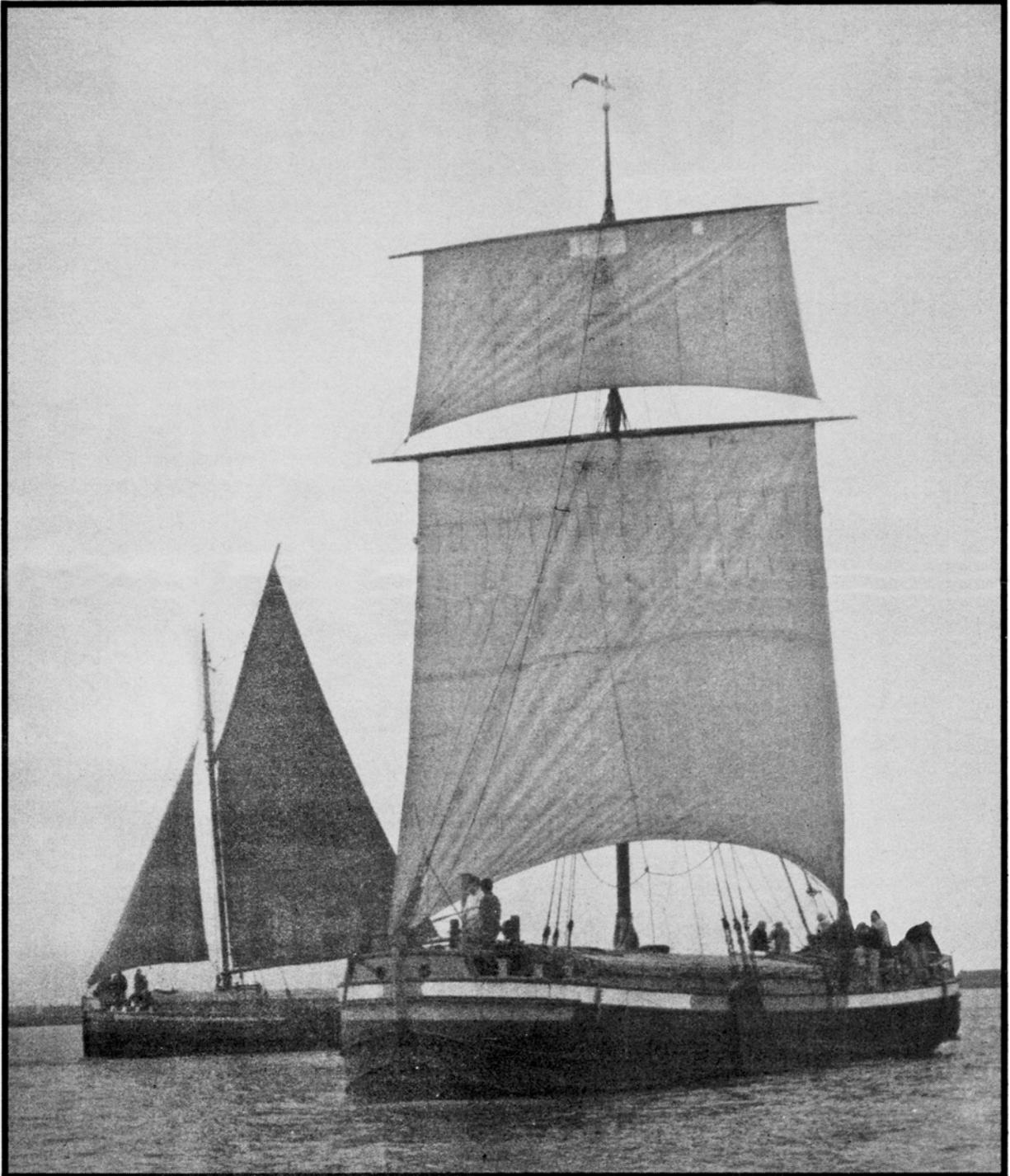


The Slabline



'Comrade' and 'Amy Howson' off Chalder Ness

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

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COMRADE: J W Thompson, Tel: Hull (0482) 441277

COVER PHOTO: By kind permission of Dave Mountsey

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

We regret the late appearance of this issue of 'The Slabline'. The person likely to be most concerned by its belated arrival is our hard-worked Membership Secretary, Mary Wilson, as we use the spring issue to remind members that annual subscriptions are due to be paid on 1st May. The lack of a reminder may well mean that this has been overlooked until now. If a slip is included with this letter, please let Mrs. Wilson have your cheque while it is fresh in your mind.

Covenant Secretary

Cedric Lodge, who has looked after covenants for four years, has found the problems of liaising with us from his home in Buckinghamshire, and of meeting the demands of the Inland Revenue, increasingly burdensome. Malcolm Strachan, who was previously our Honorary Auditor, has very kindly agreed to take on the job. We are very grateful to them both. Covenanting your subscription for four years enables the Society to obtain valuable extra funds at no cost to you, and payment of your subscription by Standing Order saves work for you and for us. Please ask Mrs. Wilson for further details, or contact Mr. Strachan direct at 2 Southfield, Hessle, North Humberside, HU13 OEX.

