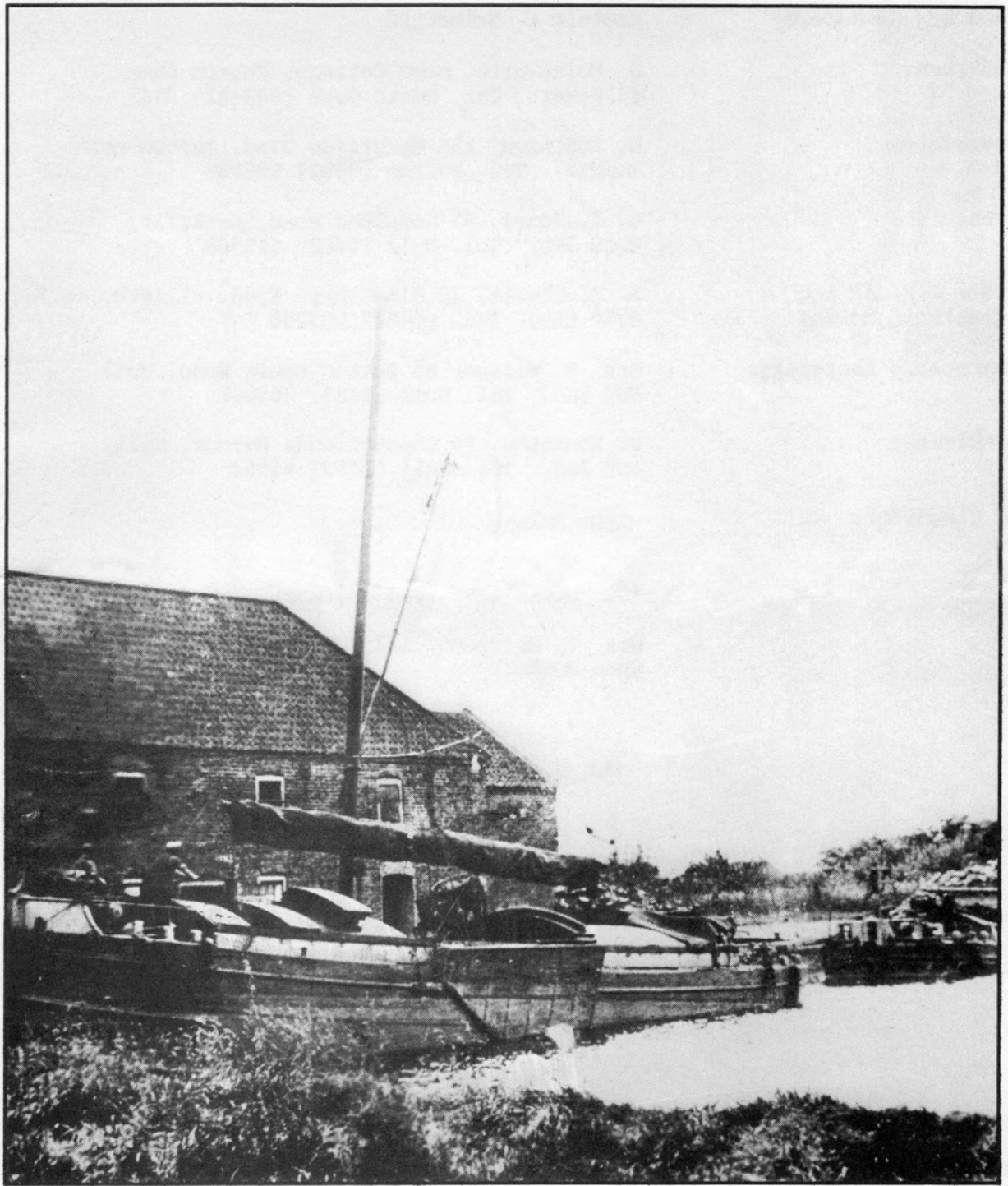


The Slabline



Keel "Olive" at Leven Canal Head

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:

<u>'COMRADE'</u>	Humber Keel - Purchased December 1974
Hon Sailing Master:	C S Screeton
Relief Sailing Master:	J W Thompson
<u>'AMY HOWSON'</u>	Humber Sloop - Purchased March 1976
Hon Sailing Master:	C Harrison
Relief Sailing Master:	D Robinson
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<u>COVER PHOTO:</u>	Keel OLIVE at Leven Canal Head

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Humber Keels and Keelmen

Since its publication in May, Captain Fred Schofield's memorable book has made a notable impact. The publishers are well satisfied with its sales, and we ourselves have sold around 60 copies, with substantial benefit to our funds. It has been greeted as a uniquely authoritative account, and an important contribution to maritime and social history. With its exceptional wealth of illustrations, both in the form of photographs and of the many drawings and maps by Edward Paget-Tomlinson, it has great visual appeal.

The Humber Keel and Sloop Preservation Society has been very fortunate to have Fred Schofield as its mentor for so many years. His influence has not been limited to the restoration and sailing of COMRADE: he is a mine of information on many matters, and his wise counsel has guided us on many occasions. For a long time we were concerned that we were not able to give the time to recording on paper the history of the keels. Now Fred has done this for us too. His book will remain the standard work on its subject, and will continue to be read for many years.

Copies of the book are still available from Mrs Harrison. It would make a very acceptable Christmas present.

Annual General Meeting

The provisional date for the AGM is Saturday, 18 February 1989, at the Hope and Anchor Inn, South Ferriby.

Dinner

Following the very successful dinner earlier this year, your Council has made a booking at the Hesslewood Hall Hotel for a similar function on Wednesday, 15 March 1989. Full details will be sent out with the AGM notice after Christmas.

