

*TWO HUNDRED
KEELS
AND THEIR
CAPTAINS
ONE HUNDRED
YEARS AGO*

AN ESSAY BY
J. S. TAYLOR

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

Thorne Local History Society

Occasional Paper No 24 1997

Originally Printed by

T. A. Tate, Market Place, Thorne, via Doncaster

1965

HISTORICAL PUBLICATIONS by J. S.
TAYLOR

‘Essay on the History of Thorne, and Parish Affairs in Thorne in the Reigns of George II and III’. 1953

‘Two Humber Keels and their Captains One Hundred Years Ago’. 1955, First Edition

‘Works and Days. 1835 – 1872. Extracts from the Diaries of Thomas Askren, farmer’. 1956

‘Thorne, 1723 – 1785. An Essay’. 1957

‘Two Essays on Old Thorne and a Letter from Dr. J. J. Littlewood’. 1957

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

‘Hatfield Chace’. 1964

‘Herod’s Steward’. A Novel. 1964

Published by T. A. Tate, Thorne

Also several articles on letters and account books and local history in Doncaster Gazette and Chronicle.

NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION

Since the first edition appeared in 1955, there has been a great interest in the Inland Waterways. I have, therefore, felt that now so many pleasure craft are on the Canals there must also be an interest taken in the older vessels which sailed on them, and the way of life of their captains and crews, and that a second edition would be well received.

I would like to underline all the acknowledgements, especially my indebtedness to Mr. T. A. Tate, J.P., and his staff for their never failing kindness and interest, and to the

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

Rev. R. B. H. Greaves for his support of the venture.

As before, I intend to devote the profits to the Littlewood Memorial Hall Fund, as the need for a new Church Hall in Thorne is becoming more and more acute.

J. S. TAYLOR

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge with grateful thanks Messrs MavMillan and Company's permission to quote from their published 'Memoir of Alfred, Lord Tennyson' part of a letter from Edward Fitzgerald, advice from Dr. T. Kingston Derry as to arrangement, and my indebtedness to my brother, Mr. H. M. Taylor, the Rev. C. Weaver and Mr. T. A. Tate for their kindly criticism and encouragement in this venture and for assisting me with their suggestions and time given in

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

reading the proofs, and to Mrs. Tate for typing the MS.

I would like to acknowledge especially my indebtedness to the keelmen of Thorne and Stainforth both on the 'active' and 'retired' lists and their families and all those others among the shipwrights, lock keepers and bridge keepers and engineers, who have helped me on innumerable occasions with information.

J. S. Taylor

Thorne

NOTE

This booklet is prepared from account books of old residents of Stainforth by the permission, courtesy and kindness of their descendants and the Executors. I would like to express my gratitude for their kindness and co-operation. – J.S.T.

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

INTRODUCTION

Amid the numerous changes which are rapidly transforming the aspect of many of the towns and villages which lie on its banks, the Sheffield and Keadby Canal remains, almost unchanged since its opening a hundred and fifty years ago, as a reminder of a more leisurely age.

For many different reasons it holds a warm place in the affections of a large number of people. To some it is a means of livelihood, and in consequence is also of great importance. Others, whose sport is angling in its waters, find hours of enjoyment sitting expectantly on its banks. Many more delight in strolling along its towing paths, soothed by the calm of its surroundings, and their escape from the hurry and noise of the highways.

To all who have either a passing or enduring interest in this canal and its connecting waterways, it gives me the greatest pleasure to

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

recommend this booklet, so ably compiled by Dr. J. S. Taylor, who has undertaken this task not for gain, but purely for the joy of accomplishment. Any profit which may accrue will be given to the Littlewood Memorial Hall Fund.

All who find pleasure in perusing its pages will, I am sure wish me to extend to him our sincerest thanks.

Chas. Hanby, J.P.

Thorne, 1955.

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

One Hundred Years ago

An Essay by J. S. Taylor

At Christmas, 1862, Edward Fitzgerald wrote to his friend, Alfred Tennyson, from his home at Market Rise, Woodbridge, and spoke of the crews of the trading vessels, with which he was so familiar, and of them he selected specially for comment the crews of the billy-boys. ‘... I sometimes talk with sea-faring men who come from Boston in billy-boys, and from Goole and other places in the Humber; and then I don’t forget the coast of Locksley Hall. ...’ There would have been a large variety of ships at Woodbridge, and at Lowestoft, and Edward Fitzgerald might have been expected to comment on some of the larger sea-going ships, or those with foreign crews. Mention of billy-boys would indicate the marked characteristics of their crews rather than those of the actual ships, as they were small craft of about 60 tons

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

burden, fore and aft rigged on their single masts and engaged on the costal trade.

