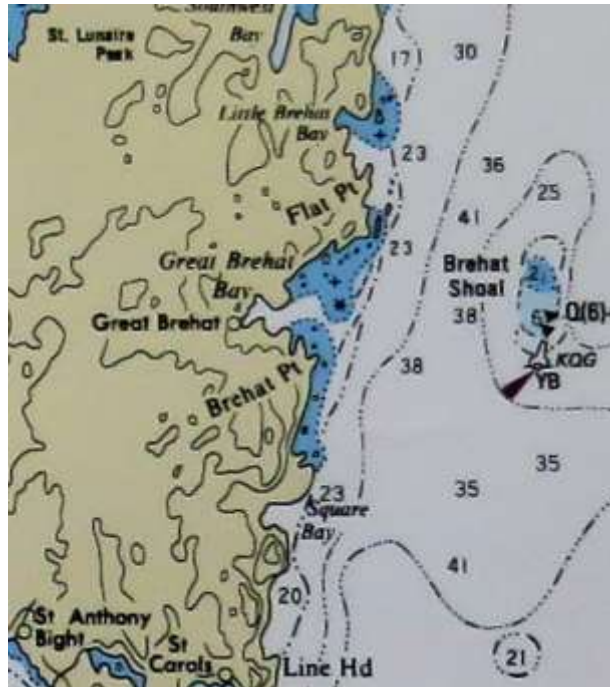


Figure 1 Great Brehat nautical chart

ⁱ Thole Pin: Thole or wooden peg, often used in pairs, set vertically in the gunwale of a boat and serving as fulcrum for an oar which is usually secured to it by a 'withe' or thong formed by a flexible branch, rope or leather strap.

ⁱⁱ Quintal: A measure of dried and salted cod-fish ready for the market; 112 lbs.