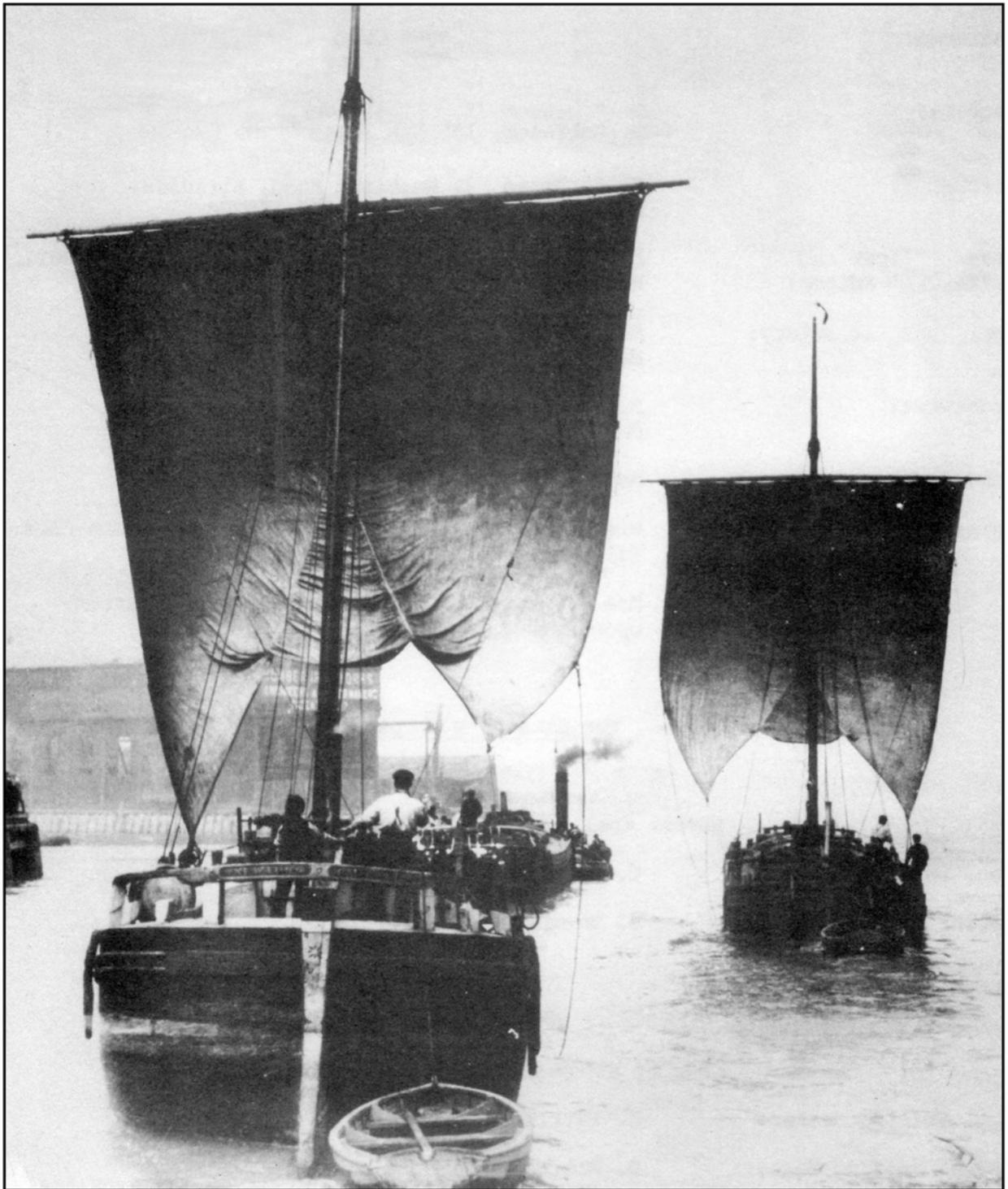


The Slabline



Keels nearing Sammy's Point

JOURNAL OF THE HUMBER KEEL AND SLOOP PRESERVATION SOCIETY

THE HUMBER KEEL and SLOOP PRESERVATION SOCIETY LIMITED

Registered as a Charity

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THE SOCIETY'S SHIPS:

'COMRADE'
Humber Keel - Purchased December 1974
Hon Sailing Master: C S Screeton
Relief Sailing Master: J W Thompson

'AMY HOWSON'
Humber Sloop - Purchased March 1976
Hon Sailing Master: C Harrison
Relief Sailing Master: D Robinson

SHIPS' AGENT for both vessels: J W Thompson, 218 Victoria Avenue, Hull HU5 3DZ
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COVER PHOTO: Keels nearing Sammy's Point – courtesy of the
Christain Ford Shipping Collection of Hessele

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Society Dinner

It is some years since the Society held a dinner. The last one was our Tenth Anniversary Dinner aboard the LINCOLN CASTLE, and it was so successful that it is rather surprising that it has taken us so long to think of arranging another.