Society Slides

The Society has a collection of several hundred slides, mostly from old photographs. These are shown regularly at lectures given to a remarkable variety of organisations, and always arouse great interest. Unfortunately they are at present in cardboard mounts; these are deteriorating, and are unsuitable for automatic projectors. We would be very glad to hear from a member who would be prepared to put them into plastic mounts, to ensure their proper preservation. (The Society will pay for the mounts, if someone will supply the labour.)

Humber Keel Sweaters

A leaflet about these sweaters, marketed by Flamborough Marine, is enclosed with this issue. They are supplied post free to Society members.

Market Weighton Canal

Mr Trevor Auld, of Carrfield House, Carr Lane, Newport, Brough, HU15 2QH has written seeking information on the Market Weighton Canal. In particular he is looking for photographs, and accounts of passages or trading. We have very little on this waterway: can any member's help?

CLYDE PUFFERS

John Hainsworth received the following letter earlier this year. Can anyone help Mr Cooper?

307 Spen Lane
LEEDS
LS16 5BD

7.4.88

Dear Mr. Hainsworth,

I am writing to you, because I have just reread the article in the winter edition of 'The Slabline' concerning the Keel EVANGELENE in which you and Fred Schofield were able to answer Mr Clayton's enquiry.

For some while I have been trying to find out about the building of the Clyde Puffer type of R.N. Victualing Inshore Craft (VIC Class) that were built during the last war. I have sailed (steamed?) on the VIC 32 and the Captain (Nick Walker) of this puffer believes his boat to have been built by Dunstons of Thorne (at Thorne) but on the brassmakers plate fixed to a bulkhead on the VIC, beneath the words "Dunstons Shipbuilders Thorne 1943" in much smaller lettering is engraved "controlling Henry Scarrs, Hessele". (I do not know the works number.) When I suggested to Nick Walker that, to me this suggested the building of his puffer had been subcontracted to Scarrs at Hessele by Dunstons, he seemed surprised, so I said I would endeavor to see what information I could find out.

Therefore I would be grateful of any information you might know, particularly were Scarrs of Hessele owned by Dunstons and did Scarrs build "VIC's" during the war? I have seen other vessels with oval brass "Dunstons plates" on them which make no reference to Scarrs.

A few years ago you gave a most interesting lecture on Keels and Sloops to the Yorkshire Archaeology Society in Leeds, so I joined the HK&SPS which I find most worthwhile for 'The Slabline' alone.

Yours,

Bob Cooper

MY EARLY LIFE ON A HUMBER KEEL (part four)

We continue our serialisation of the memoirs of Mr Jim Wilson of Stainforth with a description of the Trent and the Humber, and an account of Stainforth:

"At the age of about 12 years, I used to like to go out of the canal into the River Trent at Keadby. When it was full of water the speed of the tide fascinated me: it also put a bit of fear into me. The reason was because Keadby Road and Rail Bridge was just above the lock, and my trouble was that if a towrope had to break we would be athwart the bridge before we could get our anchor down and get it to hold. You see, when you let go the anchor you sometimes drag it for a few minutes, and then minutes seem like hours. As soon as I found the tug was holding its load without any drift back I brightened up, and thought we shall soon be full speed ahead now.

After this I always looked back to the old windmill which had sails. Then I turned to look at coasters and London barges waiting for coal at Keadby Hoist. I looked to see their names and where they were registered. My next view was the chimneys at Scunthorpe steel works and, as we left Keadby town, I looked at the little Chapel. I knew some of the people who attended it. My next landmark was Amcotts Church of England, because my Grandma Wilson came from Amcotts. The next viewing point was Burton Stather Village: it looked so nice on the hillside. Not much more viewing until we came to Trent Falls unless there was a ship coming up, then I wanted to know her name and the firm.

At the end of the Trent I was all eyes watching for the Lanky and York ships coming from Goole, nice looking ships with masts and funnel leaning aft, yellow funnel red band, black top. They had some speed and made us roll a bit after they passed us. After that I had a look over to Whitton and the lightship. My next interest was Brough on the Yorkshire side of the River; I have seen seaplanes there years ago. Next viewing was the big island in the River off the Ancholme; I have seen a lot of sheep on there, then I looked over to Barton, there were often a few sloops there, a bit further on I looked towards Hessle. There was a shipyard on the riverside here in the first war, apart from the one in the Haven, from here if the wind was up you could tell that the Fish Dock was not far away; you could get the smell of the fish manure. In the ordinary way keels would be dropping off here but I am going on the King George Dock.

After St. Andrews Dock (Fish Dock) came Albert Dock, generally full of ships from the near continent, the Baltic, and the Med. Sometimes I have seen a few warships in this Dock. A noticeable feature on the riverside was a large hydraulic tower with a clock at the top: this was near the Riverside Quay. Also in this area were a lot of seagulls, with the Dock being so near Fish Dock. Also if you looked a little further over Albert Dock and towards Fish Dock you would see a lot of smoke houses used for curing fish. On the riverside of Albert Dock was the Riverside Quay; here were always 5 or 6 ships. They brought in fruit and vegetables, from the continent. Also the butter boats discharged there. Humber Street Fruit Market was near here and buyers came from all over Yorkshire, a lot of Lanky and York ships used this quay, and a few foreign ships used the place. I remember the old DUKE OF CLARENCE: she sailed from here, with passengers from Hull to Zeebrugge. She was a lovely

looking ship: yellow funnel, red band, masts and funnel leaning aft. Ships could leave the quay at all states of tide, a few bucket dredgers also used to moor at the quay.

