

The Slabline



JOURNAL OF THE HUMBER KEEL AND SLOOP PRESERVATION SOCIETY

THE HUMBER KEEL and SLOOP PRESERVATION SOCIETY LIMITED

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- COVER PHOTO: Amy Howson in Tinsley Lock courtesy of the Sheffield Morning Telegraph

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Looking at the Society's progress over the last few years, one is conscious that some of our plans have succeeded beyond all reasonable hope, whilst others have been a failure. Success has, of course, been most apparent in the work carried out on the Society's two vessels, in their fine state of repair, the splendour of COMRADE's rig and the spectacular and continuing improvements to AMY HOWSON. It has been apparent in the Society's good standing and (relative) financial stability, and in our freedom (despite occasional disagreement) from the internal dissension, which has rocked many voluntary organisations in the past. It is apparent in this journal, which is highly regarded not only in Humberside.

Our greatest failure has been in terms of involvement. One of our aims has always been to pass on to as many people as possible the skills and traditions associated with Humber sailing craft. We always used to tell ourselves that, once the ships were sailing, people would be queuing up to join. In fact, the queues have not materialised. There is no lack of people wanting to come out for the day, or to charter the ships. But the crew, those actually handling the gear or starting the engine, are still the same few stalwarts on whom we have always relied.

It may, of course, be that most enthusiasts for boats and sailing own their own craft and feel no need to join an organisation like ours. Or it may also be that we present an image which is too exclusive, and that there are people who would like to join in but are not quite sure how to go about it. If this is true, all of us can help by assuring both Members and potential Members that they really are welcome, not just to hold a brush but to join the crew and give some of the regulars a rest. The HKSPS may never become a mass movement, but if it is to remain healthy, at least a few drops of new blood are needed from time to time.

THE MARITIME TRUST

At the end of September the Society received a most welcome donation of £250 from the Maritime Trust towards the re-rigging of AMY HOWSON. The Trust's funds are severely stretched at present by the HMS WARRIOR project, and the donation is thus all the more appreciated. Its Director, Vice-Admiral Sir Patrick Bayly, hopes to visit us shortly on his way to Hartlepool, where the WARRIOR is now being restored.

GREETINGS CARD

The Society is now offering for sale a most attractive Greetings Card showing COMRADE under sail on the Fossdyke, near Lincoln. The view is thus of local interest to both North and South Humberside, and we anticipate that the considerable expenditure necessary to produce the card will be recouped by a high volume of sales. The card measures 6" by 4¹/₈" and is on sale at the very reasonable price of 12p including envelope; orders for 10 or more cards are sent post-free. Intended initially for the Christmas market, the card is printed with greeting which makes it also suitable for use at other times of the year. Full details of purchase by post can be found on the back page.

OTHER SALES MATERIAL

Our very popular folder of old documents and photographs entitled 'Humber Keels' has been reprinted and is again on sale – an ideal Christmas present for all ages. It is available by post – see the back page. We also have a new stock of ties with the Keel motif. The Sloop Committee has arranged the production of a new line in pottery in an attractive light-brown earthenware. Produced by Elsham Hall Pottery, items include mugs priced at £1.00, ashtrays at 70p and pepper and salt sets at £1.50, all with a COMRADE or AMY HOWSON motif. These are available from the Sales Officers to personal callers only. Another new line produced by the Sloop Committee is an attractive children's colouring sheet showing AMY HOWSON and designed by Colin Screeton: this can be obtained by post. Mike Ulyatt has arranged the production of some attractive 'coasters' ideal tea, coffee or drinks mats. They are approx. 3" x 6" and show COMRADE in colour, with mainsail and topsail set, on a choppy River Humber. The photograph was taken by Malcolm Fussey of Hessle. Prices are 50p each or £3.00 for a set of six.

BEVERLEY OPEN DAY

This year we again held an Open Day at Beverley, when COMRADE was on view to the public. The date was Sunday, 12th August, and the public response was most encouraging. Thanks largely to Michael Ulyatt's effective publicity, the ship seemed to be crowded all afternoon, and the stalls on the bank did a good trade. Our member George May assisted once again by providing confectionery for sale, and found himself prominently featured in the Hull Daily Mail as a result. The amount of produce and other items on sale was less than in previous years – a pity in view of the large numbers present – but nonetheless the money taken amounted to around £170 – a very worthwhile figure, though the press credited us with more.

SHOULD COMRADE GO TO SEA?

This summer our good friend Barry Beadle passed on a request from the Publicity Department of North Wolds Borough Council for COMRADE to attend the celebrations marking the two hundredth anniversary of the sinking of John Paul Jones' flagship BONHOMME RICHARD off Flamborough Head in September 1779. Various events were planned, including a mock battle in the harbour, and it was thought that the presence of historic ships such as ours would be appropriate. Much discussion took place, and we had to conclude, reluctantly, that for a variety of reasons, a visit in September would not be practicable. However, the suggestion of a visit to Bridlington for next summer is worthy of serious consideration, if the question of berthing in the Harbour can be satisfactorily resolved. Readers of 'The Slabline' will remember an account of the visit of the Keel THOMAS SCARR to the town with a cargo of bricks over seventy years ago, and the same article reviewed the evidence for keels having traded coastwise in the past. A week's exhibition at Bridlington could be financially well worthwhile, but the problems and potential hazards will need careful investigation before a decision is taken.

HUMBER SHIPPING – REVIEW

A Pictorial History compiled by Michael E Ulyatt and Edward W Paget-Tomlinson. Published by Dalesman Books, 1979. Price £2.25.