We have arranged a Dinner for Members and their guests on Wednesday, 23rd March 1988. The venue is the Hesslewood Hall Hotel, overlooking the north end of the Humber Bridge at Hessle. The time is 7.30 for 8.00 p.m. There will be no formal speeches afterwards, but a short musical entertainment with a maritime flavour.

Tickets for the dinner, at £8.00 a head, are available from Mrs Mary Robinson at 135 Waterside Road, Barton-on-Humber, DN18 5BD. Please send a remittance and a stamped addressed envelope with your order, and mention any special dietary requirements. We anticipate a relaxed and very enjoyable evening with good food, good music and good conversation. We hope to see many old and new friends, and you can be assured of a warm welcome.

Annual General Meeting

The provisional date for the AGM next year is Saturday, 20th February at the Hope and Anchor Inn, South Ferriby.

An Accolade

The Director of the Maritime Trust, Vice-Admiral Sir Patrick Bayly, visited Hull during July and was able to inspect the Society's two ships at South Ferriby. In the letter which he subsequently sent to us, Admiral Bayly wrote about COMRADE and AMY HOWSON:

"I was most impressed with the condition in which your Society has managed to maintain them, and would like to congratulate them one and all for their good work. I wish that some of the prominent organisations than yours could do half as well. It is a pity that two such important local craft, and the work which your Society has done on them, is not more fully recognised locally."

THE KEEL 'EVANGELINE'

John Hainsworth recently received a letter from Mr B D Clayton of Armthorpe, near Doncaster, who wrote as follows:

I own the Humber Keel EVANGELINE which I bought from Edgar Holgate. I am trying to trace her history, without much success, and have been advised to get in touch with you.

She was built by Scarr's in Hessle and her number is 323. Dunstan's records go back to 1928 and their last yard number is 342. Perhaps you could tell us what AMY HOWSON's number is. I would like to know whether she was a sloop or square-rigged. If you have any photographs, I would willingly pay for copies.

She has only carried bagged cargo so she is in very good condition. She is now fitted with a Gardner engine, although I am told that she was the first barge to be fitted with a Lister 20, free of charge, for trial purposes.

As you can see, the details we have are very sketchy and any information you can give us would be very welcome.

As usual the enquiry was referred to Fred Schofield, who was able to supply the following information:

The Keel EVANGELINE was built by Henry Scarr at Hessle for Joe Sutton of Thorne. I cannot give the date precisely but I can remember that I was still mate which I feel sure would make it in the middle 1920's. I recall that her cabin was made of mahogany which, at that time, cost £100 extra. The cost of a steel hull, Sheffield size at that time was about £1,100 (eleven hundred pounds). She was rigged as a keel with a 48ft polka mast setting mainsail and topsail with leeboards and cogboat. With running and standing rigging that would maybe put on another £200. A copper fastened cogboat would be about £9-0-0. A mainsail was about £34-0-0.

Joe Sutton died in the early 1930's. Then she was bought by Arthur Whitehead of Stainforth.

In the spring of 1936 she went to Donald Scarr's yard at Howden Dyke to have installed her 18hp Lister diesel engine, the first in this area.

Arthur Whitehead sold her late in 1939 to Richard Hodgson & Sons, Beverley. Her rig was then taken out and later she was given a more powerful engine. She remained with Hodgson's until they went out of business in 1975. I then lost contact with her.

THE SLOOP 'ANNIE ELIZABETH'

In May our member Alan Oliver, who operates both commercial and pleasure craft on the Sheffield and South Yorkshire Navigation, wrote to us as follows:

Since March 1984 I have owned and operated the old sloop ANNIE ELIZABETH, with the rest of my fleet.

I have always been curious about the ship's history and I wonder if you or any member of the Society can help me.

Her official number is 165693, she was originally registered in 1937 (Number 84) when first converted from sail to motor and was subsequently re-registered in 1946 (Number 67) when re-engined. On the registration book under the headings 'where built' there is the answer – 'not known'. It seems strange to me that, although she belonged at that time to Barraclough's, one of the oldest firms on the river, that no-one knew where or when she was built.