Now after this came the old town Docks right in the centre of the city. You could stand in City Square and see Monument Bridge open and see ships go into Queens Dock. The statue of William Wilberforce was near the bridge at that time. A lot of trawlers and tugs were fitted out in the Town Docks, some ships settled there for a while (laid up). My first trip to sea was from Humber Dock to Aberdeen, calling at Newcastle on the S.S. HIGHLANDER. Also one of my uncle's keels sank going into Humber Dock lock (SOBRIETY). The ships in these docks were mostly coastal and near continent. After these docks came Hull Pier which was a double deck type with an arm stretching out at each side: one arm formed Humber Dock Basin. You could often see a few yachts around here. Now, of course, Humber Dock is a yacht Marina. Now back to the Pier which was the ferry station for the New Holland boat on the Yorkshire side of the River, the other ferry station was at New Holland on the Lincolnshire side. The train ran on to the pier at New Holland. There was also a small boatyard near the pier. Again at the Hull side of the River was the Humber Pilot Station. Pilots who boarded their ships at Spurn Point would come off in Hull roads and land at the pier. Should the ships be going on to Goole or up the Trent another pilot would take over. At the other side of the pier was another arm which formed a little creek, often you could see a few Barton sloops in here loading or discharging, at that time the cargo was carried to and from the vessels by carts drawn by heavy legged horses.

Talking about the pier reminds me of a trip I once had one Hull Fair week. It would be in the 1930s, I went on to the pier and it was blowing a howling gale. Trawlers were really wallowing in the water. There happened to be a New Holland boat ready to leave so I went on it. The trip used to take about 20 minutes each way. This took nearly 4 hours there and back. It rolled very badly: water was coming in through the paddle boxes and all over the deck. All the crockery in the tearoom was thrown out of its place. There happened to be about 6 cows penned in on the deck. They were so well fastened that not one was hurt, but they looked in a sorry state with water going all over them. I sheltered some of the time on the little stairway between the upper and lower deck. You only got your feet wet there. It was dry in the main lounge, the raised portion in the door entrance was keeping that part quite dry, but when you had been in there for a quarter of an hour you got fed up of her rolling, or pitching her port holes in, and I don't like to be in a room when a shallow draft ship is rolling. If she goes over I want to be thrown clear if possible, not trapped in a cabin. [That is only my idea.] When we got to New Holland we could not get alongside the jetty. We eventually made it doing £600 worth of damage to boat and jetty, and I said to myself that we should have to stay at New Holland a long time until the wind eased or the tide fell. But when the time came we started back. I did notice when we came back a lot of clothes baskets filled with eggs did not come back with us on the return trip which was worse. In one big roll one of the big steel entrance doors was thrown off its hinges and overboard. About two rolls later after a bit of creaking and cracking, a big case of life jackets went across the ship's deck and through the space in the ship's side where the door should have been and into the Humber. Anyway the ship got back all right.

While I am still around the pier area I would like to say what a good view one had from the top deck, of the River and its shipping both up and down, after the pier came the Harbour entrance, but just to the left of the pier when looking on to the Humber was a dry dock. Looking right across the Harbour was Sammy's Point, a plot of land belonging to the Humber Conservancy Board. Here repairs are done to Humber lightships. There had been an old jetty here at one time, and I well remember dad running in one day fairly fast and he got too far over and we rubbed along this jetty. There was an old bolt head sticking out, and it scraped along our planking, and I wondered if we would sink. Even after the surveyor had been I did not sleep after we had loaded but I was only very young. These little things seem to live with me.

After this came Victoria Dock and timber ponds. This dock was to import timber a lot of which came from the Baltic, again in this area was a small slipway. After this I can well remember Earles shipyard and the very large overhead swinging crane. Then after this came Alexandra Dock and its extension. This was a large dock taking ships from all over the world. A lot of coal was exported from this dock, and there was a quay onto the River Humber with coaling facilities. Next came King George Dock, a large area taking ships from all over the world, bringing in large amounts of wheat from Canada, America, India, wool from Australia, a lot of scrap metal and fruit came in. Also in the dock and moored outside in the River were always a few sea tugs ready to be used should they be needed. A few tugs were often moored outside Alexandra Dock.

The farthest I went down the River on ENERGY was Great Grimsby. A little previously I mentioned what a good view one had from the pier on to the River. I would also like to mention what a good view one had from the middle of the Humber of the pier and looking on to Hull on a clear day. All the docks, the high column of William Wilberforce near Monument Bridge at that time, and the huge bulk of Holy Trinity Church in the background, said to be one of the largest parish churches in England.

A bit more about Stainforth, although we lived on a keel we had a house on the east bank at Stainforth. We did not use it much. Every time we moored at Stainforth over the weekend, we would make a few fires to try to keep it as dry and aired as possible. If we were having work done at the carpenter's yard or if there was not work to be had we would live at home. It was a 4-roomed house. The rent was 2/9 per week.

Stainforth 70 years ago was a village made up of the canal banks, Doncaster Road, Thorne Road, Field Road, Silver Street, Finkle Street, East Lane to the old vicarage on that side of the road. There was also Meadow Lane and Briers Lane, from the Fox Inn at Stainforth to Hatfield Church it was nearly all fields. My grandfather Parish walked from Stainforth to Hatfield when he went to school. It was a long way. He took his school money with him.

At Stainforth Feast which was in September, as many Stainforth keelmen as possible would try to get home for the weekend. The main amusements were set up in the Garth, a small field in Silver Street opposite the Fox Inn. Donkeys and ponies ran up and down Silver Street to the beginning of Finkle Street at so much a ride. Stalls used to stand at the front of the Fox Inn; they also stood in Hall Road, and where the Church of England now stands. Some of the stalls were lighted by paraffin lamps that burnt in flare fashion. Also we had a

small racehorse meeting in Ramsker Park. We even had a Stainforth St. Ledger. I was more interested in the watermen's sports: greasy pole, swimming races, sculling races, sea horse race, tub race, etc. Stainforth at that time was only farming and keeling. I think there was only one day school then, that was on Thorne Road. The headmaster was Mr. Hughes. There was only one bank in the village, the Yorkshire Penny open in the school on Friday evening 6 o'clock until 7 o'clock.