Annual General Meeting

Business at the AGM on 18 February was successfully concluded in a very short time, leaving us free to enjoy another entertaining talk and slide show by Alf Wedgwood, with some fine pictures on COMRADE under sail. This was preceded by a collection of slides of winter preparation for the sailing season, taken by Keith Sivertsen with commentary by Colin Screeton. The AGM is always remarkably well attended for a Saturday afternoon, and many members travel long distances to be there. Your support is much appreciated, and we shall continue to follow what is clearly a successful format.

Dinner

The dinner at Hesslewood Hall Hotel was another enjoyable occasion, with some excellent entertainment. (Even your Chairman was moved to song, though the other entertainers were fortunately of a higher calibre.) However, attendance was well down on last year, and perhaps the Society is not large enough to sustain such an event on an annual basis. Further thought is needed, and suggestions are welcome.

The Ships

As usual, many hours have been spent on maintenance of ships and gear during the winter, all by volunteers. Only minor repairs were necessary on this occasion, to the Treasurer's relief. COMRADE and AMY HOWSON are in a sound condition, and the sailing season is already under way as we go to press, with the promise of some fine May weather and a healthy interest among prospective passengers. Details of the sailing schedules accompanied the last issue. For the current position on bookings contact Dave Robinson (tel. 0652-635288) for AMY HOWSON and Jim Thompson (tel. 0482-441277) for COMRADE.

Events

The Society's ships are often asked to attend rallies or festivals inland. In the past they have been to many such events, helping to show the flag, arousing new support and performing a valuable educational role. However, such invitations pose an increasing dilemma. To enter the canal system and travel into South Yorkshire or the West Riding means demanding extra days from our hard pressed crews, and weekends are usually insufficient, especially now that working hours at locks have been reduced. This means less time for sailing, which is generally regarded as having first call on the crews' time: it also means a substantial financial loss, as the receipts from an open day or local festival rarely match those from a weekend's sailing donations, even before canal dues are taken into account. There is also the risk of vandalism when the ships are left at inland locations. This year, we have had reluctantly to decline invitations from Stainforth and from Thorne, and last year from Wakefield. However, we do continue to spread the word, and pass on the Society's educational message by talks and lectures: this year your Chairman's programme has included meetings at Lincoln, Haxey and Driffield, and other talks have been given by Bill and Mary Wilson, Dave Robinson and Jim Thompson. Engagements are already coming in for next year.

SLOOPS IN THE MARKET WEIGHTON CANAL

I was mate of a Market Weighton canal sailing sloop in 1933. At that time there were six sloops trading into the canal. All the sloops' names ended in fleet, i.e. Marfleet, Ousefleet, Brickfleet, Faxfleet, Skelfleet, Swinefleet.

Our main job was to keep the Brickyards supplied with coal. We loaded the coal in Winteringham Haven. After we had discharged coal we usually loaded bricks for Hull. At that time the depth of water in the canal was five feet six inches, the most tonnage we could take in was sixty, and 20000 bricks out, bricks being three tons to the thousand.

It was quite a performance getting in and out of the lock, the ship's leeboards had to be hove on deck and the mast lowered so that we could get under a small iron bridge which spanned the lock. The reason we had to get the leeboards on deck was the width of the lock. To get into the canal, the ships had to be no more than fourteen feet ten inches, which was beam of all the sloops that traded to the brickyards. The maximum tons the sloops could carry given plenty of water was one hundred and twenty. If at any time there wasn't a favourable wind to sail in the canal, the mate had to walk to the brickyard and ask them to send a horse to pull us there.

We once loaded twenty thousand bricks in the sloop MARFLEET, for Easington we had to get as far up the beach as we could, when the tide went down they sent horses and carts to discharge us, all the bricks had to be thrown out by hand.

FAXFLEET was the only wood built sloop in the fleets. She won Barton Sloop Regatta three years in succession: 1927, 1928, 1929. At that time she was skippered by Harry Hodgeson of Hull.

CHARLIE ATKINSON

MY EARLY LIFE ON A HUMBER KEEL (CONCLUSION)

A bit more about my family, I think they will have been in Stainforth about 200 years at a guess, both sides of the family, previous to coming to Stainforth they fished out of Nain on the Moray Firth, and some of the Sutherland fishing harbours. I think some branches of the family have fished out of Esbjerg so I think our blood will have a lot of water in it. I have always said that God created two beautiful things: a woman, I mean a good wife, and a ship, I mean vessels of the 1920 to 1940 period. I like to see vessels of 20,000 to 40,000 tons with two funnels, counter sterns, forward raking heads, masts and funnels leaning aft, what a picture on a calm sea, especially with a new or newly painted ship with tugs on, not forgetting the big sailing ships, but I have never seen them in full sail, I have only seen the sails up for drying.