I have asked many old boatmen about this information but as yet no-one seems to know. Everyone agrees she is very old, probably over 100 years.

She is built in a mould and style unlike any other Keel/Sloop I have ever seen, so this gives no clue as to her builders.

This ship is still in regular use, recent cargoes including steel, limestone, fluorspar and puddle clay, and I believe she is not only the oldest ship still in regular work in this area but probably one of the oldest still around in any condition.

If anyone can supply details of the ship's history I would be very grateful.

So far our enquiries have not produced any definite answers to the questions Alan has raised, though we have suggested on possible line of enquiry. We should be grateful for any information our readers can supply.

AN INCIDENT ON THE KEEL 'KATHLEEN'

At the time referred to, KATHLEEN was owned by Joseph Barraclough, her Captain was Alf Barraclough, and Arthur Atkinson (the writer) was mate. All of us were from Grimsby.

The KATHLEEN was taken in compensation for the loss of the Sloop GRETA which sunk off Hull Fish Dock circa 1919. Although she was a well found ship, being sloopmen, we took a rather dim view of a Keel. However we made the most of her. At this time thousands of tons of raw sugar were carried from Hull to Brigg. I remember counting 36 vessels waiting to discharge.

One day we were sailing down the Ancholme light with a light southerly wind. Her mainsail really was too big but the wind being so light we took the reef out which was normally left hauled. We thought we were getting quite smart lowering the sail and mast and running the bridges. Unfortunately when trussing up the main the bolt rope caught under the pawl on the fore roller and down came the lot. (We had omitted to put a dog on the forestay chain).

The rest was, sad to relate, a total wreckage. The mast was broken in two places. Topsail and mainsail halliard rollers were both broken, the mast hit the cabin chimney and forced it down and broke the stove – a proper mess indeed! Alf, when he had recovered some composure said, “Perhaps we will get a sloop rig now!” After some deliberations we made a jury rig, hauled two reefs and managed to carry on. It was darkly hinted in some quarters that it was a “deliberate mistake”. It was not, it was a genuine one.

'ACKER'

MY EARLY LIFE ON A HUMBER KEEL (Part 2)

We continue our serialisation of the memoirs of Mr Jim Wilson of Stainforth, beginning with an account of a trip down to Hull Fish Dock with a load of coal from Roundwood.

“When we got our cargo of coal in, it was all go again from St. Andrews Dock, not forgetting to call for our mast and sail and all other parts which we had left when we went up the canal. We now make for Keadby where the canal ends. Here you went into the River Trent. Every day steam tugs would leave Hull for Goole, York, Keadby, Gainsborough and Nottingham. Tugs would also leave the above places to go back to Hull, towing barges up and down. Sometimes father would sail from Keadby to Hull. This could sometimes be a long job if it came in foggy, so before we went into the River Trent, mother did a lot of shopping, getting in a large amount of potatoes, meat and stuff for making suet dumplings, and a few loaves of bread to make sure we had plenty of food in case we did not get down in one tide.

When you were in a tidal river you did not go to bed at night; you had to watch out and see that you had plenty of water under the keel's bottom if you were on the ebb tide, and

watch out for steamers coming up or down from Goole because they wanted to be in the same channel as you. You see, the channels are buoyed with port and starboard buoys, and it was sometimes a bit tricky if it was foggy. Say we ran into fog, my father would send me for'ard to ring the fog bell and to look out. If we had found a buoy on the Lincolnshire side of the Humber we watched out for its name, and then we set sail for the next buoy which might be three or four miles away on the Yorkshire side of the river. This could take a long time, and I would still be on the foredeck ringing the fog bell, and listening for any other fog bells or sirens, but chiefly for a train on the Yorkshire side of the river, where we wanted to be. Father would also be sounding the water every five minutes. He had a sounding pole marked off in feet; it also had a mark on from the top of the gun'l to a little deeper than the keel's bottom. He could soon see if we were running out of water. While father was sounding and steering, he would shout to me to ask if I could see or hear anything. Sometimes he would then say "Have you got your eyes open or are you asleep?" Father would still be sounding the river; you must not ground on a falling tide if you can avoid it. Two main reasons are: if you are on a hard ridge of bottom the ship can break its back: if the bottom is sand and mud the keel can suck into it and not lift when the tide starts to flow. (Keels are flat bottomed). If this should happen you try to get a rope or chain under the keel's bottom, down one side underneath the keel's bottom and up the other side, then you have one person on the deck side pulling the chain and someone on the other pulling it back again. If you are able to do this water will get under the keel's bottom to make her float again. I have known water get on to the deck sometimes before the keel has lifted: you are desperate to get tugs on when it gets to that stage. While all this was going on mother would be cooking meals, day or night, and coming on deck to see what was happening. She would have a suitcase or two packed with clothes and her purse, all ready for if we had to get into the cogboat and leave the keel.