There has long been a need for a book of this kind, and as is to be expected from the authors' credentials, that need has now been fulfilled. Most people will buy this book for its photographs, and these have been exceptionally well reproduced: an important factor when so many readers are anxious to distinguish as much detail as possible. But the text is also a model of its kind: not only clear and detailed captions to each picture giving the history of the vessels themselves, but the introductions to each section which place individual ships in context and provide a brief but valuable survey of local marine history.

The book contains 72 photographs ranging from a sailing pilot cutter to the short-lived 'Mercury' Hovercraft. There are some particularly good shots of early Humber ferries and some of the North Sea steamers. In addition there are good reproductions of a number of paintings, and some of Edward Paget-Tomlinson's excellent drawings. If one feels any disappointment it is that there were not more photographs to be found from the days of sail: sailing trawlers for example, or more of the square-riggers whose masts once filled the docks. But for all that, the book is a most valuable record and deserves a place on the bookshelf of everyone who knows and loves the River Humber.

('Humber Shipping' is available by post from the Sales Officers – see back page)

J HAINSWORTH

AHOY JOHN WILLIAM!

What is a Humber Keel doing in the little fishing port of Avoch, in the Black Isle, a good 400 miles from the Humber? It's a long story: the short answer in that Avoch is the base from which Eric Hutchinson and his wife, Fiona, operate day and week-long summer cruises on the northern firths and Caledonian Canal. They have converted the Keel, JOHN WILLIAM, into a home for themselves and up to ten passengers.

The JOHN WILLIAM was built as a Sloop at Warren's Shipyard, New Holland in 1905 and was named after her owner, John William Barraclough. The Hutchinson's bought her for £1700 in 1975 and paid out £1300 on conversion work, two masts being added, carrying 2200 square feet of sail. There are three cabins with double beds and two with bunks, a 15ft square saloon with chairs, table, bookcases; a toilet, shower, bath and fully-equipped galley.

Eric obtained his pilot's certificate for the waters the JOHN WILLIAM would be navigating and their first charter was in May 1977. During their first season they carried 630 passengers. The Hutchinson's also have the Hull registered Sloop PHYLLIS and plan to restore and convert her too. We wish them luck in this exciting tourist venture.

M E ULYATT

MY FIRST TRIP ON COMRADE

After a previous attempt had been frustrated by bad weather in 1977, I was pleased to be able to join COMRADE for a sail on 27th May 1979. As the trip was due to start early on the Sunday morning and Gainsborough is a good distance from Hull, several letters and telephone calls were necessary between Jim Thompson and myself to arrange my participation in the outing. We agreed that I would sleep on board COMRADE on the Saturday night and that I would catch the last ferry over from New Holland.

The Bank Holiday Saturday was cold and wet, but the rain had finally stopped by the time I left Gainsborough. My first problem was getting petrol, as I had not realised that all the garages in town would close early that day. Eventually I persuaded a friendly garage-owner to fill my tank, and then I set off to New Holland. It was a gloomy ride through a dark, damp evening and I soon caught up with the rain again. On top of the Wolds near Elsham, an electricity pylon disappearing into the mist only a few feet above the ground showed how low the clouds were.

New Holland was not a cheerful place that evening – when I arrived, it was deserted, dusk was deepening, and the rain was lashing down. I bought my ferry and car-park tickets, then went for some fortifying drinks at the LINCOLN CASTLE – where I admired the pictures of the old paddle-steamer displayed on the lounge walls – before trudging back to the station and down the length of the pier to wait for the ferry. I was pleased to find a coal fire burning low in the stove in the little waiting room at the far end of the pier, and with the poker provided I revived it into cheerful flames. Out of the window I looked at the rain, the fast-flowing ebb tide, and the dark, deserted estuary, and thought that there must be pleasanter ways of spending a Bank Holiday!

The lights of the FARRINGFORD looked especially welcome as they drew near from out of the dark water, and I made a grateful haste to the buffet for sandwiches and coffee as soon as the vessel was alongside and I was aboard. There was a sense of finality as we turned away from New Holland out on to the estuary, as with this being the last boat of the day, and my car left behind on the south bank, there could now be no going back!

Once I had disembarked at Hull, new roadworks and bridgeworks confused me, but I managed to find my way to the gloomy High Street and the even gloomier Old Harbour. In the near darkness I spotted COMRADE easily enough by her tall mast; a thread of smoke from the chimney aft, and a faint glow from the cabin skylights, showed that the vessel was occupied, and Jim Thompson, warned of my impending arrival by the FARRINGFORD's rasping siren as it approached the Victoria Pier, came on deck in answer to my shout. He helped me down the vertical ladder from the quay on to a commercial barge and then across the slippery wet decks to COMRADE; I had time to register that once I would have found this manoeuvre in the darkness distinctly frightening, and then Jim and I were chatting and drinking tea in the keel's cosy stern cabin.

My sleeping quarters that night were in the bow, in the tiny mate's cabin reached by another of those vertical iron ladders underneath a heavy trap-door close by the forward winches. Fortunately I do not suffer from claustrophobia, as sleeping on COMRADE that night was for me rather like sleeping in a cupboard! The coal stove had gone out, but an oil-lamp gave a warm yellow light in my cubbyhole until I turned it out and got into bed. I slept little that night, but was comfortable and rested. Jim had showed me how to wedge the trap door with a piece of wood, and all through the night I could see a thin sliver of sky through the nearly closed hatch.

