Hatston will be site for new Orkney industry

Details of a new industry for Orkney were given at a Press chonference in Glasgow yesterday.

A £25,000 plant is being set up at the former flying-boat station at Hatston, near Kirkwall, to produce glass-fibre hulls for commercial fishing boats which will be fitted out by local yards or exported in hull form.

Within two years up to 50 people will be employed at the factory, which will be opened early next year by Halmatic, makers of reinforced glass-fibre craft, whose main factory is at Havant, Hampshire.

Negotiations are going on with a Scottish boat-building yard for fitting out hulls as luxury yachts, aimed particularly at the American market

The use of reinforced glass-fibre in fishing boats has been feasible technically for many years, but cost, lack of approval by statutory authorities and the conservatism of fishermen have restricted their development.

Rising maintenance costs and increased prices for building with traditional materials now make its use economic and favourable official attitudes led to the company's decision to set up the factory.

Initially two hull forms will be produced, a 50-foot craft designed by G. L. Watson, naval architects, Glasgow, and a 36-foot boat designed principally for lobster fishing.

The plant will employ 12 people initially an dthe men, recruited locally, will spend three months training at Havant.

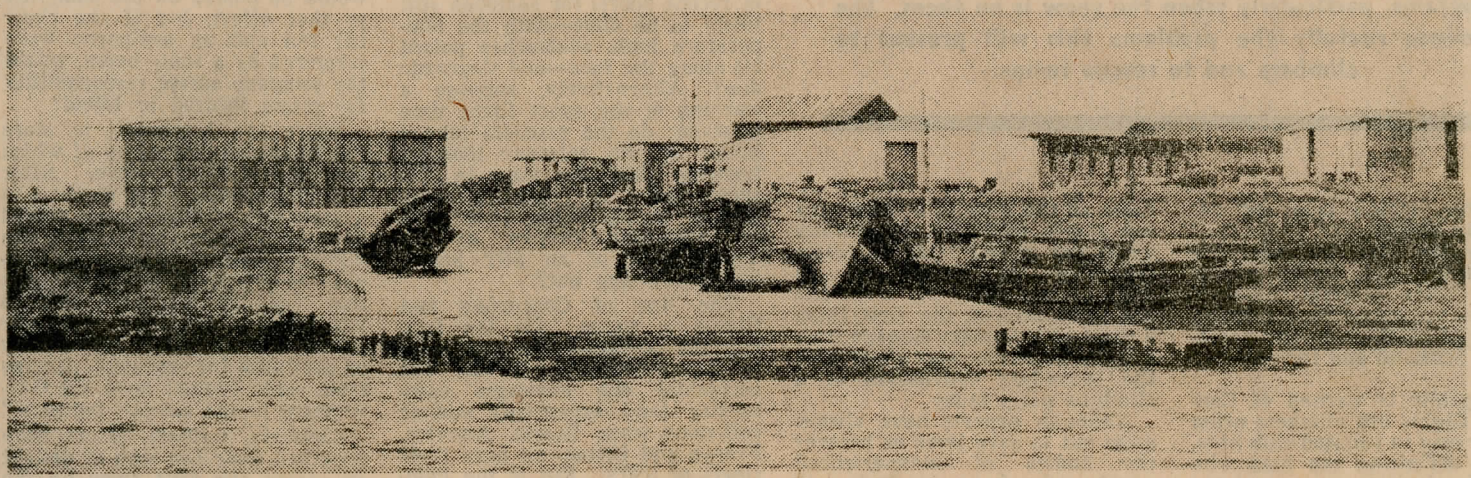
Mr Clive Hunting, chairman of Halmatic, told yesterday's conference: "Our plans have taken two years to come to fruition, during which time we have carried out considerable market research among fishermen. Negotiations for our initial production are in an advanced state.

"We have sought the fullest co-operation with established boatbuilders, with whom the company will be dealing in fitting out.

"We hope that much of our production will be fitted out locally, but this work could be done anywhere in the country, or even overseas. We are conducting negotiations in South America at the mome nt for our hulls."

Mr Donald Brown, convener of Orkney County Council, said: "With the strong possibility of a fish-meal factory in the islands, this could revitalise the whole fishing industry.

"With the 50 jobs in this factory and possibly 30 to 40 at the fish-meal plant, our unemployment rate of 5 per cent could be cut dramatically. This is just the kind of modern industry which Orkney has been looking for."



The site of the new boat-building venture at Hatston, Orkney.