Alfred Tennyson was probably as well acquainted with billy-boys as was his correspondent, for at an early age he had lived at Louth in Lincolnshire, whilst attending the Grammar School there, and as he was well known for his keen observation and retentive memory, which were well applied to the objects and scenes around him, these vessels, which came to Louth from the Humber by means of the Canal that had been completed in 1763, would in no way be strangers to him or their name unfamiliar. The market town of Louth is well inland, and any ship that reached it by the Canal, and which had also travelled to London and other parts on the rivers and estuaries of the East Coast, could not have failed to attract the attention and stimulate the imagination of the boy who was later to become Poet Laureate.

This is no doubt one of the reasons why Edward Fitzgerald mentioned the billy-boys' crews to his friend, who, in return could have told him of the other river and canal craft that he had seen at

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

Louth bringing a wide range of merchandise to the little Lincolnshire market town, and returning to the Humber ports with cargoes of grain in their holds.

Their names would have attracted his attention, too, as local usages and country words even found places in his poems, and the keels and sloops of the Humber, Trent, Ouse and Don and the complicated canal system linking them must often have been described to him while still a boy by the crews of these vessels with that forthright language of the Yorkshireman which fixed the attention of Edward Fitzgerald fifty years later at Woodbridge among the varied and cosmopolitan seafaring companions, whose conversation he so greatly enjoyed.

Wooden billy-boys, keels and sloops have practically disappeared from the Humber and costal ports and rivers on which at one time their large sails and brightly painted hulls were familiar sights, and almost regarded as part of the landscape against which they moved.

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

At the time of Edward Fitzgerald's letter the iron keel with its auxiliary engine was undreamed of, and the paddle steamers on the rivers were not regarded as being serious competitors of the sailing vessels, and even further from the minds of the keel men was the sight of a steam tug towing a series of square iron tanks full of coal from the South Yorkshire Coalfield.

The canals, which were one of the earliest features of the Industrial Revolution, were increased rapidly and they linked numbers of towns and manufacturing districts as a response to the need for the transport of heavy merchandise; for this was beyond the scope of the pack-horses and such waggons as were able to traverse the badly maintained roads during the Napoleonic Wars.

At the time of his letter to Alfred Tennyson, one of the billy-boys' captains could have told him, Edward Fitzgerald could have heard of a network of canals around the confluence of the Don, Ouse and Trent, which enabled the trading vessels to proceed inland as far as Sheffield and the Barnsley district, and to penetrate to the

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

heart of Lincolnshire, and he could have heard of the long stretches of these rivers which were navigable. Such vessels as he had seen were built at shipyards on these waterways, and he could have heard of the close connection of river and canal that afterwards occurred, and of the places where they merged for parts of their courses.

Even though he does not mention it or any particular Humber port by name, except Goole, there was Thorne on the Don, and there was at Thorne flourishing a trade which covered canal traffic which even the newly constructed railways in the area seemed to assist instead of oppose as they appeared to do in other parts of the country.

Had he visited Thorne he would have found a country market town with a population of between three or four thousand, in which practically every industry was represented, and which was the centre of a large agricultural district, and had communications with Goole, Selby, Bawtry and Doncaster by the relatively new turnpike roads. He would have found that

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

the commons had been closed within the last fifty years, and he could have talked with men who had seen the opening of the Canal from Stainforth to Keadby, which produced another link between Sheffield and the Trent and Humber. At Quayside he could have seen a river port in its last days of prosperity, where ocean-going vessels discharged their cargoes, and where there were shipyards with dry docks and rope walks. Here he could have met men who could have told him of ships built there for the Royal Navy, and of how the gradual disuse of the paddle steamer would probably cause the river to be choked with silt, and when their paddles had ceased to stir up the mud that tides deposited, the river would be less and less used by sea-going ships, and that the trade of Thorne would be taken by Goole, and the seamen and shipbuilders be obliged to go to Goole for a living and that all shipbuilding possible would be done by the yards on the canal side at Thorne, Swinton and Stainforth. He would also at Thorne see children who would grow up to see iron keels on the canal, and iron ships on the stocks at Thorne for use in another war, and who would see the course of the Don altered, and Quayside

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

be left on a backwater, and when their accounts of earlier days and wooden sailing vessels would be hardly listened to by another generation interested in speed and the possibilities of the then unknown petrol and diesel engines, and road transport.