During the night there were strange sounds: the mud sucking and gurgling underneath COMRADE at low tide, the barge on one side and the tanker on the other bumping gently against the keel, and what might have been footsteps (I had no inclination to go out and investigate, and it may only have been Jim himself).

Eventually daylight began to show through the crack under the hatch, and with the early morning tide there were sounds of life on the River Hull as barge engines started and the wash from passing vessels swung COMRADE and its neighbours together with thumps and lurches. At last I got out of bed, propped my trap door fully open, dressed and shaved before going up on deck, where the morning sun was clearing the rooftops to the east and making the Old Harbour look quite attractive. The crew of the barge between COMRADE and the jetty arrived and got their vessel away, with a little help from Jim in the way of untying of ropes, then Jim and I had breakfast and, with ropes and poles and sheer hard pulling, we manoeuvred COMRADE and the two tankers next to her into a more convenient position.

Skipper Fred Schofield and the remainder of the crew arrived, then the other five passengers, and preparations were made for getting under way. The sails were uncovered; we waited while the diminutive tug CAWOOD towed a coaster named ICE LARK down the River Hull and out into the Humber, then COMRADE's diesel engine was started, ropes were cast off, and we were away. Our mast cleared the new sluice gate, and then we were out on the Humber, with the FARRINGFORD passing not far off on its first journey of the day from New Holland.

We continued across the Humber, heading for the chimney near Goxhill Haven, until we were about three-quarters of the way over, then COMRADE was turned to head downstream, the engine was stopped and the sails were hoisted. At this stage my main impressions were the silence of the engineless barge – I had never been on any kind of sailing vessel before – and the skill needed with ropes and tackle in order to get the two sails up; all through the day I was full of respect for the expertise of Fred Schofield and his crew in handling the vessel, and I felt glad I was only a passenger!

A fresh south to south-west breeze soon got COMRADE moving downstream parallel to the Humber bank, and with mainsail and topsail both in use, speed was enough to make a slight bow-wave and provide the soothing sound of splashing water. The sun peeped in and out of the clouds, but the wind was decidedly chilly for late May, making me glad of my warm clothes. One of the ESL sludge-carriers from Goole came down the shipping channel over near the north bank; otherwise we had the estuary to ourselves.

The change in direction of the Humber bank beyond Skitter Ness made it necessary for COMRADE to alter course by tacking. I had heard of this procedure by which sailing ships can use a contrary wind, but I did not know the details of it, and I watched its operation on COMRADE with interest. The tiller was put hard over, and at the crucial moment there was a furious flapping of sails and flying of ropes and the wind caught the vessel from a different angle; when it was over, COMRADE was heading for the Humber bank on a southerly course, heeling well over in the nearly head-on wind. I was cheered by Fred Schofield's reassurance that the vessel was in no danger of capsizing in spite of its ominous tilt!

Near East Halton Skitter the tacking procedure was used again to head us in a south-easterly direction, and we stayed on this course for several miles, passing first Immingham docks, with three very large ships easily visible at the outer jetties, then Grimsby and Cleethorpes. The cold wind was finding its way even through my winter clothing, and I was

glad to go down to the little stern cabin for tea and sandwiches and a warm by the stove, while those passengers who stayed up in the well-deck draped themselves in thick rugs.

I re-emerged on to the deck as we were passing Grimsby. Between Cleethorpes and the cluster of shipping waiting off Spurn Head, we turned round and headed back upstream. Although the wind was pushing COMRADE through the water, the ebb tide cancelled out any progress we might have made, and after a time the Pier Pavilion at Cleethorpes – the most obvious landmark to be seen – was in exactly the same place as before. The Spurn lifeboat passed close by at speed, its crew taking photographs of COMRADE and the boat's wash rocking the keel violently; the sails flapped helplessly around the swaying mast, and I saw the original meaning of the phrase "taking the wind out of one's sails".

Fred Schofield decided to beach COMRADE and get some cleaning done while we waited for the tide to turn to take us back up the Humber. This was a manoeuvre which called for the engine rather than the wind, so the sails were taken down, and the vessel driven gently towards Cleethorpes beach. Soundings were taken and the water grew progressively shallower. Speed was reduced still further and eventually COMRADE ran imperceptibly aground in about two feet of water, just off the end of the beach. We were a long way from the promenade, it being low tide, and only a few people made the long walk across wet sand to view us closely. Some of the crew cleaned the vessel's hull, others went for a paddle. A blond lady passenger was in demand to be photographed sitting at the bow of the vessel against the distant background of Cleethorpes seafront. I looked at the Pier Pavilion and thought of the folk festival taking place there over the Bank Holiday weekend, and wondered if anyone I knew there would notice COMRADE. Other passengers peeped into the cubbyhole where I had spent the previous night, and seemed quite glad that it had been me and not them!

The tide began to come in, lapping higher up the beach and everyone got back on board while the sails were put up again. Eventually there was enough water to re-float COMRADE, the wind caught the sails, and we began to move slowly away northwards. We scraped over the bottom once or twice, then were in deeper water and making our way back up the estuary.

This was for me the best part of the day. The afternoon sun shone with real warmth and with the gentle wind and the incoming tide helping COMRADE along, the landmarks on the south bank of the Humber slipped gradually past. Jim Thompson at the helm steered inside the shipping lane as far as Immingham, taking care not to get so far inshore that we were trapped by the tide inside the jetties. An unusually handsome tanker made a fine sight as it pulled away from Immingham and headed down the estuary not far from us, its white upper works gleaming in the sun and black smoke pouring from its funnel.