There was a sail maker on the landing on South Bank. I have previously mentioned Worfolks Boat Yard but there was another boat yard at the basin. Keels here were launched into the River Don. There was also a lock here into the River. When the Sheffield and South Yorkshire canal was cut it only came to Stainforth at which you locked into the River, and went down to Hull via Goole and the River Ouse. It was some years later that the Stainforth and Keadby Canal was cut. This went through Thorne. Yards also sprang up there for keel building. Then the canal went through Crowle. I can remember a weekly boat running to Crowle Wharf with produce; we called it the market boat. The canal then went to Keadby and locked into the River Trent, then you could go down to Hull, Grimsby, or up river, to Nottingham.

Another little event I well remember about old Stainforth was November 5th. If it was on a weekend I used to go with some of the well known men of the village to one of the farms, and we gathered together a number of large bags, filled them with straw and other burnable rubbish, made sacks for head, legs, body and arms, and fastened them together with rope. Then we put the guy on a small cart, took it round to the east bank to the crane that was used to take the leeboards off, heaved him up to the top of the jib, and then fetched it back in the afternoon. It was burned at night in the middle of the road near our house, just where Finkle Street joins Silver Street. It left enough room for any carts to pass but there was very little road traffic at night.

A bit more from memory: keels that I have seen or know of that were built at Stainforth top yard, (Worfolks) were: FAITH, PROGRESS, PRIMROSE, ENERGY, SILVIA W., RUPERT 1, BLANCHE, RUPERT 2, SUCCESS, PROCESS, RELIANT, RELIANCE, GUIDANCE. This yard closed about 1926. At the low yard at the basin, in living memory the owners were: No. 1 Mr. Threadgold, No. 2 Messrs. Bleasdale and Barraclough; Foremen: No. 1 Mr. MacNamara, No. 2 Mr. Houlton. Among the keels built were CITY OF SHEFFIELD, ABBEYDALE, BRIGHTSIDE, ENDCLIFFE. This yard closed about 1911. After that cog boats were built for a number of years by Mr. Houlton at the yard.

Keels owned or manned by Stainforth men were: BETHEL, JAMES AND LUCY, ENERGY, ANNIE MAUD, SAMARITAN, HONOUR, UNITED, EDITY ANNIE, TIBBY, LILY, LAUREL, SOBRIETY, ECLIPSE, COMRADE, MARVEL, SUNBEAM, WELFARE, KITTY, MARYANN, INTREPID, FANNY of Fishlake. The owner of this keel lived on the opposite side of the River Don bank to Stainforth and came under the parish of Fishlake. My father was mate on this keel as a youth. The owner was Mr. W. H. Schofield. Tugs in the canal and river at the beginning of the century were: PHOEBE, DON, CLARA, MARION. In later years I have often known Grays tugs, and the United Towing Company, they also put tugs in to break the ice in hard winters. On a few occasions one or two private men tried tugs in (SULZER and TUNA) but engines came in keels and cut the tugs out.

BARGE, ENERGY, A MARVEL OF COMPACTNESS

ENERGY, the wooden barge owned by Jim Wilson's father, was divided, like all keels into three sections: the tiny forecabin, the hold, and the very small cabin aft which was galley, bedroom and living quarters combined.

For some it would seem cosy; for others cramped; but for Jim and his parents this was home, with an address which might be Sheffield one day, Doncaster the next, then Stainforth, and maybe Hull the day after. 1

It was a marvel of compactness, with an open fireplace, mahogany chimney piece and such homely decoration as a clock, a pot dog on the mantelpiece, and a calendar with tide times and moon phases.

Varnished cupboards and bed places filled the space available, with railed shelves to stop things falling off. Some cupboards and lockers held clothes, boots and shoes, sticks for lighting the fire, bedding and his mother's sewing machine. Mrs. Wilson made all the family's shirts. There was space for brushes, pens, scissors, button box, bible, and the ganseys or the stockings she was always knitting. Other spaces in this floating home-cum-workplace held cutlery, crockery, a baking cupboard, bread cupboard, toy cupboard, cleaning cupboard and a folding table. In another part of this tiny area were stowed suitcases, freshwater jug, bowl for washing, buckets and a foghorn. On the deck above this cabin were the tillers and much of the sailing gear, a 50-gallon freshwater cask and the peggy tub used on washday.

The forecabin was even smaller than the one aft. In it was a fireplace with an oven for cooking alongside anchor chains, spare hatch covers, sail, tools, and a bag of sawdust. The sawdust was used if the hull sprang a leak. You threw the sawdust into the water close to where you thought the leak was, in the hope that it would be drawn into the gap and stop it. Once again there were cupboards and lockers everywhere holding navigation lights, paraffin, Mrs. Wilson's wringer, clothes line and coal. Here was kept the line used when a horse led by a "horse marine" towed the vessel. This was also the paint store (the paint was a powder which you mixed with linseed oil yourself), there would be buckets with tar and creosote, copper nails, twine and fishing lines.

Elsewhere on the vessel you would find boathooks, the cog boat or coggie (a small ship-to-shore boat propelled by one oar in the stern) and a sounding pole to check depth of water as the keel negotiated the dangerous and ever-shifting Trent and Humber sandbanks.