Edward Fitzgerald would have regretted, as have many men before his time and after it, that so many of those engaged in the canal and river trades were practically illiterate, though hard working and honest men, and of great commercial ability – and that their children were debarred from any form of education due to their spending much time in the canal craft. As a result of this lack of education, which was by no means confined to the keelmen's families, no proper system of accounting or book-keeping was observed, and in the vast majority of cases the keelmen depended on their memories, which were very reliable and far-reaching, and their methods of reckoning were infallible. There were undoubtedly some men who preserved accounts, but these seem to be altogether lost to posterity.

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

One book has escaped the general loss of records. It is the account book of a keelman who lived at Stainforth – a small village then, lying between the Don and the Stainforth and Keadby Canal in part and stretching along either bank of the Canal. It was kept between the years 1854 and 1876, and seems to have discharged the function of Day Book, Bill Book, Cargo Register and in some instances a domestic account book, as well as being a record of banking transactions and rents received for fields. It is a small book bound in parchment with a brass clasp fitted originally, but now missing, written carefully and clearly – and within its obvious limitations, giving a fairly adequate idea of the life of a keelman on the canals and rivers in the middle of the 19th century. The end papers consist of an almanac, interest tables, stamping charges and instructions for the use of the recently established County Courts, and what was in the case of a keelman entirely unnecessary, the precepts and advice to a young tradesman, as laid down by Benjamin Franklin; for a more thrifty and industrious class of men never existed, nor one more distinguished for commercial integrity. The book

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

was printed and prepared for the year 1851, when men's minds were occupied with the idea of progress, and the seemingly infallible transition of civilisation to a New Era of peace and plenty, before the Crimean War showed them how vain were these hopes. A small notebook, without its cover now, of the same period has also survived and it gives a few details of transactions, as carefully kept as is the parchment bound book. It is thus possible to visualise this keelman, owner of two keels, and acting as canal carrier and coal merchant, landlord, and in all, a shrewd business man. He was determined that his two sons should receive the advantages of education and a bill has been pushed in between the pages of the account book detailing the charges of a boarding school.

He records his cargoes, freights and canal dues – one wishes that he had written more.

Repairs to his keels are listed in one place, and the record of the purchase of chandlers' stores. We may be sure that his keels were trim and well preserved by tarring and painting, and that the decks were well scrubbed and cabins

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

spotlessly clean, with polished oak and mahogany fittings, and gleaming brass ware, and that all was conducted in a seaman-like manner with no waste and a high degree of efficiency, even to the washing of the coal before it was stowed in the galley. At Hull the keels were no doubt under the scrutiny of the sailors of large ships, who would not hesitate to criticise what they considered to be the inadequate methods of landsmen.

Practically all the keels at this time were owned by their captains, who in many instances bought and sold cargoes as well as carrying them; the day of the almost complete and universal ownership by large firms was far distant in the future, and the keelmen could afford to be independent. It seems that at this time the tonnage of keels, sloops and billy-boys was practically the same – sloops, keels and billy-boys all plied on the canals and rivers and the Humber, but sloops and billy-boys were more often engaged in the Humber trade. There seems to have been little difference between the hulls of sloops and keels, the only difference being in their rigging; a keel's mast, which could usually

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

be lowered and raised by windlass, was in the centre of the vessel and on it were carried two square sails; the sloop's mast was further forward and it was often fixed in position, but could in many instances be raised and lowered and on it were carried the two large triangular sails of the fore and aft rig. The sea-going billy-boys had bulwarks and fixed masts, which were usually single, and were in general built on finer lines without the rounded bows and flat bottoms of the keels and sloops of rivers and canals – but at first sight, by their rig resembled the sloops. At the time that this account book opened there were no railway bridges across the canal at Thorne. These were the cause of the need for removal of the fixed masts, and cranes were provided at various points on the canal for the removal of the masts, and the lee-boards, which were needed for the passage of the Humber. In some instances these cranes were operated by the employees of the Railway Companies. In many other parts of England there seemed to be what ranged between active opposition and lack of co-operation on the part of the railways, but it seems that in the case of the Sheffield to Keadby Canal, which had passed into the control of

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

South Yorkshire Railway (it was amalgamated with M.S. & L. later) before the period covered by the account book, the keelmen had little to trouble them apart from locks and swing bridges. In the early years of this period a railway was constructed along the side of the canal bank from Doncaster. In 1856 it had reached as far as Thorne, and a tip as a means of loading coal on to the canal craft was constructed, and in 1859 the railway line was extended to Keadby; there was also a branch to Quayside.