The Sheffield to Keadby Canal had a lot of swing bridges, which had to be opened to let craft pass through. Each time a keel passed you would see the keelman throw a penny to the bridge keeper and 60 years ago they got a lot of pennies, and you could buy a fish and chip supper for three pence (fish two pence and one pennyworth of chips). I just say that to show you how far a penny went in spending power. Suits could be bought for 30 shillings: my best blue serge suit, indigo dye, could cost £4-4-0, always double breasted. It was always a worry being dressed in your best clothes when going ashore from docks. Sometimes you had to go up the side of a ship on a vertical ladder or up the steps on a jetty or wall, and you were so afraid of getting tar, mud, or paint on your clothes.

The rule of the canal many years ago was fast mast to Doncaster from Keadby so I am told, but some bridges did get fastened, and that meant lowering of mast and sail which was quite a big job. At this present time there is a very high fast bridge at Sandall. This will give you some idea of the height of masts: the first time the ENERGY came down light the vane fouled the bridge.

Another thing I would like to mention is the aegir or tidal bore running up the rivers Trent and Ouse. This is the tide rushing up the wide Humber, and when it reaches the narrow Trent and Ouse, it seems as though the smaller rivers cannot take all the water, because a high wave runs up at the side of each bank. This wave can ground you if you do not take care, and it can also float you if you happen to be aground. A good place to see the tidal bore used to be at Owston Ferry, especially at the equinoctial tides, but the Trent might not be so full of mud as it used to be, because I never hear the bore mentioned these days.

There used to be a railway run down the canal bank at Stainforth. This was years before my time. It went down the Ings, West Bank and East Bank: there was a public house on the East Bank called The Station Inn. The railway then went on to Thorne. It passed where Thorne Engineers now is, near Toll Bar Bridge.

You have heard me say that keel people had not time to stop once they got a cargo in. I can give you a good example of this with my parents. My dad was sailing up the canal all through the night, because there was going to be a stoppage at one of the locks. That was for fitting new gates, and that used to take about 10 days, and of course the firm for whom we were carrying the cargo would want it before the stoppage started and my father would want it out of the keel before the stoppage started so he could get below it for the said date. Now this happened just below Thorne: it may have been midnight; mum was on the canal bank walking ahead of the keel to open the bridges for it to pass through. This happened at Jacksons Bridge. She had let the keel pass through and closed the bridge, and she was walking fast on the bank to get to Hinchcliffes Bridge. She was just ahead of the keel when my dad heard her shout "Oh dear!" My dad ran the keel head first ashore, and got into the cogboard to go and see what was wrong. When my mum shouted back, "It's all right, it was only a cow that stood up in front of me," dad's reply was: "Well if it was only a cow you can go on and open the next bridge". Not much sympathy was there, but mum was very tough and determined when she was doing anything especially if she thought any neglect of hers would let someone else down. A lot of cattle grazed on the canal banks years ago.

A lot of keelmen could not read very well, but they could count money, and invest it, often in property. They knew some flag signals, a lot of lights at different places, and ships' siren blasts, and a bit of navigation in verse. One short blast means, "I am directing my course starboard". Two short blasts: "I am directing my course to port", three short blasts: "My engines are going full astern". This verse refers to port and starboard lights:

"Green to green or red to red,
Perfect safety go ahead".

This is ships passing, but:

"If upon your bow is seen
A steamer starboard light of green,
Act as judgement says tis proper
Ease her, go ahead or stop her".

This is when ships are crossing; this can be a dangerous position when close to each other or in fog. There are more verses but I cannot remember them. They also said:

"Both in danger and in doubt
Always keep a good look out".

Powered boats are always expected to give way to sail: if you are becalmed you cannot do anything but ride at anchor or drift, whereas powered ships can use their engines to get out of your way.

I will tell you about what I played with while on board at five or six years old. I actually had quite a lot of toys, but my favourite playthings were cardboard boot boxes. I used to string as many as possible together to represent keels, and I also had one for a tug to pull them about to different places on the cabin deck. I also had a swiveling crane of wheels to load or discharge the boxes. I used firewood for pit props. I had apples, oranges and bananas for fruit, but I used to eat those because they would not keep. My mum made me a lot of cloth sacks about three to four inches in size of different colours, these would represent flour, wheat, bran, coffee beans, and coal, with a few nails for scrap metal. When I was playing on deck I was always tied with a bit of line to stop me falling overboard. If I managed to get enough line, which was not very often, I used to get between the timber head to try to get wood out of the dock, or fish with a bit of string when we were loaded.

At Christmas time keel people often pulled a Christmas tree to the top of the mast. Sometimes when we were in Fish Dock at New Year father would take me on to the cabin deck at midnight, and if it happened to be tide time anything that had a head of steam would blow the siren. Dad would give me our foghorn, and he told me to blow as loud as them.