Externally the Wilson's keel, ENERGY, was painted ultramarine, with darker blue lining. Flowers and leaves were painted on and other parts were either tarred, grained, plant wood, red, or gilded. Nobody was allowed to wear hobnail boots for fear of scratching the deck and there was always a mop handy to wipe your boots on.

VANISHED WAY OF LIFE ON THE OLD KEELS

Jim Wilson was born prematurely 77 years ago in the tiny aft cabin of his father's keel ENERGY. It was a world so very different from the one he enjoys in Stainforth, near Doncaster today.

Jim's house, which he has known all his life, is just a cable length from the canal where ENERGY was built.

On Christmas Eve 1939 Jim was going round Stainforth carol singing with his Methodist Church friends, and so arranged things that we would be on board ENERGY, just above the cabin where he was born, with the girl he loved just before midnight. He proposed, and was accepted, by the lady who was making coffee for us in the kitchen as we talked.

The couple have one son, Dr. Jim Wilson of Thorne Road, Edenthorpe, circuit steward (finance) on the local Methodist Plan. Dr. Wilson is deeply involved in modern technology being on the staff of a computer company.

His father, however, is a product of the Old School. He spent every spare moment of his childhood helping his parents to sail ENERGY from Hull to Sheffield. They insisted, however, that he stayed with his grandparents in Stainforth so that he could attend school. These grandparents were very strict.

"Meals were at 8am, noon and 4pm. Not five minutes past! If I wasn't there they were cleared away. If I went to a chapel social, I had to be home by 9pm. The house door closed at that time. I got the strap if I disobeyed. They had me under their thumb all right, but were very kind all the same."

Jim's great grandfather, his two grandfathers and father were all Humber Keelmen – and all the staunchest of Methodists. They worshipped at Silver Street Methodist Church when it was opened in 1870, attending for 101 years without a break until it closed in 1971. "Religion doesn't make you perfect," says Jim "but I think it has done something for us. We have got rid of all the old prejudices, too. We were part of the breakaway Primitive Methodist Church in those days - the Prims they were called - and we were looked upon as the poor people. We in turn had no time for the Wesleyan Methodists who were thought of as the foremen, and the Baptists who were thought of as the bosses. We Prims were the noisy ones. You should have heard our hymn singing! Today I shout out for united Christian services."

Stainforth in the old days was all keelmen and farmers, with famous keel families like the Schofields, Parishes, Fowlers, Downings, Barrasses and Brackenburys predominating. The huge colliery village which extends to the south of the Stainforth and Keadby Canal was unthought-of.

But many of the ancestors of the old keel families still live in the old village or at nearby Thorne.

Nobody had much money and thrift was the order of the day.

Jim still has his old Yorkshire Penny Bank book from the days when he was optimistically saving up to buy his own keel! The entries for 1918 show deposits of sixpences and shillings but his ambition was to be thwarted when he eventually took a job with Auto Components and later became a partner in Thorne Precision Engineers.

It was thrift, too, which prompted Jim to take out an insurance policy which helped his son pay his way through two universities and a polytechnic, and a similar policy will assist his young grandson to do the same.

Jim Wilson, throughout his life as an engineer, always looked back with nostalgia to his happy but hardworking youth, and it is in his retirement that he has found the time fully to recall those days for "Slabline", the journal of the Humber Keel and Sloop Preservation Society.

Jim's reminiscences, some of them related on this page, form a priceless archive of a vanished way of life for the historian.

ALAN BERRY

RELICS OF A LOST LIFESTYLE

Every old photograph of the rivers, navigations and canals of Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire seems to have as its centrepiece what some people still call a barge with strange square sails and a tall, single mast.

There on that old shot of Sprotbrough Lock, or Dockin Hill at Doncaster, or at Keadby or Thorne, we see the simple date-box shaped hull, gliding majestically along, perhaps under sail or being dragged by a man or a horse. Or, tied up by some wharf at Stainforth, the owner and his family will be standing grimly on the stern in their Sunday finery, staring back at the photographer.

These boats are the Humber Keels, once a common sight from Boroughbridge in the North; Leeds, Huddersfield, and Sheffield in the West; Nottingham in the South; to Lincoln, Gainsborough, Beverley and Hull, until the big lorries took over carrying bulk loads and so sent the keelman back to the dry land to earn a better if less romantic living. Even his auxiliary diesel could not save the keels, and a whole way of life had ended; a chapter in transport history had closed. Today, very few keels and keelmen are around to tell the story.

The keel has existed a long time. It is thought to be a descendant of the Viking longship, and you can see the resemblance. The name seems to come from original work like ceola or keyll.

As new canals linked the rivers in the 18th and 19th centuries, creating a system that could reach the west coast of England, so the keelmen prospered.

They usually lived on board, keelman and mate or keelman and family, and would be away from home, be it Stainforth or Thorne, where many boats were built, for weeks at a time.

Keels were originally built of vast quantities of oak and elm, later iron and steel, and those 61 feet 6 inches long with a beam of 15 feet 6 inches were termed Sheffield Size, capable of carrying 100 tons.

One unusual feature of a keel is its leeboards - massive pear-shaped pieces of wood about 14 feet long, which can be suspended from the sides of the vessel rather like wings. These gave an empty keel a better grip on the water and more stability to manoeuvre in open water.

Probably most keels came out of the yard of Richard Dunston at Thorne, and would cost about £500, being bought by their captains over a period of 15 to 20 years.

Stanilands of Thorne, Waddingtons and Guests at Mexborough, Scholeys at Swinton and Pendleburys of Rotherham were also builders.

While a keel occasionally ventured out to sea, Humber sloops, whose hulls are almost identical, often sailed as far as Bridlington, Yarmouth or Lowestoft. The difference was that the sloop had sails placed fore and aft.