Eventually we arrived at St Andrews Dock entrance. Here we could have to wait four or five hours if the flood tide had not set in to give us water over the dock gates sill and into the home of the Hull Deep Sea Fishing Fleet. I liked this dock very much. At daytime it was always very busy. When we got moored we had to find out how many keels were in front of us for coaling the same firm of trawlers. Cargo was usually discharged in the order you entered the dock, or the first one to arrive at Keadby if you were on the tug: you tried to be as fair as possible. There may have been three or four keels in the dock before us. You could be wanted the next day or you might have to wait a day or two and there could be three trawlers in on one tide, and some of them took about 250 to 300 tons on long trips. I have seen them go to sea with coal on their decks after they have filled the bunkers. We will say that we had orders to coal a ship in the morning. That trawler would be at Billingsgate ready to land her fish at 4 o'clock in the morning. We would go along about 7 o'clock to start coaling her offside bunkers. When she had landed her fish, a tug would come along and tow her to the other side of the dock, while we were still coaling. Now at the other side of the dock she would take on tons of ice, while other men would be painting her, even graining her bridge, and tarring all round. Ships soon rust at sea with wires, nets and gear rubbing the paint off. On her decks would be fitters, riggers, carpenters, surveyors, compass adjuster, boilermen, people bringing on provisions for the next three week trip, and the water boat men who had to fill her tanks. Meanwhile we are still coaling this trawler and you can see that she will be getting a bit list to starboard in this case with taking on about 70 to 80 tons of coal on one side, so another keel will come along and coal her portside bunkers. At this stage she is about ready for sea again for a three week trip to the Arctic, off Iceland, Greenland, Spitzbergen, White Sea, and the Grand Banks. Her bedding was also changed: the mattress was referred to as a donkey's breakfast, because it was made of straw. I was told they were quite comfortable, and easy to replace.

All this happened during the 36 hours a ship was in dock, so you can see what the dock would be like with about two dozen ships getting ready for sea, because other firms would be coaling our of craft, and trawlers were also coaling from the coal hoist. Railway wagons were tipped direct from the hoist to bunker. Sometimes when a ten ton wagon was tipped you could not see the trawler for dust, but painters still kept on with their job. Other trawlers would be settling. That was a major check. They would be taking all wires, nets, ropes, boats, sometimes the winch, anchors, chains off, and they would go on to the slipway, to have the bottom surveyed, and the propeller and tube checked. On the dockside near the cranes where the trawlers took all the gear off it was like a ship's spare parts museum. Sometimes a number of ships would want to be at these cranes at the same time, because the crane jib covers a large area when it swings in a circle, and tugs would pulling at them and pushing them to get their head up to the dock wall so they could get a head rope on, and at times we could be coaling in this vicinity but we never got sunk. Our main damage was broken after rails and a crushed cogboat. The tugs were handled very well in such a crowded dock. Trawlers did not use their engine in dock; only to come in and go out. At certain times of the year herringers would come in, and that made a full dock packed.

I think that is all about St Andrews Dock, apart from saying when I was three years old I fell in. I had been given a new watch and I lost it overboard and I went in after it. Our keel was light, that is empty, and high up in the water. My mum heard someone shouting out trying to get help. She came up out of the cabin, saw me in the Dock and jumped in and saved me, a very brave thing to do when she could not swim, with the aid of another woman who got into our cogboat. Mum handed me to this lady, and some dockers came and pulled mum out; thanks to all!

I have fallen in on three other occasions: twice at Stainforth and once in the River Rother at Rotherham flour mill. It is not bad falling in still water providing there is someone there to get you out, if you do not fall between a ship and a wall or quay. If this happens try to get a fender to drop in between ship and wall at once because the slightest breath of wind or any movement in the water could cause the ship to move and trap the person in between. If a person falls in tidal waters it is very much worse. Docks are bad places to fall in, because they have walls all round and you cannot find much to get hold of, there are a number of steel ladders let in the walls, but often vessels lay near these so you have to try to get hold of their fenders or rope, or a plank that might be floating about. There were also a lot of lifebelts around the Dock.