Between the years 1866 and 1869 the construction of girder bridges across the canal at Thorne for the railway produced an effective barrier for any vessel with a fixed mast. It is true that the mast could be removed, and the rest of the journey to Sheffield or elsewhere, performed by horse-towing, but it was an obstruction that must have made it difficult for the captains of billy-boys to compete with such keels and sloops as only required to lower their masts, and thus make full time use of all favourable winds. It was often the practice for keel captains to leave their masts as well as lee-boards at Thorne and proceed by towing to Sheffield, or elsewhere,

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

and from their destination to Thorne again when returning, and take up their masts and lee-boards. This leaving of masts could also be done at Mexborough, where there was a crane. Many keel captains seem to have maintained their own stables of horses for towing, but there were also men engaged in the occupation of keeping, tending and leading towing horses. For all users of the canal it was possible for entry to be made into the River Don at Stainforth through the lock there when tides were suitable, thereby providing an alternative route to Hull, which was free from obstruction until the building of Jubilee Bridge near Thorne. This could also be used by vessels coming from Goole and elsewhere, whose captains wished to reach the Sheffield to Keadby Canal without sailing by Trent Falls.

As he opened the book in 1854 the Crimean War was in men's minds and before the last entry was to be made in what was to be part of a record of his own life, he was to hear of three more wars, and the Prince Consort was to die. These events were far away from him as he guided his keel down the peaceful canals and

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

rivers; making sweeps with his tiller as regular and precise as the long strokes of the quill pen on the neatly ruled pages. As he watched the broad sails of his keel fill and swell, and the yards move gently he would only hear the creak of the blocks and the slatting of the canvas, and the voices of his fellow captains on the quiet waterways as they hailed each other. There was almost too much to occupy the minds of men such as these in their struggle with winds and tides and the long laborious hours of loading and unloading cargoes to make it possible for them to give more than a passing thought to the busy world, whose wars were for them reflected in the furnaces of Sheffield with their smoke and grime and the teeming docks at Hull where these Yorkshiremen mingled with Lascars and Norwegians alike in one common purpose. Such newspapers as came their way were few and expensive and not all could read them, and they told of a world that could not be more distant than the Humber, with its uneventful, though far from tranquil life, were it to be located on another planet.

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

He scorned to use the pages at the beginning of the book prepared for an index, but entered his cargoes and charges at once as there were cash lines ruled for him – such was his life: - to make the most of what opportunity offered and to crowd as much work as possible into the hours of daylight, and darkness even if need arose.

Benjamin Franklin had nothing to tell such a man, and he could well have listened to the simple proverbs and found nothing in his honest face that was not as clearly written in Franklin's own strictures.

The first entries in his book which he made, or caused to be made for him, recorded the carrying of a cargo of iron to Sheffield on February 6th, 1854 for £13. He had been in the trade earlier than this, for a receipt dated 1st August, 1845 from Darley Main Colliery near Barnsley, shows the delivery of 59 tons of hard coal at 5/- per ton 'for himself' and this cargo he conveyed and sold himself for his own advantage. He was then a young man 25 years old. He chiefly carried coal of varying grades, slack, smudge, soft coal and hard coal for various customers, and he

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

returns to Sheffield with cargoes of iron from Hull, and sometimes with corn to Doncaster. Such is the pattern of his work and he receives approximately £10 as freight. The cargoes of coal could only have come from the region of Barnsley as there was then little coal developed elsewhere available to him.

He prepares a bill and enters it in his book:

1857		£	s.	d.
March 18th	55 ton coals at 4/6 per ton	12	7	6
	Dues	4	1	1
	Freight	9	0	0
		£25	8	7

and on May 11th he receives a cash payment of £20.

His cargoes are all between 50 and 60 tons in general. His business thrives for in 1858 he boards his two sons with Mr. William Ratliffe at Burton (? Burton Stather). He receives as bills:

Board, washing and mending 7/- per week

		£	s.	d.
30 th December	13 weeks at 7/- per week	4	11	0
1859				
Jan. 20 th	3 weeks at 7/- per week	1	1	0
April 28 th	14 weeks at 7/- per week	4	18	0

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

	Shoes, Schooling, Books	10	8	
August 4 th	14 weeks at 7/- per week and other lad's shoes	5	8	10

and in 1860 on October 12th Board wages are begun. He had previously boarded them with Henry Wright at 4/- per week, and in 1858 and 1859 makes final settlement with him. He seems to have supplied Henry Wright (or his namesake) with coal as well, so there is reason to suppose that besides running a small boarding school, Henry Wright was a coal merchant.

