

Overview

This paper discusses the outcomes of a worldbuilding research dedicated to the study of the functions and design of early European fishing villages.

In a first part, the paper analyses the aesthetics fishing villages inspired by historical sources in a general way, and then goes on to analyse the main inspiration for the described worldbuilding, the village of Walraversijde.

The paper then describes the original design, based on the current research, for two structures that can be seen as examples of the typical architecture of a fishing village, located in a world where magic is known and practised by a few special individuals, causing functional alterations of the classical buildings that have been historically built by mankind.

Fishing Villages References

Today's fishing villages, like those of ancient Europe, have in common the need for shelter and protection from flooding, due to their obvious proximity to waterways or the sea. This is the case of the village of Crail (Scotland), whose harbour is still protected from the sea, and the ancient village of Walraversijde (Belgian coast – 1200-1600). The two main solutions for achieving flood protection historically involved building villages on stilts or within dune or rock belts.



Stilt Houses - Source: 2abroad.eu



Stilt Houses - Source: CGTrader

Stilt houses are architectures raised on piles over the surface of the soil or water. These structures are primarily built as a protection against flooding while also keeping out vermin. Houses of this kind present a shady space under their pavement, which can be exploited for work or storage - [Wikipedia](#)



Crail Harbour - Source: Fine Art America



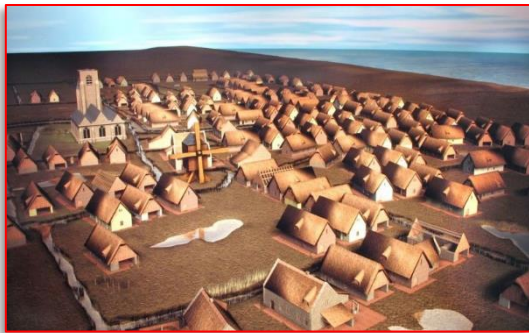
Crail Harbour - Source: The Scottish Sun

Walraversijde – An Early European Fishing Village

The village of Walraversijde, located behind a protective dune belt, presented houses arranged in small, loose groups (with the largest house measuring 7 by 12 metres).

Walraversijde villagers fished and traded salted fish and other goods, sometimes engaging in piracy. It is probable also that these peoples dug peat to produce salt.

Because of a bad maintenance of its dune belt, Walraversijde became vulnerable, and in 1394 the water drowned the town causing heavy sand drifts and floods around the village. Walraversijde lost then its advantaged position, ending up in front of the dunes and being therefore rebuilt further inland. - [Wikipedia](#)



Walraversijde - Source: Medieval Histories



Walraversijde 15th Century Cottage - Source: Wikipedia



Walraversijde Fish Smokehouse - Source: Wikipedia



Walraversijde House foundations - Source: Wikipedia



Walraversijde Well - Source: Wikipedia



Walraversijde Drying Fishing net - Source: Wikipedia



Walraversijde House Interns - Source: Wikipedia



Walraversijde House Interns - Source: Wikipedia



Salted Herrings Barrels - Source: Wikipedia



Walraversijde Carpenter House - Source: Wikipedia



Walraversijde Child Bedroom - Source: Wikipedia



Walraversijde House Hearth - Source: Wikipedia

Original Structure Design 1 – Fish Smokehouse Inspiration

For preservative reasons many foods have been smoked by humans throughout history.

A smokehouse is a building where fish or meat is cured with smoke and the very same village of Walraversijde featured a similar building.

In a traditional fishing village, a smokehouse was often attached to a fisherman's cottage, and served both as the place where the fish was treated with smoke and as a place for storing the product. Fish could be preserved if it was cured with salt and cold smoked for two weeks or longer, for this reason smokehouses were often secured, preventing the access of animals and thieves to it.

The traditional method for fish smoking involves the fish being suspended in smokehouses over slowly smouldering wood shavings. The fish are left overnight to be naturally infused with smoke.

In the modern mechanical method instead, smoke is generated using smoke condensates, solid or liquid smoke's form obtained through industrial processes. The advantage is that fish generally spend less time being smoked than in a traditional kiln. - [Wikipedia](#)

Original Structure Design 1 – Fantasy Fish Smokehouse Design

In a fantasy setting such as the one in the brief, structures of this type may have been altered to allow the production of "liquid smoke", like that employed in the modern techniques described above. These buildings, similar in architecture to the real historical ones, could show as a difference a large, deflated (during daytime) net positioned above the main chimney from which the smoke would exit. During the night, as the smoking process is underway and the smoke begins to flow through the chimney, the net swells, trapping the smoke through the magic imbued in the thread that weaves it together.

Once the smoking process is finished, at dawn the following day, these structures have a very puffy smoke-filled net positioned above the chimney. Appearing like a hot air balloon.

The smokehouse workers, who came to work the following morning, can collect the net by pulling the ropes stretched inside the building. Consequently, the smoke retained by the magical net begins to rain into the chimney, becoming liquid which is then collected inside wooden barrels. This smoke can then be reused the following evening to smoke the new fish caught for the day.

At night the structure is uninhabited and without any real lighting, but the large net that swells over the building as the night passes emits a slight bluish glow that makes it visible from the whole village.

Original Structure Design 2 – Magical Dune Belt Protection

As emerged from the research, ancient European Fishing villages were usually protected from floods by rock or sand belts. The main inspiration for that design is in fact the dune belt from the dune belt of the already shown Walraversijde village.

The dune belt that forms this structure in the fantasy context would appear as a massive circle of sand dunes around the entire village. Between the dunes, tall wooden poles stand, covered with long, loose-meshed fishing nets. Once again, the magic lies in the fabric of these nets, which, thanks to the enchantment woven into them, can repel the water, creating a bubble of defence around the village.

This magic would prove particularly essential in this fantasy world, because just like the creatures that inhabit the seas, the water itself is also more violent and dangerous, with higher and more powerful waves that would otherwise sweep away a simple barrier of sand.

In order not to lose sight of the fact that this type of barrier was in constant need of maintenance in our historical reality, the imaginary counterpart of these structures proposed in the document also maintains this characteristic, as the enchanted strands of the barrier's nets should be repaired and replaced after consumption.

Observing the village from afar at night, one can clearly see the large billowing nets swaying above the smokehouses, dimly illuminating the streets of the village with their soft blue

glow. Furthermore, the protective belt around the entire inhabited area emits the same glow, almost resembling a crown around the village, due to the tall, pointed, sail-like shapes formed by the wooden poles and the magical nets that cover them.