Grain, coal, bricks, cement, gravel ... the dirty cargoes seem merely to have offered a challenge to the pride of the best known families, like the Schofields, Wilsons, Hinchcliffes, Parishes and Holts in Thorne and Stainforth.

FEMALE PULLING POWER

Sailing a Humber keel is a skilled job, especially in the Humber itself where the greatest hazards include fog, other shipping, and hidden sandbanks where the tide can leave you stranded. There are only a few people who still know how to operate the ancient and traditional sailing mechanisms of a keel and today they always have an engine for emergencies. Their boats are even more precious as historical objects.

Sometimes a vessel could break its back if stranded on the sand and mud; the flat bottomed boat might be held by suction which could only be broken by dragging a chain under it.

Jim Wilson, now retired and living at Stainforth, says that when sailing on a tidal river at night you did not go to bed. You had to watch out to see you had plenty of water under the keel's bottom, especially if the tide was going out. Every few moments, in the eerie silence of the great estuary, his father would shout: "Have you got your eyes open or are you asleep?" Meanwhile Jim's mother would be down below cooking, day or night, and she always had a suitcase packed with clothes and her purse in case they ever had to abandon the keel in a hurry.

Once in Hull they might unload South Yorkshire coal from Kilnhurst or Denaby or Roundwood on to trawlers of the deep sea fishing fleet. The next task was to try to get a cargo from Hull back to Sheffield, a three day journey with 28 locks to negotiate. Old keelmen used to say that by the time a keel reached Sheffield it was as high as Holy Trinity Church in Hull. Jim's dad would scour the newspaper shipping columns to see what ships were due in the port. A grain ship would usually have a cargo for Sheffield; or perhaps there would be a load of flour for South Yorkshire.

Jim has vivid memories of the busy Hull docks, 70 years ago the third largest in England, packed with steamers, tugs, trawlers, keels and sloops. Even finding your own boat could be a problem when so many looked alike and one dock could extend to 58 acres, so each keel had an identification vane on top of its 60ft mast. In the case of the Wilsons' boat this bore a gilded E for ENERGY.

Keels frequently sailed very low, the water washing the deck, and a loose cargo like wheat could shift, causing the keel to list dangerously. If it was one of several being towed by a tug, water could build up in front of the bows and they always had a hatchet handy to chop the rope.

With a good wind you could of course sail using mainsail and topsail in almost any direction on the wide Humber water, but once in a narrow river or canal only a fair wind was of any value. A canal allowed no room for tacking. So if you had no engine, you had to push it with a pole, have a horse pull it (and 100 tons of boat and cargo moved easily to one horse) or you could put yourself into a harness and drag it yourself. Wives often did this horse work, their husbands at the tiller or working the barge pole on the banks.

And there was no resting up. Keels were often idle, with no income, and competition was fierce. If you were overtaken by another keel family they might eventually take on the cargo you were hoping to get.

Sheffield is the farthest place west on the Sheffield and South Yorkshire Navigation and Jim can remember when it was a busy basin with cranes and warehouses for the discharging of all kinds of cargo; wheat, flour, wood."

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MY LIFE AS A KEELMAN

The last full-rigged keel I was in charge of was the DAYSTAR in 1939. When I left school in 1907 I was very fortunate, for most of the keel lads could neither read nor write as I could. A good many families were reared on board and some of my friends had only a week's schooling at a time, and others none at all.

Some of the agents I dealt with as a keelman were also poor hands with a pen, and once I heard of an agent in Hull sending an order by post to a skipper requiring him to load with coal, the skipper's address being: c/o Dalton Main Colliery Office, Nr. Rotherham. This letter

was lost for about a month, but it did arrive eventually. It had been to Rotterdam in Holland, causing a lot of inconvenience.

I will now refer to some of the names and phrases a mate had to learn. Parents taught lads that there were two sides to a question, but a skipper taught them that there were: inside and offside, nearside and farside, starboardside and portside, foreside and afterside, weatherside and leeward side, topside and lowside, broadside and alongside, deckside and coamingside, over the side, besides the right side, and if you happened to get on the wrong side, you could keep a good look out for your backside.

There were fenders made of rope, corks, grummits, different knots such as goosenecks, reef knots, sheepshanks, and different names for hitches, such as half hitch, Blackwall hitch, etc.

The mate had to learn how to rig a derrick for discharging cargo, and to make and use a Spanish windlass, etc. He heard such phrases as, "slack a bit of sheet", "haul your weather brace", "heave your tack down" and "haul your bowline", "ease your lee brace", and "don't let her come up in the wind with you" and "put it athwart".

If you had been riding at anchor in the river, and were getting ready to get underway, you might have heard the following: "All right, heave your chain in while I break her shear", "Take a weather bit, your chain's slipping", "Put your flitter in and flit over while I keep her steady", "Heave in now, she's tripped her anchor", "Take your riding ball down", or it may have been, "Anchor light", if it was dark.

Each keel had a name, and what a collection these were, ranging from ADAM to TOJO, the victorious Japanese admiral. There were also affectionate names like MARY, TWO SISTERS, and so on. Messrs. Wilson's Line of Hull had a fleet of keels, and the letter of their names ran through the alphabet. They were: ANT, BEE, COMET, DOVE, EAGLE, FLAKE, GLADE, HARRY, JOHN, JANE, KATE, LILY, MINNIE, NERO, OUSE, PRINCE, QUILL, ROSE, SWAN, THOMAS, UNA, VINE, WASP, XERXES, YORK and ZULU. Some of the names of the four-masted barques carrying Australian wheat which I unloaded were: PARMA, PASSATT, PAMIR, OLIVEBANK and MILLWALL. There was a fleet of Hull tugs trading up the Trent with names ending in -man, NORMAN, BOWMAN, YEOMAN, etc.