Now that we had discharged our cargo of coal we looked for another cargo. Sometimes the trawler firm would offer us another cargo of coal to take on from the hoist on the dock and use us as a warehouse and pay us demurrage, sometimes we would do this for a month or two. We called this lightering. I think that is all about Fish Dock apart from what a grand type of people the Dockers were, always willing to help. I will give you an example of what I mean. My father was a Hull City football fan. I have known one or two occasions when we have towed down on a Saturday morning and as the Dockers were going home they have seen us in the lock, and they have shouted down to dad "No City today, Jim." Father's reply was "I might make it," two or three of them have said "You will," and they have jumped on board and helped us up the Dock. You see there were no engines at that time, and the main way of getting where you wanted to be was warping. That is you get in the cogboat, take a rope as far as you can, hang it on something, go back to the keel and heave away until you get all the rope in. It takes a long time when you do it all yourself. When these men helped one would take the rope out and stop with it, and the other men would help dad to heave and this progress would continue until you got to your berth. As the docks

were very often a long way from the town they would ask if you wanted any shopping done.

We would then try to get another cargo for Sheffield to complete the round trip now since leaving Hull on our previous trip we had been looking at the newspaper shipping column to see what ships were in dock, what ships were due and what they had in. If a few grain ships were due we knew that there might be some for Sheffield or that we could go into the Old Harbour, that is the River Hull, for a cargo of flour for Sheffield. The River Hull was always very full with lighters, coasters, tugs, London barges, and one or two coal hulks and keels. You could also enter other docks from the river. I would say all this was packed in the first $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of the river. William Wilberforce lived in this area: his house is still there. The River Hull is tidal and when the flood tide sets in every ship that had water wanted to move at once. It was a bit bad for dumb craft when powered boats were pushing their way through the packed place. We often gave them a bit of rope and they pulled us through.

I once remember coming out of St Andrews Dock with a shy wind. We were in the lock with a trawler. My father said to one of the deck hands, "Will you pull us out of the lock please," which he did. My only trouble was, when the man saw me, he tormented me a bit, and said "I won't throw the rope off, I will pull you to the Dogger Bank." I was a bit afraid of going to sea with him. He pulled us very fast nearly to the Pier. I was saying to dad "Will he pull us to sea?" Dad says. "He says so," so I went to mum, but she calmed things for me. When I said, "Will the man throw the tow rope off?", she said, "Don't be silly, if he doesn't your dad will undo it for'ard." I don't know why I didn't think of that. I have never been up the River Hull much higher than Beverley, where trawlers, tugs, coasters and keels were built. All along between Hull and Beverley were oil mills, cake mills, flour mills, paint works, the gas house, and lots of small firms. Most of these often used keels, to receive and to send out their goods.

Anyway, into King George Dock for a cargo of wheat for Sheffield or Rotherham. King George Dock was the largest dock in Hull when it was opened: I think that was in 1914. In fact it was then the largest enclosed water space on the north-east coast, the dock was never really finished until after the last War. Where the North Sea Ferries now berth, I used to play. It was a large shallow arm of the Dock. Keels and lighters used to lay there, near the lock when they came light into the Dock, and when they got loaded, they came back into it to be ready to go out of the lock. It was a safe place for keels; when tugs were bringing big ships in there was no fear of them blowing on to you because there was not enough water. My father taught me to scull in that part of the Dock. I also fished for eels and flatties in it. The new part is called Queen Elizabeth Dock. The old lock was about 750ft between the gates; entrance width was 85ft, water over the sill about 40ft on spring tides. So you will see that a ship of practically any length could enter the Dock at level, that is when the water in the river was as high as the water in the Dock and all gates could be opened. King George Dock was a lovely picture to me on a nice sunny day, when they were all working, and the white paint on the ships from the tropics was shining in the sunshine. Also a lot of the ships would be flying their nationality flags, house flags and courtesy flags. On the day in 1914, when King George V actually opened the Dock to take his name, our keel was loading flour at Ranks Mill in the harbour, and the King had to pass by the street at the side of the mill. Dad and mum and myself were invited into the mill and we went up two or three storeys high so that we could look down on his carriage, but a little drizzle came on and the top of his cab was put up, so we did not see him. I think that is enough about the Dock for now.