Beyond Immingham we steered further out towards the middle of the estuary to leave the shipping channel clear now that the tide was coming well in and large vessels would be moving up and down the river. Some of the ships clustered off Spurn Head had started to move upstream while COMRADE was still beached at Cleethorpes, but the main movement came in the late afternoon as we made our way slowly back up to Hull. I could see several vessels in the distance coming up the river behind us, and there was an extra interest in our journey as these ships overtook us near Killingholme, passing between us and the south bank. I photographed a Danish coaster, one of the Goole sludge ships, an Egyptian freighter and a Lebanese car-carrier. Near Paull we had to cross back over the shipping lane where it turned towards the north bank. The wind seemed to be giving us very little help, and I looked with some apprehension at the large orange-coloured freighter coming slowly downstream towards us and a blue-painted coaster heading up the river behind us, with a

notable wave creaming back from its bow. We appeared to be motionless right in their path, but Fred Schofield assured us we were in no danger; he started the engine, and in a minute or two we were clear of the shipping lane and the two vessels were passing well behind us.

Then it was the end of the trip. The sails were taken down and we went back into the Old Harbour on the engine. The sun glinted off the Humber to the west and behind us a large freighter, which had followed us up the estuary, stopped outside King George Dock for tugs to be attached. We went ashore and said goodbye to each other. All that was left for me was a chilly wait at Victoria Pier for the last ferry, then a ride across to New Holland on the FARRINGFORD, and then a drive back to Gainsborough in the evening sunshine, with me finding it hard to keep my eyes open after all the fresh air!

PAUL SLATER

WHY NOT LEARN HOW TO SAIL A KEEL?

We have been a little surprised that more members have not expressed an interest in sailing regularly with us on COMRADE. Obviously, this is more of a commitment than coming out once a season but other members would be very welcome. There are advantages. Although on members' trips, all members are on an equal basis and pay the same fees, on charter trips the crew, whilst not paid, do not pay either. Anyone interested please contact Jim Thompson, 218 Victoria Avenue, Hull HU5 3DZ (Tel. Hull (0482) 441277).

HKSPS MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

Alan Binns of Paull, a lecturer at Hull University and one of the country's leading experts on Viking Culture and seamanship, designed and helped to crew a replica Viking ship, ODIN'S RAVEN, sailed from Trondheim in Norway to the Isle of Man to celebrate that island's millennium earlier this year. The ship was 50ft long and made from 12 tons of oak imported from South Germany. The sail measured 50 sq. yards of sailcloth and a crew of 17 were to sail her. Alan sailed with ODIN'S RAVEN on the 160 mile crossing to the Shetlands.

Francis Daly, owner of the Waterfront Club, a converted warehouse in Princes Dock Street, Hull, bought the Humber Paddle Steamer LINCOLN CASTLE from British Rail earlier this year and planned to bring her from her berth in William Wright Dock, through Humber Dock and crane-lift her over the South Orbital road into the now disused Princes Dock subject to permission of Hull City Council, present owners of the Dock. Francis planned to berth the LINCOLN CASTLE immediately outside his club entrance and use her as a floating club/restaurant. Humberside County Council have also been reported to have offered a berth near the Humber Bridge.

AMY HOWSON

1979 has been a busy season for the AMY HOWSON and her crew. This year she has travelled over 400 miles to different events and on charter trips. The season started on April 1st, when we moved from the winter berth at Barton back to South Ferriby. April and May were spent in doing various jobs on board which had been waiting for good weather, the most important job being to load 11 tons of iron ballast to get AMY down to nearly her sailing trim. This ballast has been stowed away to take up the minimum of space, and unless we find that more is needed after the mast and sailing gear is shipped, we hope to be able to keep the valuable hold space clear for our exhibition.

June 2nd Penning out of Ferriby at 9.30 a.m. with a full complement of passengers for the run to Lincoln and the Water Festival, we met a strong run of fresh in the Trent, and arrived at Torksey at 6.40 p.m. for the run up the Fossdyke to Lincoln, arriving at 9.30 p.m. We were very pleased to have John Frank on board with us for this run, he took AMY as far as Owston Ferry for us, and gave a great deal of information about the Trent.

A highlight of the Water Festival was the performance on board AMY by the Old English Pub Band on Saturday evening, with Sea Shanties and Folk Songs which attracted a good audience. After the Festival we took AMY to the Glory Hole to see if we could get under, but unfortunately the Witham and Brayford Pool were above navigation level so we could not quite manage it ... something to look forward to for next year maybe.

July 15th A charter run from Ferriby with the Lincolnshire Naturalists Union, into the Trent as far as the High Wires, then to Blacktoft Jetty and back to Ferriby. With the engine running at tick-over and the ship moving slowly past the reeds on the bank we saw a wide range of bird-life and marsh plants. It was even possible to hear skylarks singing over the sound of the engine on this trip, which we hope was the first of many.

July 20th saw the start of the main event of our year, the Sheffield trip, which is fully described in a further article.

August 25th and 26th were Open Days at South Ferriby with a very good attendance and good write-ups in the local press.

August 31st AMY HOWSON went up the Ancholme to the Brandy Wharf Regatta. Here the South Lincoln Ranger Guide Unit presented us with a £20 donation towards the cost of our new Regatta Burgee. We are very grateful for this, and for their continued interest in AMY, as youth involvement is very high on the Society's list of priorities. Once again the attendance figures at the regatta were very good, and the weekend was rounded off with a run up to Harlam Hill lock where the Rase-Ancholme Navigation Trust seem to be having some success in persuading the Anglian Water Authority to carry out some improvements. Once again our thanks are due to Ian and Jilly Nixon-Horsley at Brandy Wharf for the berth and assistance generally throughout the weekend.