About the 1930s we at Stainforth had a large Sunday School Union taking in the Primitives, Wesleyans, Church of England, Salvation Army, and any other religious groups. All were invited. We had one big day each year. We marched round the village headed mostly by Hatfield Band, all the Sunday Schools having their banners or flags. Of course our own Salvation Army Band was in the procession and sometimes the Scouts would be there. When we had marched round, there was tea and sports. There was a shield for some of the races and there was the Ernest Parish Cup to be raced for. This was given by one of my uncles, the winners held cup and shield for a year. We often managed to win one or the other during the year. The Sunday School Union was kept together by having concerts, and meetings. Our concerts at that time were held in the Miners Welfare Hall.

When I was six years old I went to live with my grandfather Wilson so that I could go to school. I would just like to tell you what it was like, he being 60 years older than me. My breakfast, dinner and tea times were at 8, 12, and 4 o'clock, not five minutes past! Meals would not stay on the table long after that time, though of course they would give me time to get home from school. Meals were very good: hot breakfast before going to school and dinners were large with a large piece of Yorkshire pudding and a second bit if you could manage it. Second helpings could be a huge potato and meat pie made in a bowl about 16 inches across and about 5 inches deep in the middle. The last course would be a milk pudding, very often rice. A rice pudding at that time was put in the oven the previous night. I think teas must have been on the light side, I don't seem to remember a lot about them but we had tea. I can remember suppers, potatoes and onions done in the frying pan. My mum and dad always fed their workers well.

There was not much to do in the village at night time apart from meetings at the Primitive Chapel for me to go to, and sometimes there would be a social on a Saturday evening. When I went to these my grandfather told me the house door would be locked at 9 o'clock. I was told that the bricks that built Silver Street Primitive Chapel were brought to the landing by water and then carted to the site in 1870. Another thing I remember in connection with the Chapel is the hosting of the local preachers for meals on Sundays. At that time preachers would come from Doncaster by horse and trap, maybe about six men, and they would be dropped off to preach at various places between Doncaster, Hatfield, Stainforth, Fishlake and other villages. Now these men would preach two services, probably morning and evening at one place, or maybe morning at one place and evening at another. If they changed villages they mostly had to walk unless they were being put up by a farmer, and he would often do the taxi work by trap. Now grandpa Wilson used to take these men for dinner and tea maybe once a month. Sunday was always a bit severe for me, no toys or games, only reading, but when the preacher came for meals I had to sit at a separate table and I could not speak unless I was spoken to, and worse was to come. I had to go to the evening service, which might finish at 7.30 and after that there would be a prayer meeting. This used to send me to sleep. I can remember these meetings now. When I was sitting in the pews my feet would not reach the floor. I used to get pins and needles in my legs, lean on grandma and had to wait for the preacher to give him a cup of tea before he set off back to Doncaster (good old days).

Next door to us at that time was a boot shop; in fact my uncle owned it. My mum's sister took me in one day to buy me some football boots, my very first. I felt over the moon. It so happened that grandpa Wilson happened to come in while she was buying them so he said to her "Who are you buying the boots for?" so she told him they were for me, so he told her to put her money back in her pocket because I could not have them. It happened to be Stainforth feast time so my aunt put some of the money into my hand and said, "Go to the feast". This my grandad saw and when I got back home, he said, "Has it burnt a hole in your pocket?" He meant had I spent it, but I still had a bit left. I never spent up in my life; I always still like to keep a small amount for a rainy day, I have not the slightest complaint about the way they treated me; they were very good in their way and always the same. His main fear about the football boots was that I might get hurt, and his problem about spending money was that he did not like to see you waste it, when he knew that I would need it for a keel some day. He was thinking about my paying interest some day. They had no room for pleasure.

Another thing I remember about grandpa goes back to when Stainforth cinema was built around the 1920s period. I wanted to see a certain picture at the afternoon matinee and I had no spare money, also they always wanted to know where I was going if I was away from home for a long time. Now grandma was deaf so I got her to come into the backyard, and I asked her if I could have two pence to go to the pictures. She gave it to me and I felt well away. But when I had been back home for about ten minutes I noticed grandpa smelling around the room then he asked where had I been, he could smell the tobacco on my clothes, I told him the pictures. He said "Did grandma know?" I said, "Yes", so all went well.

There is another bit of fatherly advice that he once gave me. When we used to go off St. Andrews Dock, West Dock Avenue way, there was a big club with a large magnet hanging just above the front door. My dad said to me "Do you know what that is?" so I said, "Yes, it is a magnet". Then he said, "Do you know what a magnet does?" I said, "Yes, it lifts things up, or draws them in". He replied: "See it never draws you in".