We now proceed to the grain silo which used to hold 60,000 tons of grain, because we had heard that some of this wheat was for Rotherham Flour Mill. We took this cargo on, then

we had to get our hatches and hatch covers on, all lashed and battened down, and lashings over most of the boat hooks, planks and ropes on the hatches, because if we rolled a bit or a lot of water came over us we could lose some of them. When a keel rolled a lot with a cargo like loose wheat, the cargo would sometimes shift a bit and leave you with a big list. We often tied a bucket over the top of the forecastle chimney to stop water going down. You also saw that you had two oars in the cogboat and that they were tied down, because a cogboat can toss about like a cork in windy weather. If your next tide was in the dark, you had to see that your port and starboard lights were trimmed, also your riding light. Always did what was needed well before you needed it. You should also have a hatchet handy. You might wonder what that was for, but if 8 or 10 keels are on a tug and any bad accident happened to one of them you could not always undo or lift off heavy wet ropes, so you had to chop them. The reason you had to have your tackle handy was because it was kept in the forecastle and the hatch was battened down in bad weather. Due to the shape of the keel's head you got a lot of water on when towing: the tug cut through it, a keel shipped it, now we got through the lock and went into the Humber where a tug would be waiting for us. We also had the patent anchor slung on the davit ready for use if needed. We hung on to the tug to suit the place we were going to, e.g. Keadby, Stockwith, Gainsborough, maybe Nottingham. The keels going the farthest were the first on the tug. We were for Keadby so we had to be at a position where we could be dropped off if the tug was going further up the Trent than we were. The tug pulled the keels in two lines, one string from each tow hook and about 5 keels on each hook. Sometimes the last keel was a long way back from the tug if each keel was 60 to 70ft long and you had a similar length of rope out. If the tug was full you set off for Keadby not forgetting to fasten all cabin cupboard doors where you kept cups, plates and glasses. Packed those with dusters to stop them moving about, also empty water jugs and bowls, if the weather was bad. If the tug was not full from King George Dock, you might have to pick up at Alexandra and Victoria Dock. This used to be a bit hectic at times if a lot of vessels were riding in Hull roads, especially if it was a bit foggy, because you were towing up on a flood tide, and to pick up you had to go round in a big circle: the proper name is round up. The tug went round taking all the keels with it so it could hold them against the tide, until it got the other keels made fast. Then you rounded up again hoping you would not foul any vessel's anchor chain that was sure to be riding off these Docks. Then you set off up the river again hoping Hesse whelps and Barton bulldogs would not be too choppy. Then on the Keadby where you rounded up again and went into the canal and followed the route of the previous trip. When you rounded up at Keadby the Trent was much narrower than the Humber was at Hull; you felt that the last keel on the string would end up on the river bank."

MORE ON FIDDED TOPMASTS, AND THE SHEFFIELD AND SOUTH YORKSHIRE

As an addendum to the article on MARY JANE and her topgallant, appearing in the last 'Slabline', Fred Schofield provided some additional information. Acts of Parliament regulating the Sheffield and South Yorkshire originally prohibited the construction of fast bridges (fixed bridges) between Keadby and Doncaster. However, this was not the case for the section between Doncaster and Mexborough. Many fast bridges were to be negotiated in that stretch and, in earlier times before the fitting of a fore roller, the mast would be hove up using the windlass. No light matter! Consequently, if a keel was to carry a topsail, a fidded topmast, which could be unshipped offered some advantages. Some readers may be aware of the model of the clinker-built keel HANNAH owned by the Maritime Museum in Hull. HANNAH was owned by Jimmy Ford of Mexborough and the model clearly displays the fidded topmast. Although a canal, there is nevertheless always a drain of water down the Sheffield and South Yorkshire amounting to, perhaps, half a knot. The Don Valley between

Doncaster and Sheffield is relatively deep, running roughly east to west. Constantly, no serious sailing could be attempted up the canal unless the wind was easterly. Suitable conditions might not occur more than three or four times a year. On the other hand, coming down from Mexborough to Doncaster favourable westerly winds were much more common. Fred Schofield's father reckoned it was nearly always possible to avoid hiring a horse. Even if the wind were not of much assistance, the small current and judicious use of the stower to straighten the ship up would usually keep her going. Raising and lowering the main mast only, with topmast unshipped, would be much less of a burden. On the other hand, the fitting of a fore roller was likely to swing the balance the other way. The task of raising or lowering the mast would be much eased so the avoidance of the extra complication of a fidded topmast compared to a pole mast would become worthwhile.