September 8th AMY was taken to the Chequers at Ferriby Cliff for cleaning and tarring round, This work gets easier every time as we have got rid of the deep-seated rust, and we now have a good paint surface to work on.

September 22nd A charter trip down-river past the Humber Bridge, Hull Docks, Saltend, the tankers and bulk carriers at Immingham, returning along the Lincolnshire bank looking at what remains of the havens and shipyards, jetties, etc.

September 23rd was a repeat of the previous day's down-river trip taking passengers who had booked while we were a Brandy Wharf. This type of trip seems the easiest way of seeing tidal water for the first time if your own boat is only about 18ft to 20ft long, and again, we hope to repeat this type of run next year.

One pleasing feature of this year's programme is that we have taken passengers with us on every trip. Not only is this an additional source of revenue for us, but also it is introducing many new people to river and canal life, and we are gaining a lot of new members through this. We have found that the accommodation, cooking facilities, etc. on board have worked out quite well, and the only improvement we have planned for this winter in the accommodation is the provision of a fresh water tank.

Cyril Harrison has been busy during the summer dressing up the mast, and we should be able to get this finished off during the winter. After long discussions with John Frank, and studying our collection of photographs, we have now drawn up a sail plan and all the sails have been ordered from Jeckells. There is a lot of work to do before we can order the rigging, but we thought that the sails, being the largest and most expensive single item should be given priority. The Sloop Committee are grateful for the hard work put in this year by so many members and especially by Mrs Harrison, our Sales Officer, making it possible for us to order the sails. The Sloop Committee have raised over £1100 during the last financial year.

Ex-sloop skipper Fred Harness of New Holland has given a model of the sloop PROVIDENCE to the Society, and this model has already been of great assistance in sorting out some rigging queries. We have also received many photographs during the year, which we are copying to include in our exhibition.

On Saturday, 27th October a party of intrepid South Bank members left South Ferriby on board AMY HOWSON bound for Hull Corporation Pier, where our Sloop moored at the Horsewash for a very successful 'Half-day Open Day'. A bright and breezy day made conditions ideal, AMY's flag was most noticeable from as far away as Holy Trinity Church, and a steady stream of visitors came on board the ship. Colin Screeton and Mike Ulyatt had contacted North Country Breweries and they had generously agreed to donate a keg of beer to the Society, as a symbolic gesture of the days when market sloops transported their beers on a regular basis from the Horsewash to Barton. Donations, sales and membership fees brought in £85 for Society funds. Very encouraging.

TRIP TO SHEFFIELD BASIN

AMY HOWSON's trip to Sheffield was looked on with mixed feelings by our crew, the main feeling being, "will we even get there?" Several of us had been to look at the low bridges in the top level and then gone back to have another look at our ship. Templates were made and after another visit, going down through the low bridges on the Sheffield community services vessel ETHEL (a Manvers size ship), by courtesy of skipper Jay, we thought we would have about 1" clearance but could not be absolutely sure. The greatest apprehension was caused when reading a British Waterways guide which said that the beam permissible through the Tinsley Flight of locks was 15' 3". A tape measure across AMY showed her to be 15' 9", but the old boatmen all said she had been before and so we decided we had to try it. The ship was penned out of Ferriby Sluice at 7.45 p.m. on 20th July and moored to the wall opposite the lock ready for an early start next morning as soon as she floated. We then retired to the nearby 'Hope and Anchor' to be lubricated by North Country ready for the trip into long disused waters.

We left Ferriby the next morning at 3.50 a.m. in order to get to Keadby before the tide turned. We arrived at 6.00 a.m. and eventually penned in at 7.30 a.m. when the lock keeper came. We next lost a further 20 minutes waiting for an endless stream of coal trains at Keadby railway bridges. At 10.15 a.m. we penned through Thorne lock in a downpour and wishing sloops had been built with wheelhouses. We carried on however, trying to convince ourselves we were enthusiasts and arrived with clothes steaming in a better climate at Doncaster at 12.30 p.m. We waited impatiently for a newspaper reporter, who did not arrive, and eventually left at 1.30 p.m. We passed through the lovely Don Valley, through Sprotbro' lock, on past the site of the old Conisbro' lock overshadowed by Conisbro' Castle, through Mexboro' low and top locks to moor up at Swinton at 4.00 p.m. We took the opportunity of looking round the interesting canal junction where keels could once have passed through to Barnsley and Wakefield – sadly now mostly filled in and impassable. There were also plenty of vessels to look at round the shipyard of E V Waddington, the last major carrier on the Sheffield and South Yorkshire Navigation. It is interesting to look at old vessels and note the remnants of fittings which prove that they were once under sail. We took on further supplies at several local hostleries before turning in.