With me saying that I went to live with my grandparents at the age of six, you will think that I have remembered a good bit about keels, but I was on them at every opportunity I had. Years ago when I was a young lad the L.N.E. railway ran some cheap 7 day passes for this area at 10 shillings. One could go from Doncaster and intermediate stations to Hull, Cleethorpes, also across the ferry to New Holland. We sometimes loaded coal at New Holland for Fish Dock. I used these cheap tickets quite a lot for getting to Hull Docks. Well I did not leave school until I was 16 years old and I was on board at all school holidays I could manage to, and all holidays at Thorne Grammar were quite long and it just suited me for going on board. I liked it better than school, sorry to say now, I was never very bright. I also used to walk down the canal bank to see if any of our relations were struggling up with a shy wind and give them a pull. I remember one time I knew that dad would be getting into Keadby at a certain time in the morning and I did not want to walk too far. So I went on the bus to Thorne and then set off walking towards Keadby thinking I would meet him somewhere, but after I had walked a long way and could not see our mast I knew he would be at Keadby. He was without wind, horse or tug, and I had tired feet. I had some food and carne home on the train.

In closing I would like to say how very proud I have always been of Hull: its station, football team, docks, Humber, William Wilberforce, Holy Trinity Church, built chiefly of bricks, The Three Crowns, and its once being England's third and cheapest port, and most of all its people.

I often think of the past times when I stood on top of the old pier at tide time, trawlers coming in and out, tugs off the pier, lighters going in and out of the harbour, Sammy's Point with a lot of bell buoys on and Earles' shipyard crane standing out large and clear.

I sometimes think of the past with a little bit of sadness and say to myself sic transit gloria mundi and I often hope that those past days of work will soon return, not only to Hull, but to all the British Isles.

BARTON-ON-HUMBER JUBILEE REGATTA (1887)

The inaugural Keel Regatta was held at pretty little Barton on Monday last, and was a big, genuine and unqualified success. Eleven keels spread every stitch of canvas for the Jubilee event, the course being from Barton up the South Channel, round the top Whitton light vessel, and back to the flag ship moored off Barton-on-Humber, when the powder was ignited at 9 a.m.

The keel was ready and the wind blew fair,
When good Mary Ann spread her canvas in the air,
With a yo-ho, my lads, my lads yo-ho,
Up with main and top-sail, boys, and then she'll go.

The Mary Ann (Capt. Wallace) having got under way was followed by the Joseph (Captain Joseph Oldridge), next came the Jane (Captain W. H. Barraclough), ahead of the Triune (Captain Geo. Fisher), Charity (Captain Thomas Walker), Two Brothers (Captain J. Barraclough), Fortune (Captain Walter Owbridge), Clara (Captain John Drury), Sarah and Ellen in the order named, whilst Elizabeth and Carrie had the pleasure or displeasure of contemplating the disadvantages of a stern chase which usually is a long and unprofitable one. Mr. Boreas whistled his breezes from the nor'-west, and some really good rivermanship was shown in handling the keels which has never been excelled in any previous regatta on the Humber. The Whitton Light Ship was reached as follows:

KEEL	CAPTAIN	TIME
Clara	John Drury	11 28
Joseph	Joseph Oldridge	11 28½
Sarah & Ellen	B Barraclough	11 37
Triune	George Fisher	11 38
Elizabeth	J Barraclough	11 39
Charity	Thomas Walker	11 41
Jane	W H Barraclough	11 46
Carrie	Henry Oldridge	11 47
Mary Anne	Wallace Walker	11 50
Two Brothers	Joe Barraclough	11 56

After passing the lightship the competing vessels took advantage of the slack round Oyster Ness and made for the Yorkshire side of the river when it was seen that the Clara and the Joseph had got a long homeward lead. Joseph attempted to hug Clara several times, but Clara, like the virtuous female that she is, always kept him at a respectful distance, and eventually ran home a clever winner, the time being as under:

SHIP	OWNER	TIME
Clara	T Barraclough	1 33
Triune	J & S Barraclough	1 34
Joseph	G Hill	1 34
Elizabeth	J Barraclough	1 34½
Sarah & Ellen	W & B Barraclough	1 35
Charity	Jon Foster	1 37
Jane	Joseph Barraclough	1 37½
Carrie	Cobb and Pullant	1 40
Mary Ann	W & B Barraclough	1 41½
Two Brothers		not timed

The S.S. Humber was employed as Committee boat, praise and credit being due to the captain for the able manner in which he handled his ship, giving every satisfaction to a large party on board. Altogether the affair aquatic was an acknowledged success and the Committee desire me to return thanks to the Lincolnshire and Yorkshire people who patronized them on this occasion, an occasion which I trust is the first of a long series of regattas associated with Barton-on-Humber. I had almost forgotten that Commodore Hewson and a party from Hull were present, and I took as per usual great interest in the movements and handling of the various vessels sailing on the broad waters of the Humber, evidently much to their edification and satisfaction. Luck to your next regatta, old and historical Barton-on-Humber.

[Reprinted from the Hull Critic 18th June 1887)

THE DISHMAN FAMILY

Last October, our Commodore Fred Schofield received the following letter from Mr. John Dishman of Merchant Taylors' School, Northwood, Middlesex. Fred replied to the letter, but was unable to add much to what he had written about the Dishman family in "Humber Keels and Keelmen". Can any member supply further information?