I have had close connections with keels since I could walk, being brought up within 100 yards of the canal lock at Thorne. From our house we could watch the skippers trimming their sails as they panned through the lock. The entrance to Messrs. Staniland's shipyard was within 50 yards of our front door. The shipyard had two building berths, two dry docks, and a large seasoning yard for timber. About 200 yards below the lock was Messrs. Dunston's shipyard, which had two building berths, one dry dock and one slipway. We had permission to go up Dunston's old rope walk (the Ropery), on our way to school, where we used to see Mr. Butler and his workmates spinning hemp into ropes. They walked backwards with a coil of hemp around their waists, tousling it away, while at the other end of the rope walk a youth was using the spinning wheel by hand. We spent many an hour in those shipyards watching the carpenters repairing old wooden keels and building new ones. The timbers, beams and planking were all sawn by hand over the sawpits and shaped to

measurements with adzes and planes. We heard the clatter of the carpenter's caulking mallets, the smell of the boiling pitch, the escaping steam like a fog when they carried the big long planks out of the steam house to be bent round the head or stern of the ship. The planks were hammered home with large spike mauls - all done by hand.

Then came the great day we had been waiting for. "They are launching today", we heard. "Where at?" we asked, "Dunston's or Staniland's?" Whichever it might be, and on a Saturday when we were not at school, off we would go and get permission to go on board the new ship on the stocks. There would be a shout from below, then clash bang would go the hammers, knocking the chocks and wedges. "Here she goes, hold fast." Away we used to go, the new vessel dropping into the water, broadside on with a splash that sent the water rolling over the far side of the canal bank. Up went the burgee with the new ship's name on it, and in the water all around were wedges, slipways and timber used for launching purposes. When the new ship was berthed, we would climb ashore equally as proud as Captain Cook when he discovered New Zealand. When the new ship was ready she was known as a dumb barge. They would then berth her opposite Dunston's sail loft for the riggers. Ned Rippon would fit the mast, yards, wooden blocks and deadeyes; Mr. Butler the wires, rigging and ropes; Colonel Sanderson the sails and hatch covers, old Jack Lee doing the blacksmith work, and old Sammy Carr sniffing around to see that everything was perfect. Then there was a final survey by Mr. Dunston and the new owner before handing over. When a dumb barge was rigged out she became a keel, but if she was rigged with a pine mast and fore and aft sails, which included a main and a foresail, she became a sloop. All classes of sailing ships or yachts were known by the rigging they carried.

During my school holidays my father would take me aboard for a trip. He was then trading from Keadby with coal, discharging it to the fishing trawlers at St. Andrew's Dock Hull. At that time there were dozens of keels laid alongside in tiers, six or seven abreast, waiting their turn to discharge to the different firms. I recollect where the sloop MASTERMAN capsized and sank with the skipper's wife and two children in the cabin, after striking Whitton Sand end on, the previous spring tide. Neither the MASTERMAN nor the passengers were ever seen again.

I was born in January 1895 and in November 1907 I left school and started my career as a mate. My elder brother and myself joined my father's keel UNITY at Medge Hall. She was on her voyage from Hull loaded with a cargo of iron ingots weighing half a ton each, bound for Dunford's and Elliot's wharf at Attercliffe, Sheffield. The canal was frozen over and when the icebreaker had passed us, a Thorne boat hauler named Johnson hung his horse on to pull us to Thorne. My father was steering and my brother and I were pushing the ice round the vessel's head with a small boathook. Eventually we arrived above Thorne Lock and put the leeboards ashore. Next morning we set off about four o'clock and when I turned out of my bunk we were at Bramwith Lock. Just above this lock we passed the New Junction canal which connects with the Aire and Calder Navigation, on our starboard hand. Through Sandal Lock and on to Doncaster we moved, where we changed horses, and strained on to Sprotborough Lock through old narrow walls and past an old water mill. By Warmsworth lime kilns we passed under a high railway bridge to Conisborough Lock. On again, we crawled under the railway bridge past Cadeby Colliery to Denaby Lock. Passing old Denaby

Colliery, we arrived at Mexborough where we landed our mast and sails. By this time it was 6 p.m. so we bedded down.

Next morning we started about 4.30 a.m., the horse pulling us up the shallow and narrow canal. The morning was still as dark as a grave except where it was lit up by the glare of glass blowing factories and forges built on the canal banks. As we approached the Swinton glass works we could hear the workmen singing like a distant choir. We glided by and a big red glow burst out so that one could see men with long tubes in their mouths blowing bottles and various glassware - a strange sight for a lad, so early on a winter's morning. We could hear father calling to the horse marine to go steady or to stop as he navigated the narrow bridges and locks, the keel practically trailing on the bed of the shallow canal. My brother and I stood with fenders and helped to negotiate the lock gates and cloughs. We passed through Swinton Lock and on our starboard side was a branch canal with a lock at the entrance. It connected such collieries as Manver's Main, Wombwell, Cottonwood, Mitchell Main, Barnsley and several others, eventually connecting with the Aire and Calder Navigation at Wakefield.