Swinton was left behind at 8.15 the next morning and we soon had to get by a barge athwart the canal which children had put adrift. After passing the healthy aroma of the Tar distillery we moved through Kilnhurst narrows, bridges and flood lock and then were back into the river. We passed the huge British Steel bar mills at Thrybergh which could have used the canal to export steel if the ill-fated BACAT operation had been allowed to succeed. An interesting find at Aldwarke lock was that there was a wasps nest in one of the mooring recesses halfway up the wall. They were a little upset at being fumigated by our exhaust and so with much haste we were pleased to pass through. At Eastwood low lock we were leaving the last part of the navigation to be used commercially. Waddington's vessels still run regularly to their depot just up the old river at Eastwood but further traffic finished several years ago. After passing Eastwood top lock the entrance to the old Parkgate Canal can be seen to the right and then through a reconstructed road bridge where it seems that the old bridge was all in the canal. The next lock was at Rotherham after which we turned right into the heavily silted section leading to the BWB depot and then to Ickles lock which was full of weed. We backed the ship out again and tried to flush out the weed by lifting the paddles. After we had done this and got into the lock, after clearing our water intakes a couple of times, the dredger arrived behind us saying that they had come up to clear the weed for us! The next pound was weedy and shallow up to Holmes lock and then the next pound up to Jordan lock was nearly dry but we struggled through. After this lock we turned a bend and were confronted with what looked like piling right across the canal. It turned out, however, that there was a small way through which very helpfully led us towards the head of the river weir which we had to turn sharply away from against the current. We arrived at the low end of the Tinsley Flight at 12.00 p.m. and by 12.30 we had arrived at Plumpers lock where there was no more water. We were forced by this to visit a local pub and wait for the level to rise and we eventually got away with a struggle at 1.30 and arrived at Sheffield Basin at 3.30. Things were indeed a little tight for size in one lock halfway up the Tinsley Flight, one thickness of rope used as a fender was enough to jam the ship solid. If the water had been high at Bacon Lane we might have needed to remove the quarter rails even though AMY has ballast on board. But still – we made it – and learnt a lot very quickly. None of us had been up there before!

The following weekend I had the pleasure of bringing up to Sheffield the keel CHARLES WILLIAM which had been chartered by the Mikron Theatre Company for their South Yorkshire tour. Their Saturday evening performance attracted many people to Sheffield Basin and consequently to spend money on board AMY. CHARLES WILLIAM went down the next day and AMY was again alone in the basin except for pleasure craft.

On Sunday, 5th August, having been open at Sheffield all week we decided to take the ship down to Sprotbro' where our member and operator of two cruise vessels, Alan Oliver, had offered us a mooring with good access for the paying public. We left Sheffield with a full complement of 12 passengers at 7.45 a.m. and arrived at Sprotbro' at 3.00 p.m. when the ship was opened to the public.

The previous weekend at Sprotbro' Alan Oliver had kindly operated a cruise on his vessel WYRE LADY for the sole benefit of our Society. Apart from being a very enjoyable cruise it made us money and I am sure everyone will join me in thanking Alan. We were open the following weekend again at Sprotbro' and then on the Monday morning the ship was moved down to Long Sandall lock to moor safely for the week.

On Saturday, 18th August, we again took on passengers and left Sandall at 11.00 a.m. We had a lunch break for an hour at a canal side tavern at Stainforth and took note of the canal basin here where the remains of the lock down to the River Don can be seen. We panned out of Keadby at 4.40 p.m. and after punching the tide to Guinness Groves we ebbed out and panned into Ferriby Sluice at 7.30 p.m.

This ended an interesting and eventful journey in which we learnt a lot about how keels and sloops working inland. We met many interesting people who remembered or worked on the vessels when the canal was busy. Our journey into the past taught us a lot and allowed us to understand the problems and respect the generations of boatmen who had gone before us.

P.S. Mild drinkers will do better to stay at home!

LES REID

A TRIP TO THE DEEP SOUTH

We are very keen to arrange a weekend with our good friends, the Thames Barge Sailing Club. At the time of writing, we are unable to specify a definite date or a price as the TBSC have not yet determined their rates for 1980 (neither have we!)

The plan is to travel down from Hull by minibus and, of course, the party will be limited to 12 persons. The present intention is to travel down on the Friday evening and back on the Sunday evening. There is at least a chance that we will be able to sail from Ipswich but most details have yet to be settled.

Apart from the sheer pleasure of sailing aboard a Thames Barge, those of us involved in fitting out accommodation aboard COMRADE will be expecting to learn a great deal from the TBSC. If you would like to come on this trip, please fill in the appropriate section of the enclosed form and sent it, with a stamped addressed envelope to J Thompson, 218 Victoria Ave., Hull HU5 3DZ.

THE REVIVAL OF GAINSBOROUGH AS AN INLAND PORT

In a previous article for the 'Slabline' I described the collections of old shipping photographs at Gainsborough Library. The history of the town as an inland port is of interest to many local people, and several books and pamphlets in the library's Local Studies collection are devoted to the days when the town was a busy port for sailing and early steam vessels. Of more immediate interest to me since I came to live in Gainsborough has been the present-day shipping scene in the town; on my very first day here I saw a barge passing by on the Trent, and had not been here long before I found that small ships regularly visited the town. I have amassed a small collection of photographs of these vessels over the last ten years, and have been interested to find some account of the growth of this coastal traffic in the Local Studies collection.

The revival of Gainsborough as a port for small sea-going vessels is a recent phenomenon; it began only a few years before I came to live here, and the revival is still growing, with coastwise traffic still increasing. As far as I can tell from the records available to me, the present-day use of the town as a port dates from June 1968, when a local newspaper, the 'Gainsborough Evening News', carried a photograph of the coaster WILLMARY at Beckingham Wharf, on the bank of the Trent opposite Gainsborough. An accompanying article described how the vessel had brought in a cargo of several hundred tons of soya bean meal direct from the Continent, and pointed out that its Dutch crew had dispensed with what was then the usual practice of discharging into barges below Keadby Bridge, and had delivered direct to the wharves at the old Beckingham shipyard. It was pointed out that the WILLMARY was one of the largest vessels to navigate the river as far as Gainsborough for some time, and that it was built on the lines of craft widely used on the Continent, with low superstructure, telescopic or folding masts and shallow draught. An 'experienced riverman' was quoted by the 'Evening News' as saying that he could foresee a big increase in river traffic if vessels such as the WILLMARY continue to come up to Gainsborough.