Dear Mr. Schofield,

I hope you will not object to my writing to you. I have a copy of your book, "Humber Keels and Keelmen", which is a splendid production with beautifully reproduced photographs and diagrams. The content links up with my interest in my ancestors of Barton. Perusal of the Barton Gazette of 1815 and 1832 shows that there were Dishman boats, ISABELLA and FAME, Schofield RICHARD and MAYFLOWER and Kitwood ELIZABETH, JASON, NEPTUNE and HUNTER plying to and from Boston. One of these was probably named after the Elizabeth Kitwood who was buried in Boston on 15th February 1824 at the age of 105!

Thompson's "History of Boston" shows that there were usually about 130 boats based at Boston, and no doubt many others in and out from other ports.

I enclose copies of family trees as far as I have managed to extend them. Please chuck them away if they are no interest. I do not know yet if Charles and Luther Dishman link directly (p. 50 on your book). However there was a Mary Ann, wife of Charles Dishman, who was buried in Boston at the age of 29 in 1887.

Perhaps somewhere there are records of ships, their crews and their voyages, which would help me to extend my knowledge of these men. If so you would probably know more about their whereabouts than anyone else.

I obtained your address through my sister who has met your daughter as a fellow nurse.

Yours sincerely

John (Keightley) Dishman

SCARR'S FAMILY HISTORY

Dear Editor,

Whilst researching my family's history, I discovered one of my ancestors was Henry Scarr of Scarr's shipyard. I have uncovered some details but I would be very grateful for any further information. Could any readers who may have any information connected with Henry Scarr or his company please contact me as I would be most grateful for any information that could be of any help to me.

If so, please contact:

Nicholas Evans
258 Kingston Road
Willerby
HULL
HU10 6ND

Tel. 0482-651972

MISSING PAINTING OF THE KEEL SECRET

The Chairman has received the following letter, but has had to write back saying that the painting is unknown to us. Can any member help?

26 Church Balk
Thorne
Doncaster
S. Yorks
DN8 5BY

Dear Sir,

I wrote a letter to the Town Docks Museum, but they were unable to help me, but have given me your name and address. So hopefully you will be able to help me. Many years ago my great grandfather, owned and was Skipper of the first Keel with sails built at Richard Dunstan's Shipyard Thorne. It was called THE SECRET. This Keel won the Hull Regatta. I still have all the papers and agreements drawn up between Richard Dunstan and William Sutton. I also have the logbook etc. to prove the Keel belonged to my mother's family. Her father, William Sutton Jun., had a large oil painting of THE SECRET and when the Hull Museum held an exhibition covering the Regatta the painting was sent to the museum for the exhibition. Over the years my mother never bothered about having the painting returned to her. She was so proud of the thought of it still being hung in the museum, but now a distant member of the Sutton family is trying to trace the said painting, but we wish it to remain in the hands of the museum. So should you have the painting or know the whereabouts of it, and if anyone does try to remove it, we would appreciate it if you let us know. Hoping you can help me as the Keel and Sloop Preservation Society was started before the Docks Museum so we hope you still have it in your keeping.

Yours faithfully

Marlene and Roy Taylor

INFORMATION APPEAL ANSWERED

307 Spen Lane
LEEDS
LS16 5BD

19.2.89

Dear Mr. Ulyatt,

Firstly many thanks for publishing my request for information about the origin of the Clyde puffer, VIC 32, secondly please excuse my delay in replying to your two letters. I received four replies, two via yourself, and have written back to each of them.

I am now certain that the VIC 32 was built at Dunstan's Thorne yard, your friend Mr. McMullen even knew the yard number, and another reply from George Foster of Hull (who had worked as a blacksmith's striker at Thorne until 1936) included the purchase order number.

You probably know that one of the larger types of VIC puffer, the VIC 96, which was also built by Dunstan's, survives at the Marypont Maritime Museum in Cumbria.

Thanking you again for your help.

Bob Cooper

STEAMING ON THE MEDWAY

(This article was originally written for the newsletter of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society (Industrial History Section) but we hope it will be of interest to members of the Humber Keel and Sloop Preservation Society.)

Having lived well inland, I never expected to become fascinated by nautical matters, but after spending a few holidays on the Clyde and Caledonian Canal on the "Puffer" VIC 32, which has been converted into a floating hotel and cruising vessel, a nautical enthusiasm has been awakened. After being aboard such a boat for only a short time, the sheer scale of preserving a steam coaster becomes apparent; large though commercial vehicles are, at least there is not the worry that the mooring lines might fray and snap allowing your preservation project to be washed out to sea, probably never to be seen again. In addition, although legislation for road traffic generates more difficulties and expense to the enjoyment of attending a few rallies in the summer, these difficulties take on a different perspective when compared with sea journeys. Busy shipping lanes, or a fast current taking your towards rocks, are not places to find any weaknesses either in man or machine. Aspects of originality on boats are considered as important as with road vehicles but even

so it has been found necessary to convert the Puffer's boiler from oil to coal firing in the interests of fuel economy.