SPURN GRAVEL

I was mate on the Sloop ERNEST, Captain and Owner Len Cook. She had a bowsprit and could set a mizzen.

We sailed from Grimsby about 0600 down into Spurn Gut and picked up a gang of lifeboatmen including the Coxswain Mr Cross.

We sailed round the corner and anchored on the Binks and waited to ground. The system of loading was as follows: we had numerous tins made specially for the job, they had three handles on them so two men could hoist them on to one man's shoulder, he then walked up a plank raised two feet so that his shoulder was level with the deck, the tin was then emptied into the hole cut in the deck. There were three each side. After this operation had gone on for about five hours, there would be 80 or 90 tons on board. But, on this particular day, when we were about half loaded, Mr Cross said, "I should go a bit light today Len, there's going to be a stiff Easterly later on and a fair swell." The loading stopped, the holes were made tight, hatches battened down including the foc's'le hatch. We then had a meal and waited for the tide. We dropped a bit of sail against the mast and kept as dry as possible.

On a spring tide it flows a good three feet an hour. But before we floated solid water was running across the decks. Before we were properly afloat the swell picked us up and made things very uncomfortable.

Eventually we were afloat and driving up river. I got rather damp getting the foresail up, and soon the double reef mainsail. A quick run to Grimsby got us safely in port.

The pounding the old lady had taken made her leak rather badly so we gave her a 'branmash' and that seemed to do the trick. We then went home. Next morning Len was on board before me and had pumped her dry before discharging.

Some time after, the Humber Conservancy stopped all gravel being taken off the Binks, but what harm was done I failed to see.

There was once a substantial trade going on. All the cobble stones used for road making came from Spurn.

The only Sloop in this trade besides us, was the PARADISE owned by Billy Foster of Barton.

'ACKER'

SPURN LIGHTSHIP HULL MARINA

Dimensions

Length	100ft	Beam	24ft	Weight	200 gross tons
Depth	14.5ft	Draught	10ft	Lantern Housing ...	8ft diameter

An Introduction

The Spurn Light Vessel was built in 1927 at Goole by the Goole Shipbuilding and Repairing Company Limited at a cost of £17,000. On 17th November that same year the Lightship SPURN was placed on her station, one which had previously been occupied by Newsand Light and Whistle Buoy, at the entrance to the Humber, four miles, nautical position 104 deg (S 65deg E magnetic) from Spurn Lighthouse. The vessel, having no form of propulsion, was towed into position and moored by means of a 26cwt mushroom anchor, with two spare anchors of 9cwt and 7cwt respectively available in case of emergency. The Spurn Light Vessel was commissioned by the Humber Conservancy Board, whose annual report for the year ending 31st December 1927, commented on how modern a ship she was. There were then five lightships on the River Humber: SPURN, LOWER WHITTON, MIDDLE WHITTON, UPPER WHITTON and BULL.

During the Second World War, the ship was moved to the middle Humber position marking the boom across the river. She was replaced on 22nd May 1946 in approximately her pre-war position off the entrance to the Humber, where she remained until being withdrawn from station for refitting in 1959. In May that year a new SPURN lightship was accepted by the Conservancy Board and placed on station on 3rd June. The old SPURN, which is the vessel we have here, was then painted red and transferred to the Bull Shallows station on 9th June 1959. She remained in service there as the Bull Light Vessel until she was decommissioned in November 1975. She was laid up until 1983 when she was acquired by the Hull City Council, with the aim of renovating her and displaying her to the public. Every effort has been made to restore the ship to her original condition, by workers on the Community Programme Scheme run by the Hull City Council Opportunity Centre. She was towed to her present berth in the Marina in October 1986, and has been open to the public since February 1987, having been returned to her original colour of black with white lettering.

The vessel is built of steel and divided into numerous watertight compartments by seven transverse watertight bulkheads (partitions), two longitudinal watertight bulkheads and eight short transverse watertight bulkheads connecting the longitudinal bulkheads to the shell. Thus she is believed to be practically unsinkable.