One of Mr. Ratliffe's bills has been preserved. It deals with 1860.

	£	s.	d.
Two sons board from Oct. 12 to Dec. 21	4	10	0
10 weeks school wage		4	8
4 copy books 1s. James counting books 1/2		2	2
Pens, ink, pencil			6
	<u>4</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>4</u>

Settled Feb/14/1861

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

His property is a source of income, as in 1854 he records 19/9 received as half a year's rent from one tenant, and 30/- from another for half a year. His business must have been in a good state as on September 23rd, 1863 he makes the final payment for his keel 'Alinda' in the sum of £120 13 0. The payment is acknowledged by a separate receipt which has been preserved.

In January 1864 another hand is noticeable in the account book and the keel 'Alinda' is mentioned by name for the first time. One is inclined to think that his sons have now joined him in the business, and that Mr. Ratliffe's schooling is bearing fruit in accountancy. A cargo of clay among the coal entries is mentioned and it was probably for repairs to the canal bed, and there is mention of ironstone being conveyed, and keel 'James and John' appears for the first time on the pages. Nowhere in this part of the book is there mention of a mate or any crew, and whether he was accompanied by his wife, we cannot say, but the wives of many keelmen worked as hard as their husbands. By 1864 it is possible that if his sons were with him they may

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

have captained the keels on occasions, as well as working with him. Among his payments that we re-listed are dues to the River Dun and Aire and Calder Companies and he often places a payment for inspection – as in 1865 when with 60 tons of coal at 5/6 per ton he pays to the Aire and Calder Canal Company:-

		£	s.	d.
		3	4	10
Dues at Hull Dock	...	1	1	0
and Inspection	... ..		2	8
and Freight	... ..	9	0	0

The inspection was of the coal and not the keel, presumably, as it varies with the tonnage.

The pattern of his life is still much the same as in 1854. Hoyland, Silkstone and Elsecar are among the collieries he visits and his cargoes go to private merchants in Hull and the Hull gas works, and he also makes the journey to Louth market; he takes a cargo of seeds to Gainsborough on the Trent, and a cargo of flints to Swinton. He chiefly carries coal, but sometimes timber and barley and wheat to Leeds and Gainsborough. During all these years he has visited Mr. T. R. Rakes, the banker, and opens

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

an account with him as early as 1853, and also with the Hull Banking Company and the Hull Old Bank and the Doncaster Bank. These transactions are recorded in a much smaller book, but as carefully recorded as those in the parchment volume. In this small book in 1872 there is recorded the final payment, and the payments by previous instalments of the money for the half share in the 'James and John' by his son in February. The family partnership is now well established with both keels plying on the canals and rivers and coal still forming the backbone of their business, but here and there is a cargo of bricks, a cargo of manure and a cargo of rails taken to Hull. In 1871 while the partnership was maturing they had taken a cargo of ice to Hull. This may have involved breaking the ice on the canal, loading it in spite of the attendant difficulties, and probably conveying to the fish docks at Hull, for this was before the days of electrical refrigeration, and on the large estates the ice from ponds was carted to specially constructed ice houses where it could be kept for many months. The Sheffield and Barnsley districts with their collieries and their destinations to load coal and to Hull they mainly

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

carry it. So for 22 years they enter their journeys and cargoes, and then the pages became blank; after turning many of them, there are some carefully written by what is presumably the hand of one of the sons in which he details the new charges to be made by the Dearne and Dove Canal after the opening of the railways and the Dun Navigation Company and the charges of the railways for conveying goods.

In 1857 there are the beginnings of the entries of what are probably the wages paid to mates. In some cases their names suggest that they were either his sons or related to him otherwise. One is paid 7/- per week, another 3/-, another 6/6, and one of his sons is paid 7/-. This pay may seem small, but it almost certainly included their board. We may assume that they were well treated and that to sail with such a man would be to learn the art of canal and river navigation at the hands of a good master. Several of these men appear to have been paid partly in kind and such entries as the following can be found:-

1871

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

August 2 nd	Received for shoes	2	6
	trousers	6	9
Sep. 9 th	Received for cap	1	0
	trousers	6	6
	jacket	11	6
	shoes	3	0
	shoes	<u>9</u>	<u>0</u>
		<u>£2</u>	<u>0 3</u>