The two vessels with which I have been involved were both built for the Royal Navy. They were classified "VIC" - "Victualing Inshore Craft" and were used for ferrying stores to larger ships at anchor. The VIC 32, already referred to, was built in 1943 and is a traditional Clyde Puffer of the type used for trade. VIC 56, the subject of the following paragraphs, was built in 1945 and is a later, non-traditional version, which is slightly longer than the traditional Clyde Puffer, so she will only fit the locks on the Crinan Canal and not the smaller ones on the Forth and Clyde Canal. Like the VIC 32 the engine is a vertical compound condensing engine made by Crabtrees of Lowestoft, but the steam is provided by a Cochran boiler which is a more efficient boiler than the usual steam crane boiler found on most Clyde puffers. The flue arrangements to the funnel have necessitated the wheelhouse to be built in the conventional position ahead of the funnel. The wheelhouse is fairly tall to give a clear view over the fo'castle quarters, which are raised up above the hatch level and are entered through a door rather than a hatch, then down a ladder.

The fo'c'sle containing two pairs of bunk beds and a bench seat, which also doubles up as a bed, (more sleeping accommodation is available in the Captain's stern cabin) and next to the bench is a dining table surrounded by chairs. The wall surfaces are not wasted, there being plenty of cupboards provided, porthole openings permitting! Although the washbasin is only supplied with cold water from a tank, the fo'c'sle is kept warm by a coke stove.

The VIC 56 is moored on the Thames and in November 1984 I was asked if I would like to take part in a day excursion from London to Gravesend. I found the voyage most enjoyable and the outcome was that the following summer I was making my way south, up to London, then on to Chatham to join the VIC 56 moored in the Dockyard for the festivities at the start of the 1985 Tall Ships Race; except this time I was not just a mere passenger, but the ship's second engineer. I had until lunchtime to raise steam and about coffee time HRH The Duke of Edinburgh surveyed the assembled fleet from a small launch. As the day progressed more and more vessels left the dockyard via the sea lock and eventually we locked out with the last lockful of ships which included the sail training ship THE WINSTON CHURCHILL. Once into the Medway we joined the tail end of the parade, sailing past the other end of the dockyard where the wooden men-of-war were built in covered over dry docks. Just before the first bridge we turned to head downstream, this time sailing past the paddle pleasure steamer KINGSWEAR CASTLE which was being used as the reviewing stand and public address commentary point. It was now getting late into the day and time to take our leave of the sailing vessels as we were not going to follow them across the North Sea so we headed for Sandgate Creek where we dropped the anchor and spent the night. The VIC 56 remains virtually unchanged from her working days, so all the meals have to be cooked on the coke stove in the galley. The crockery of the puffer is the original left over from her days in the Navy, many of the plates bearing crests of more illustrious vessels that she served alongside.

The following day's sailing was purely for pleasure so after a leisurely breakfast eaten sitting in the sun on the hatch covers, the anchor was winched from the deep by the steam windlass. The lack of haste was also so that the tide would rise to give enough draught to sail to the south side of the Isle of Sheppey under the lifting bridge at Kingsferry.

About 3 o'clock we headed up a small creek and rowed ashore to call at 'The Shipwright's Arms' to collect some essential supplies. Next to the pub was a shipyard for which the electricity supply was provided by a very elderly diesel generator set. As it was warm in the generator shed some birds had made their nests in the rafters - I suspect their offspring got used to the perpetual noise and the aroma of hot oil!

So, after a leisurely day's sailing, it was time to anchor again for the night. This evening we ate earlier than the previous day, but by the time the meal was ready it was necessary to light the oil lamps and to hoist a mooring light up the mast. The puffer is wired for electric lighting but these can only be used when tied up in connection with a mains lead. The principal source of amusement and fascination this evening was the phosphorescence being given off by the light emitting plankton in the sea, especially if a bucket of seawater was shaken slightly the emission increased. If anyone on the shore was watching our activities they could only have concluded that we were going mad!

After breakfast the next day I was rowed ashore so that I could catch a train home to keep a previous appointment, and once the rowing boat had been lifted on to the hatch covers I could hear the anchor being raised before the puffer set off back up the Thames, thus ending a most enjoyable few days.

BOB COOPER

CRUISING THE DALMATIAN ISLANDS

Last September my wife Carol and I, and three friends, Mike, Jenny and Tom joined one of Island Sailing's flotillas in Yugoslavia, to sail the central Dalmatian Islands.

After a 2½ hour flight from Manchester to Split, it was less than an hour to Kremik marina where we joined BISEVO our 33 ft. Maxi 100 - home for the next two weeks - in a flotilla of twelve other boats. As this was my, and my wife's first sailing holiday, we were given choice of cabin and chose the aft (found to be a mistake later!), Jenny and Mike had the main saloon, whilst Tom took the double up for'ard and enjoyed space and total privacy. BISEVO was in her fourth season and whilst in reasonable condition, new sails would have been an improvement, something which became evident in the obligatory last-day race back to Kremik.