A note in the 'Doncaster Evening Post' for August 1968 confirmed that Trent Wharfage Ltd., the operators of Beckingham Wharf, had been granted a customs franchise after the arrival of three ships during July bearing animal foodstuffs from Rotterdam. It was emphasised that these were trial runs, and that it was not possible to say when regular sailings would begin, as there were a lot of details to be worked out, but the prospects looked good for a revival of the coastal traffic which Gainsborough had enjoyed until the advent of railway competition in the mid-19th century.

Under the headline 'A Cargo Ship Makes History', the 'Doncaster Evening Post' for 17th June 1969, described the arrival of the coaster KATHE MOHLMANN, registered at Brake (West Germany), at Beckingham Wharf with a cargo of 300 tons of packaged timber from Bollsta (Sweden); this was believed to be the first Scandinavian cargo ship to navigate the Trent as far as Gainsborough this century. In the days of sail there had been a considerable trade with Scandinavia from Gainsborough.

Only three days later, the 'Gainsborough News' reported another milestone in the history of the port of Gainsborough: the first time a sea-going vessel sailed through the widened 18th century road bridge at the upper end of the town. The ship was the BLATENCE, registered at Rochester, and it carried 550 metric tons of wheat from the Seine river port of Ducliar in France direct to Spillers Ltd. mills at Gainsborough. The coaster was brand new and fully automatic, with a English crew of four; it was specially built for combined sea and river work, with a collapsible mast and a very low superstructure, and other craft were expected shortly to the same pattern.

I came to live in Gainsborough at the end of 1969, and over the next few years the photographs, which I occasionally took at the town's wharves, give a fair idea of the increasing use of Gainsborough as a port. The vessels of the London and Rochester Trading Company multiplied, as had been foreseen in 1969, and the dull-red coasters with the Rochester registration became a familiar sight. I frequently saw the BLATENCE and its sister ships AMBIENCE, CADENCE and ELOQUENCE, passing up and down the river or moored at one of the five wharves in the town; they are very low built in order to pass under Gainsborough bridge, and I have seen all of them at various times unloading at Spillers Ltd. mills half a mile above the bridge. Slightly larger and more conventional in appearance, the FAIENCE and GARDIENCE cannot pass under the bridge, so I have never seen them at Spillers, but I have often seen them at Beckingham Wharf and the three wharves below the bridge on the Gainsborough side of the river – British Waterways, Whitton's and Furley's.

The WILLMARY, which had made history in 1968, continued to visit the town; I photographed her at Beckingham Wharf in 1972 and at Furley's in 1975. I saw another small coaster with a London registration, the TOWER HELEN, heading down the Trent near East Ferry on a summer evening in 1972.

I found a special interest in the foreign vessels which visited Gainsborough; there was a real fascination in seeing ships from abroad in a quiet little Lincolnshire town so far from the sea. The first one I photographed was the SCHLEI from Flensburg (West Germany) at Whitton's in 1971; this has continued to be a regular visitor, and I have photos of her at Furley's in 1978 and the British Waterways wharf later the same year. During 1972 I snapped the OSTERBRUCKE from Hamburg at Furley's, and the ANGLIA from Flensburg and the COURIER from Hamburg at Beckingham.

The national dock strike of August 1972, which caused riots on the Trent at Neap House wharf near Scunthorpe, did not affect Gainsborough, except that the town's wharves seemed busier than ever with small coasters. One Sunday that month I photographed a scene of activity at Beckingham, with the KARIN KNORR from Hamburg unloading timber, and four barges at the wharf as well as the Dutch coaster BRINIO.

In February 1973 the 'Gainsborough News' carried a feature on the town's river trade. It began, "the use of wharf facilities in Gainsborough by sea-going coasters able to navigate the River Trent has increased significantly in recent years and future prospects for the town's river trade look bright", and pointed out that registered tonnage using the wharves had increased from 31,964 in 1970 to 37,642 in 1972. An accompanying photograph showed two coasters and four river barges at the Gainsborough waterfront.

A new, though short-lived development, in 1974 was the use of Bacat barges direct from the Continent. These were large rectangular barges, which were brought across the sea attached to a mother ship, and were then pushed up the Trent by a propelling tug. I saw the strange looking vessels a few times, but dockers at Hull 'blacked' the Bacat system, and their action was followed by the Trent bargemen, and Bacat was soon abandoned. Two articles in the 'Gainsborough News' for September 1974 described a blockade of Beckingham wharf being carried out by conventional barges in order to keep the Bacat vessels out, and a photograph seven barges filling the whole frontage of the wharf.

Since then, British and foreign coasters have continued to visit Gainsborough, and there are not many days when no ships can be seen in the town; sometimes three or four are visible from the riverside gardens. The Rochester vessels still predominate, but other British-registered coasters as well as Dutch and German ships are frequent visitors.

Two recent developments have been the introduction of two new coasters, HULL MILLER and GAINSBOROUGH MILLER, to share the trade to Spillers mills with BLATENCE and her sisters, and the appearance of another series of new vessels, painted bright red, on workings to the other wharves in the town. HULL MILLER and GAINSBOROUGH MILLER are painted blue, and are low built to pass under Gainsborough Bridge; I photographed one for the first time in January 1979, when I saw HULL MILLER unloading at Spillers. One of the new red ships put in an appearance in a book called simply 'Rivers', published by David & Charles in 1978; the caption to the photograph was rather vague, but the vessel appeared to be arriving at the British Waterways wharf at Gainsborough, I photographed one of these vessels in May 1979, when I caught the ELSIE H from London just leaving Furley's wharf.

