

A MYSTERY OF WHALES

The big school of blackfish whales stranded on the shore near Port Albert, Australia, raises an old problem, for what it is that leads apparently healthy whales to destruction on beaches all over the world has long been a mystery. About 20 years ago 150 false killer whales were stranded in the Dornoch Firth and there was also a mass stranding on the Lincolnshire coast not long ago.

The suggestion that the Dornoch Firth whales were chasing herring schools and ran ashore had some local support, but some students of the whale suggested that an unexplained suicidal urge had driven the entire school on to the beach.

In South Africa, where immense numbers of stranded killers are found from time to time, it has been noticed that the whales while still alive make no effort to get back into the sea. In fact, several "killers" forcibly dragged into the water by bystanders hauled themselves ashore again.

The theory that the whales may have been stunned by a subterranean upheaval and lost sense of direction has been considered and dismissed, but there is some support for the suggestion that the whales may have been following a leader who lost his sense of direction.—Manchester Guardian Weekly."