Most days began around 9.00 a.m. with a sort of Continental breakfast aboard, followed by a skippers' briefing at the nearest cafe. Anyone with the idea that flotilla sailing is a "50 yards apart - follow-my-leader" system couldn't be more wrong. The briefings lasted about

20 minutes, provided general information on the area, and gave a latest time of arrival for the next port of call. After that, you leave when you like, go where you like and do what you like - but always arriving by the appointed time - like homing pigeons coming from all directions!

I think it was day five (just at the start of our 4-day free sailing period) when a good fresh wind sprang up and, as we had settled down to life on the boat, it gave us an ideal opportunity to beat upwind and see what BISEVO could do. Hard on the wind at 6 knots she seemed content on her ear, and Carol suddenly realised the angle as she declared it was possible to touch the water from a sitting position in the cockpit! That was the point when our stern anchor decided to leap overboard with the clatter of yards of chain following from the stowage box. Carol was less than impressed later when about two gallons of salt water was found in her clothes locker. Undaunted she washed, dried and repacked everything into the other locker. Three days later after another good session to windward, Carol washed and dried the same clothes again!! We never did solve the leaks in the aft lockers.

After the free sailing days, the flotilla rendezvoused in a small bay on a deserted island for the barbecue evening. As everyone had become accustomed to paying mooring fees to men dressed in white shirts, trousers and white peaked caps, Torn produced his own outfit and attempted to make a few bob himself!

The last day was the race back to base, and with plenty of booze left on board, we were not seriously interested in racing. Mike had bought out a local shop of all its children's balloons the day before, and filled them with cold water. BISEVO caused havoc at the start line. Helmsmen of other boats were caught by surprise as they were bombarded with our water bombs. The confusion caused almost gave us an advantage, until the lead boat sneaked up unnoticed, and completely drowned us all with several large buckets of very cold seawater. In our haste to avoid this unexpected attack, the course was abandoned and BISEVO relegated herself to the rear of the flotilla. After a complete change of T-shirts we followed the fleet expecting to be last but, one-by-one, BISEVO overhauled them. Of the ten boats in the race we were now fifth with the wind freshening all the time. The entire race was hard on the wind and eventually we had to reef for the first time. Still we passed one other boat and fought hard against an Irishman who was only yards from us each time we cross-tacked with him. As the wind eased we decided to shake the reef out, and it was then that the clew shackle decided to part, leaving us little choice but to retire - as four other boats had done already. Still - we needed the engine on anyway to cool the fridge - the beer was getting warm!

The last night was presentation time, with everyone sitting down to a fine meal at a local restaurant, exchanging the experiences of the last two weeks. We had travelled 220 miles, motored around half and sailed half. It wasn't all sailing though - we stopped at many different marinas and picturesque small ports where there were interesting things to see and do. One town called Trogir was very old indeed - entered by a huge wooden gate in the town wall, with some magnificent mediaeval buildings as well as very good restaurants; but

just outside the town within 5 minutes walking distance was an excellent marina with all mod cons - so - the best of both worlds! One other essential to mention on a flotilla holiday is the regulation lunchtime stop. You find a deserted bay where the water looks turquoise, anchor and have a drink; then you have a swim, then another drink, after which you're ready for a bite to eat and a drink - get the picture? There is one more thing you have to remember - the sun shines all the time!

MIKE BARTLETT

FESTIVAL OF THE SEA

Hull Regatta, the city's great weekend festival of the sea will take place this year on August 12-13 at Hull's award-winning Marina.

The Regatta is promoted by Hull City Council's Tourism Committee and Hull Marina Ltd. to help encourage sailing generally in the region and to reflect the city's traditional links with the sea and maritime affairs.

This year there will be a busy sailing programme over the two days with racing for cruising yachts, J24s and Flying 15s and traditional rigged craft will be able to participate in an Old Gaffers Race.

There will be Boat Handling and Man Overboard competitions for skippers of powered craft and the Lord Mayor, as Admiral of the Humber, will view a Parade of Boats.

A Concours d'Elegance Trophy will be awarded for the 'best turned out' vessel.

The Regatta Pavilion will be displaying a wealth of activities and crafts by nearly 40 Maritime Societies and Charities.

This year the Pavilion will be in Nelson Street as improvement works in and around Humber Dock Basin have closed its usual site for the time being.

Displays of boats and boating equipment and accessories will be shown in the open air along Humber Dock Promenade and there will also be exhibits by the Royal Navy and Yorkshire Water Authority.

In addition the Royal Navy will exhibit Patrol Boats in the Marina itself.

There will be a grand fireworks display above the River Humber on the evening of the 12th and on both days there will be children's entertainment and jazz around the Marina area.

Hull Regatta was first staged in 1987 as a revival of a 100 years old tradition. In those days owners of the square-rigged Humber Keels would race one another each year in a Regatta and sailing trawler owners later followed suit.

Now their successors, the sleek pleasure boats, have taken up where the working craft left off.

The harbour, in the shape of the two docks that form the Marina, remains as testimony and link with the days when sail and the wind was the only power available at sea.