In 1870 he fitted out one of his sons in a similar way

1870

Sept. 29 th	Shipd at 4/6 per week		
	Received for trousers	8	0
	shoes	6	6
	shoes	3	6
	6 braces	1	4
	for oil	1	0
	jacket and waistcoat ...	2	0 0
	for shoes ...	4	0
	for shirt ...	5	1
	worsted for garnsey ...	1	4

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

shirt	...	6	4
shirt	...	3	6
shirt	...	3	0
calico and buttons			11

and in 1869 he had been provided with a previous outfit

Received for shoes	...	...	3	6
cap	...	...	2	0
cap and money		...	1	8
money for shoes		...	10	0
money for rabbit				
(? Pet rabbit)		...	2	0
money for shoes	...		10	0
money, trousers				
hat	...	...	17	0
two shirts	...	...	8	0
			<u>£2</u>	<u>17 8</u>

All would have been of the best and well planned for the cold winds and fogs of the Humber, and the rains and cold of the canals in the Winter.

He had also at another time been provided with:-

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

A watch	...	...	4	6
braces	...	...	1	0
shirt	...	...	6	3
worsted (? for guernsey)	...	...	1	3
tie	...	...		10

In 1862 another man had shipped on the James and John for 12 months and he had agreed for £7 15 0 wages for the time and also that any time of absence caused by ‘lameness or illness’ would be made up by him at the end of the year. He signed the agreement and his Father or some relation witnessed the signature and he was paid partly in kind and partly in money.

1862

August 20 th	A Garnsey and worsted	...	9	6
Sept. 27 th	paid for garnsey with sleeves		10	6

and at this same time, which was also Stainforth Feast he was paid 6d. in money.

The cargoes listed in the Account Book are mainly for coal, but an attempt is made here to give a representative selection of all cargoes.

Freight

£ s. d.

1858

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

April 17	A cargo of Park Slack to Hull	...	9	0	0
July 1	A cargo of Iron (62 tons) to Sheffield	...	7	15	0
July 8	A cargo of Silston (60 tons) to Hull	...	8	5	0
1860					
July 3	A cargo of Darley Main (55 tons) coal and slac		9	0	0
1862					
May 28	A cargo of 53 tons slack and smudge	...	9	0	0
Nov. 11	55 tons of coals and Iron	... ..	9	0	0
1864il 9	76 Tons of Clay	...	6	6	6
Oct. 19	64 tons from Kilnhurst (coals)	...	8	15	0
1869					
Sept. 6	65 tons Lundhill Slack	...	8	10	0
1970					
Oct. 4	70 tons Ironstone to Sheffield	...	8	15	0
1871					
Feb. 25	A cargo of ice (61 tons) to Hull	...	23	0	0
1872					
Jan. 23	A cargo of cotton seed 64 ½ tons	...	5	10	0
Jan. 31	75 tons of Sand to Rotherham	...	7	10	0
	A cargo of seed to Gaisbro'	...	8	5	0
Oct. 24	A cargo of barley to Gainsbro'	... ..	11	6	6
	A cargo of wheat to Leeds	... ..	10	10	0
1874					
Sept. 16	75 tons of foist of lime (? phosphate)		7	2	6
1874					
undated	60 tons super fossit (? Superphosphate of lime)		5	5	0
	15 thousand of bricks	... ..	3	15	0
	60 tons of grease (?) bones	...	9	0	0
June 27	A cargo of copper ore	...	7	10	0
	A cargo of boanes	... ..	6	0	0
1875					
June 9	One cargo pitche to Goole	...	9	10	0
Dec. 30	A cargo of sand Barnsley glass works		5	0	0
1876					
April 29	A cargo iron hure (ore ?) 72 tons		9	0	0
	Farley iron hure				
May 12	A cargo of rails				
	72 tons 12 cwt to Hull	... ..	9	1	6

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

Aug. 18	A cargo seed Gains (bro)	...	...	7	3	0
	360 qrs.					
Dec. 2 nd	80 tons gravil	...	...	4	0	0
Dec. 11 th	A cargo of manure (70 tons)	...	...	5	5	0
	Specimen bills of coal					
1859						
July 29	35 tons of soft coals – 4/6	...	...	7	17	
6						
	10 tons of slack at 2/-	...	...	1	0	0
	5 tons Smudge	...	...		7	6
	River Don dues	...	...	3	17	11½
	Freight	...	...	9	0	0
				<u>22</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>11½</u>

1861						
May 10	Barnsley dues	...	...	8	6	
	River Don dues	...	...	4	11	10
	51 tons of slack 3s per ton	...	...	7	13	
	Freight	...	...	9	0	0
				<u>21</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>4</u>