The impressive lantern and optical apparatus is supported 35 feet above the waterline by a hollow steel mast, 4 feet in diameter, which contains a vertical ladder for access to the light. Originally she also had two wooden masts to carry the wireless aerial 53 feet above the deck. The light (group flash, white) has a power of 18,000 candles and is visible for 11 miles. The following signal was given out by the light: ½ second light, 2½ seconds eclipse, ½ second light, 2½ eclipse, ½ second light and 8½ seconds eclipse (i.e. 3 flashes every 15 seconds). The pattern would then be repeated. Acetylene gas was used for the light and 12 months supply could be stored aboard. It is important that the light beam is always horizontal; therefore the optic is mounted on a constant level table controlled by a balance

weight which ensures that the table and light remain horizontal, whatever the weather. The optic was revolved by a falling weight contained in the mast which had to be regularly re-wound.

The ship is also equipped with wireless and three types of fog signal, which operate in conjunction with each other: an electric foghorn, a wireless signal and a submarine signal. Ships would thus ascertain their distance and bearings from the lightship. By means of the wireless the lightship could communicate with the Board's offices, via the Humber Radio Station at Mablethorpe. The main fog signal is an electric nautophone, the trumpets of which were fixed at the top of the mast immediately below the lantern. It gave a blast of 2 notes every 20 seconds. The wireless fog signal was in Morse ('MMH' followed by a series of dots) on a wavelength of 988.5 metres, with a range of 50 miles. Finally the submarine signal was given by an electric submarine oscillator suspended over the starboard side of the ship. This had a maximum range of 20 miles. The vessel had a large capacity storage battery so that all fog signals could be commenced without waiting to start the engine and electric machinery.

The crew originally consisted of the Master (or mate), four seamen, one wireless operator and one engine man. When on relief from a one month tour of duty the seamen joined the crew of the Buoy Yacht QUEEN. Later the crew was reduced to a total of five. Wages were £8 16s 0d per week for a Master and £6 14s 7d for a seaman in 1953 plus uniform. In 1962 they had risen to £12 12s 9d and £9 19s 6d respectively plus £2 lightship duty allowance and uniforms. The crew's quarters, fitted with four sleeping berths and a galley stove in the dining area, are below deck to the rear (abaft) of the lantern mast. The only access was via a staircase from the upper deck, meaning that they were far more private then. Alterations have been made to show her off more safely to the public. The Masters Cabin, a more comfortable and better equipped affair, is situated immediately astern of the mens' quarters.

(Acknowledgement's to Hull City Council and Manpower Services Commission)

COMRADE IN 1987

Over the winter, a major job of restoration involved the replacement of the 'following pieces' round the cabin deck. The timber had decayed beyond the point at which it could sensibly be repaired and the steel beneath was rusted through in a few spots. The work took longer than expected so that the first scheduled sailing weekend was lost.

However, the remainder of the sailing programme was successfully completed. No days were lost through bad weather and every party who came with us had a reasonable amount of time under sail.

There were occasional small dramas. On one day the robands on the mainsail blew out and on another a topsail sheet parted. Swift action prevented serious damage on both occasions. New robands of great strength were made fast and new topsail sheets were acquired. In the case of the latter, the old ones were those fitted in 1975 and were of hemp. In Fred Schofield's words, "They didn't owe us anything!"

There was disappointment that the trip to Owston Ferry was cancelled because of a local tragedy involving three teenagers who were drowned a week or two before the Festival. However, later in the season we did 'show the flag' up the Ancholme, going as far as Brandy Wharf, in conjunction with Chris Topp in his vessel JUNE, into which he has put a

keel-like rig. At Brandy Wharf your Sailing Master was amazed beyond belief to find that the ale house really had no ale, whatsoever, but only many varieties of cider. Nevertheless, a very pleasant weekend was had by all. The river has silted up since the earlier trips on AMY HOWSON reported in 'Slabline' some years ago. It was possible to take the smaller vessel JUNE up to the weir below Harlem Hill lock but this would not have been possible in a Sheffield-sized ship. We also established that it really is possible to turn a canoe over but that you can stand on the bottom anyway!

The winds have not been overly favourable and we've seen more westerlies than we would have liked. We have had some more members coming out regularly and acquiring the skills in the only way possible. We thank them and also the lock-keepers at Ferriby Sluice who continue to give us excellent service. In early October, the ship will be back in Beverley and the wheel will have turned full circle – winter maintenance. Help is always welcome and volunteers should contact the Sailing Master.

THE PURCHASEMAN

SAILING PROGRAMME 1988

As in previous years, members requiring an advance copy of the 1988 programme for both ships should write to J Thompson, 218 Victoria Avenue, Hull HU5 3DZ enclosing a stamped addressed envelope.

The programme should be available around the turn of the year.