We passed the chemical works and a large forge at Kilnhurst and on through the lock. We heard the rattle of the colliers' clogs to or from the pit known as "Bob's Oils" locally. After passing the coal staithe we went through the cut end lock into the River Don again. Here was a ferryboat which took our horse and man across the river. Winding our way along we passed Dalton Main coal staithe on the starboard. We penned up through Aldwarke Lock and up the river to Eastwood Low Lock, where we entered the canal on the starboard side of the river, our horse and man again being ferried across. We passed Aldwarke Main coal staithe on our right and went through Eastwood Top Lock. About a mile above we passed another small canal named Rotherham Goit, with a small shipyard on its banks, Parkgate forge and a small colliery higher up. At this period (1907) a lot of slag was loaded here at Parkgate, for shipment to Hull and Grimsby. (I myself later accompanied a skipper who was taking his cargo of slag to Leven near Driffield, right up in the East Riding). We proceeded on our voyage up the shoal canal approaching the industrial town of Rotherham, with its electricity works, glasshouses, breweries, and potteries, to the Canal Company's wharf and warehouse. At this time the place was a very busy trading centre indeed, with keels discharging all kinds of goods; flints and white sand for the glassworks, red moulding sand for the iron works etc. Into the keels they loaded grindstones of all sizes, from the hand size up to half a ton in weight, new railway engine wheels and axles, and bundles of steel, for shipment abroad from Hull and Grimsby.

HERBERT RHODES

SAILING PROGRAMME FOR 1989

Unusually, at this time of year, we are able to offer some tentative dates for COMRADE in 1989. We do not propose to take firm bookings before the end of January 1989 but are happy to consider provisional bookings before then. In other words, any trip provisionally booked before the end of January will need to be confirmed around that time.

We are not able to offer dates for AMY HOWSON yet because other commitments of her sailing masters in 1989 are not yet finalised. Any enquiries to Dave Robinson (0652-635288).

Date	H.W. at Ferriby	Date	H.W. at Ferriby
Sat 6 May	0752	Sat 15 July *	1708
Sun 7 May	0833	Sun 16 July	0533
Sat 20 May #	0713	Sat 29 July *	1657
Sun 21 May #	0745	Sun 30 July	0630
Sat 3 June #	0646	Sat 2 Sept #	0835
Sun 4 June #	0731	Sun 3 Sept #	0904
Sat 17 June #	0604	Sat 16 Sept #	0740
Sun 18 June #	0645	Sun 17 Sept #	0821
Sat 1 July #	0549	Sat 30 Sept #	0737
Sun 2 July #	0631	Sun 1 Oct #	0807

Notes

- (1) All times are British Summer Time.
- (2) Sailing trips normally leave from Ferriby Sluice.
- (3) Members wishing to make bookings of places must confirm them with J.Thompson (tel. 0482-441277) for COMRADE.
- (4) All sailings are subject to weather and tide permitting. The Society reserves the right to cancel any sailing on the advice of the Sailing Masters.
- (5) Trips marked with an asterisk (*) will be "half-day". (6) Ferriby H.W. times are approximate.
- (7) Block bookings for 12 passengers for full-day sailing will continue to be £96.00 per day.

***** STOP PRESS *****

Some tentative dates for AMY HOWSON are now available, indicated by a hash sign (#) in the programme for COMRADE above. There is also an additional weekend, namely Saturday, 5 August (H.W. 0814), Sunday, 6 August (H.W. 0936).

THE KEEL OLIVE AND THE LEVEN CANAL

As noted on the cover, the vessel in the photograph is OLIVE livering (discharging) at Leven Canal Head and was identified by Fred Schofield who gave the following information.

OLIVE was the only steel keel with a full rig in her, able to work the Leven Canal. She was owned by Jack Porter and was Sheffield length, 61 ft 6 inches and Driffield beam, 14 ft 6 inches. At one time, Fred made an offer for her about the time that Jack Porter's mother also had a share in her and unfortunately a deal could not be struck.

The reason for Fred's interest relates to Alec Bell who had an extensive coal business on Becksid. At its height, he would bring as much as 6000 tons at summer prices, shipped in by keels. About the same time that Jack Porter was thinking of retiring, another coal merchant, Nathan Morris, was similarly inclined. Nathan Morris had a small business at Frodingham and Alec Bell was considering buying him out and substantially developing the coal yard there. The job of supplying the coal was offered to Fred Schofield, if he could find a suitable vessel but, in the end, nothing ever came of it.

Distribution of coal from Alec Bell's yard was as follows. By 7.00 a.m. there would be five or six 10 ton carts on the road, each loaded with bagged coal. Each carter would be given a price wanted by Bell for the whole load. It was then left to the carter to strike such bargains with farmers, etc. as he saw fit.

The photograph on the cover shows the cargo being livered by derrick. In the original, at least, the arrangements described in Fred's book are quite clearly seen. Coal is being heaved up in a large basket to be set on a barrow and wheeled ashore. In this instance, the fore roller is in use but derricking was also carried with the help of horses. A block would be secured to the mast and sometimes block might be on a wall. The horse could then walk the baskets out of the hold.

OLIVE is still in existence and belongs to two members of the Society, who are starting the long haul of restoration, with every intention of rigging her out again eventually.

THE SHIPS IN THE SUMMER OF 1988

As you will be aware, we have a goodly amount of historical material in this issue of 'Slabline' so this report has to be brief.

Sufficient to say that our two ships successfully completed much the greater part of the sailing programme proposed earlier in the year. There was one sailing cancelled because of weather and one or two bookings failed to materialise. We were present at the Owston Ferry festival with COMRADE, an occasion enjoyed by all.

Both ships are now on their winter berths, AMY HOWSON at Barton and COMRADE at Beverley, ready for the winter maintenance programme. Offers of assistance will be welcomed by Dave Robinson (AMY HOWSON) (tel. 0652-635288) or by Colin Sreeton (0482-797112).

We congratulate the Sobriety Trust on their completion of the replica billy boy AUDREY. Although there is no organisational connection with our Society, members will be aware that there are individuals making very active contributions to both Society and Trust.