							£	s.	d.
1862.									
Oct 21	36 tons of coal	...	...	10	16	0			
	14 tons of slack	...	...	1	15	0			
	River Don dues	...	...	3	15	10½			
	One thousand of bricks	...	...	2	15	0			
	Warfag (? wharfage)	.....	.....		1	6			
				19	3	4½			
	freight	...	...	9	0	0			
				28	3	4½			
	21 thousand of pipes	...	...	<u>2</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>6</u>			

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

					30	15	10½
1863							
April 28	9 ton 10 cwt of Iron						
	from Hull to Wasbro at 5/-						
	per ton	...	...	...	2	7	6
May 7	A cargo of coals casting from	Wasbro to					
		Hull forge			9	0	0
	River Don dues	...	...	...	4	2	9
June 11	6 tons 7 cwt of Iron St.	...			<u>1</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>9</u>
					17	2	0
1865							
	60 tons of coal at 5/6	...			16	10	0
	Aire and Calder 70 ½	...			3	4	10
	Hull dock dues	...	...	...	1	1	0
	Inspection	...	...	...	2	8	0
	Freight	...	...	...	<u>9</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
					29	18	6
1867							
July 7	57 ton coals at 7/6	...	...	...	21	7	6
	67 tons Navigation Dues	...	...	...	5	6	1
	Dock Dues	...	...	...	1	0	0
	Inspection	...	...	...		1	3
	Freight	...	...	...	<u>9</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
					36	14	10
1869							
July 7	22 tons coals 7S per ton	...			7	14	0
	19 tons slack 3/6	...	...	...	3	6	6
	5 tons Smudge 2/-	...	...	...		10	0
	Navigation Dues	...	...	...	5	4	6
	Inspection	...	...	...		1	0
	Freight	...	...	...	<u>9</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
					25	16	0
1875							
June 9	44 tons coals 10S per ton	...			22	0	0
	15 tons slack 6S per ton	...			4	10	0

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

	5 tons smudge 3S per ton	...	15	0
	Navigation Dues	... ..	4	17 4
	Freight	... ..	<u>10</u>	<u>10 0</u>
			42	12 4
Aug 23	31 tons coals – 9/6 per ton	...	14	14 6
	22 ton slack 6/- per ton	...	6	12 0
	8 ton smudge 3/- per ton	...	1	4 0
	Navigation Dues	... ..	4	13 4
	Freight	... ..	<u>10</u>	<u>10 0</u>
			37	13 10

The last few pages of the book deal with the recording of rents received for the fields that he owned, with the dates of entry of the tenants and a banking account.

In 1876 there is copied a long rigger's and chandler's statement, though it is not recorded for which of the keels it was or whether it was for both.

1876

March 11 th	Main sheets 1" 2	...	15	0
	Wiff Fare (?)	... ..	3	0
	2 pairs Boat Hook grains	...	1	6
	2 Handlings repairing	...	1	6
	1 Houle (?) brush	...	1	0
	1 galan amerecan oile	...	1	6
	½ gallon boild oil	... ..	1	6
	1 galon Roar tar (? Raw Tar)	...	1	3
	5 lbs black paint	...	1	3
	3 lbs green 2 lb blue	...	1	4 ½

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

	1 ½ lbs turpentine		6	
	1 ¼ galan boiled oil 1 g stip (?)	4	1 ½	
	2 lbs dryer 3 ½ orange led ...	1	10 ½	
	A new mast	3	0	0
	altring hoop ...	9		
	1 Sheave ...	1	0	
June 19 th	A new wire stay ...	16	6	
	Paint and gilt ...	12	6	
Sept. 21	1 gallon lamp oil ...	1	8	
	2 lb . . . turpentine	8		
Sept. 23	Carpenter bill ...	9	7	0
July 29 th	Barrass Bill	2	0	
Sept. 21	Armitage Bill	6	0	

This would suggest that a thorough repair and refit was carried out. Perhaps this was the time when this honest and kindly middle aged man left the canal to work as a farmer in his fields and to live supported by the rents of his property and the interest on the money he had so hardly earned and so assiduously saved.

It would seem a long time to him since he had first stepped aboard a keel; but now his sons would be in charge of the ‘Alinda’ and ‘James and John’. He could watch for the coloured flags at the trucks of their masts when they moored at Stainforth, and feel a pride in his sons and his training of them – and now he turned to his fields and cottages.