Now that Immingham, Grimsby and the wharves near Scunthorpe are in Humberside, Gainsborough is Lincolnshire's second port after Boston. A recent official document described the increasing penetration of rivers to inland ports by small coasters as being a significant feature of present-day transport developments, and I look forward to being able to observe the continuing growth of the port of Gainsborough.

P SLATER
Group Librarian
Gainsborough

HULL MARITIME SOCIETY

The Society now has well over 100 members and is in the fourth year of its existence. New members, both ladies and gentlemen, would be most welcome. Annual subscriptions are – Members £1.50; Member and Wife £2.00; Senior Citizen and Wife £1.00; Juniors 50p. Application forms are available from the Hon. Secretary, The Hull Maritime Society, c/o The Town Docks Museum, Queen Victoria Square, Hull.

The rest of the programme of meetings for this winter/spring is as follows:

Tuesday, 27th November

R W A Suddaby, Esq.
Keeper of the Department of Documents, Imperial War Museum
"Armed Steam Yachts, Trawlers & Drifters against the German Mine & Submarine Threat 1914/18"

1980

Tuesday, 29th January

G de Boer, Esq., MA
Reader in Geography, Hull University
"Lost Towns and Reclaimed Lands of the Humber"

Tuesday, 26th February at 7.15 p.m.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

And afterwards:

Dr Joyce Bellamy, B.Comm
Senior Research Officer, Dept. of Economics & Social History, Hull University
"Aspects of Hull's Industrial Development"

Tuesday, 25th March

L Hobson, Esq.
Engineer to the Humber Bridge Board
"The Humber Bridge"

Tuesday, 29th April

Capt A J C Harvey
Formerly master of the PS Lincoln Castle
B Beadle, esq
Local Chairman, World Ship Trust
"The New Holland Ferries"

Tuesday, 27th May

Wine and Cheese Party in the Court Room of the Museum.

COMRADE IN 1979

We have had another successful sailing season with COMRADE. This year we took our first weekend charter with a party from the Thames Barge Sailing Club. As you will see elsewhere in 'Slabline' we are hoping to arrange a return trip on one of their vessels, possibly sailing from Ipswich.

There were also some one-day charters and the weather was sufficiently kind that we only had to cancel one trip. In all, we made seven voyages including the two-day charter with the TBSC and were able to sail on eight days. From May 4th to September 30th we travelled a total of 212 miles of which 173 were under sail alone. However, to achieve this required twenty-six movements of COMRADE on twenty-six separate days.

A typical weekend can require work on four other days. If the ship is at the top end of Beverley Beck, we will run the mast inboard and take her down to Beverley Lock. To run in the mast requires a minimum of three. Although the trip down the River Hull may take only 2-3 hours, by the time she is rigged out again, not much is left of that day. After the weekend it is often necessary to repeat the whole process in reverse.

The trip to Grimsby for the Fish Dock Open Day was reasonably successful and a very large number of people visited the ship. On the way there, despite the flat calm as we left Hull, there was enough wind later on to do a bit of good. The return trip enabled us to take a look at the mouth of the estuary and also gave us a grandstand view of a spectacular electric storm over Lincolnshire.

Next year, we expect to be able to fix our sailing programme a little earlier than we have been able to previously. If you would like a copy as soon as it becomes available, please send in the loose form enclosed with 'Slabline' with a stamped addressed envelope to J Thompson, 218 Victoria Avenue, Hull, HU5 3DZ.

HUMBER KEEL AND SLOOP PRESERVATION SOCIETY LTD
Price List

		Price (postage included)
Humber Keels -	A collection of historical documents	£2.20
Greetings Cards -	with colour photograph of COMRADE sailing On the Fossdyke. 10 cards with envelopes for	£1.20
Christmas Cards -	Billy Boy Sloop design by Colin Screeton 5 cards with envelopes	50p
Postcards -	Four different views of Keels and Sloops (each) Set of four	13p 30p
Keel sail plan		20p
Pairs of lithographed photographs, A4 size, showing Keel and Sloop		35p
Pairs of posters -	19 th century advertisements for the sale of Keels and Billy Boys	30p
Society ties, with Keel motif, in green or maroon		£3.00
'Old Ships, Boats and Maritime Museums' by P Sullivan		£1.65
'Yorkshire Waterways' by Peter L Smith		£1.15
Canal are Great – an activity book for young people by Peter L Smith		60p
Ethel and Angela Jane – A brief History of Commercial Carrying On the Calder and Hebble Navigation		60p
Beckside Today – by Mary Ingleby		30p
Colour prints – high quality reproductions of the picture by Henry Wilson Carmichael, showing Keels on the Brayford Pool at Lincoln, 1858		£3.90
Five Hull Tragedies – by M E Ulyatt: Union Steam Packet Explosion 1837; The Whaler Diana's Dramatic Voyage 1866-7; The Dogger Bank Incident 1904; The R38 Airship Disaster 1921; The Train Disaster 1927		60p
Humber Shipping – by M E Ulyatt and E W Paget-Tomlinson		£2.50
Tankers Knottingley – by Alan Faulkner		£1.05
Hull and East Coast Fishing – by Gordon Pearson		70p

Available from the Sales Officers, Miss H Darby, 13 Middle Garth Drive, South Cave, Brough,
North Humberside and
Mrs F Harrison, 137 Waterside Road, Barton-on-Humber, South Humberside