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

Occasionally trouble seems to have clouded his last years and in the last written pages of the small notebook that he had bought in 1858 we find some sad entries. It seems that for a friend the undertaker's expenses are recorded and another hand has supplied them as his heart was too heavy with grief; yet his precise habits did not desert him, and he recorded that a friend took him in his conveyance and would accept no payment, and that wine, biscuits and ham had cost him 9/2, also that he had made a loan of £7.17.0 but we may be sure that he never intended it to be repaid. He had to make journey to Hull in connection with this matter in 1893 and it cost 10/-.

We do not know what were his thoughts on that journey, but it must have occurred to this man who had been a child when George IV was King, and who was destined to live to see the dawn of another century, and who was as a boy could have spoken to old men who had heard John Wesley preach, and had received the news of Trafalgar and Waterloo, that he was travelling by a main line train over a route where no

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

railway had been when he was born and even the first railway he had known was now no longer to be traced in its course by the canal. His first journey to Hull would have been by keel or the paddle steamer from Thorne Quay, and now there was no shipping at Thorne Quay, he would have reflected. When he reached Hull he would have been welcomed at his Banker's office, and at those of the firms with whom he had dealt; but there were now many new faces and more palatial buildings. On the quays at Hull it would be apparent that iron and steam vessels were to win in the long drawn out struggle with the wooden sailing ships he had known as a young man. He may have seen a motor car in the streets of Hull, but he had probably heard of them if he had never seen one, and it may have occurred to him that here was a threat to the supremacy of sloops and keels on the waterways, and that in time these new motor cars might even threaten the railways, which had so far not succeeded in putting the canal captains out of business.

He might have seen a strange flag on the merchant ships that were being unloaded, and realised that here was a new nation in the field of

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

mercantile competition, and reflected that his sons had at one time spoken of the German Ocean, in their school days.

As he fingered his sovereigns and the broad silver coins he would reflect that the earliest coins he had earned had had more King's heads on them than Queen's, and that he had met men who had spoken of seeing those Kings and their brothers at Doncaster – and, also how the present Queen Victoria, who as a young girl had come to Doncaster, was now an ageing lady, and that they were almost as old as each other.

Whether he realised it or not, he was a living link between the men of the early days of the Industrial Revolution and the New Era, where progress seemed to be illimitable, and men of his stamp were part of the rich blood that had flowed along the arteries of English Commerce that were still the canals and rivers.

Appendix.

A second account book kept by another keel man has also survived. It, too, is bound in

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

parchment and it is about half the size of the one already described, and has a brass clasp. It covers the period 1833-1847. In addition to freights there are notes of canal dues and charges. The places mentioned as well as Hull and Brigg, Louth, Grimsby and Beverley, in addition to the collieries in the Barnsley area.

The freights which are practically all for cargoes of coal are closely similar to those already recorded. There are also in this book many notes of chandlers' charges, and notes of the sale of three keels: the 'Sarah and Martha', 'The Bachelor' and the 'Exchange', and notes of general interest.

Specimen freights are as follows:-

Oct/1/1833	Wosbro Silkston Coles 9 ½ wags. slack 6 on account of Mr. Thos. Lee of Beverley freight	8	17	0
Jan/20/1835	Corn from Brigg			
	Wheat Qur 176 3/8			
	Barley Qur 40 5/8			
	Mustard Qur 10			
	For Doncaster	freight	...	...

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

		9	0	0
Feb/19/1834	delivered to Mr. Gunn of Wakefield			
	Wheat Qur 241			
	Barley Qur 31			
	2 Sheets of wool, 14 tod each	freight		
		11	0	0
March/22/1836	Wosbro Iron Works 10 ton of pig iron for			
	Mr. Hart, Brigg	freight		
		2	10	0
Oct/13/1837	50 ton of blue clay for Swilinton Bridge on			
	account of Reed and Taylor ferrey bridge			
	pottery freight	8	0	0
March/19/1838	Hull George Shaw and Gillet 320 deals for			
	Rotherham and 2392 of iron freight	11	10	0
Feb/12/1840	Driffield 24 ton of Railway Sleepers delivered			
	to Craven and Sons Fairburn freight	11	0	0
1843, Hull, Sept. the 31	James Taylor 3 ton of blue slate and 80 bundels of			
lats	Wosbro freight	£2	18	0
1844/Dec/17	Wosbro Park hard coles 63.10 tons delivered			
	into the Bety at Riga freight clear of all			
	dues	13	0	0

Such is a selection of cargoes and freights. There is a large selection of Chandler's and Shipyard's charges:- they commence in 1835 but there do not seem to be many recorded until 1845.

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

Sept. the 4. 1835

	£	s.	d.
Water cask	10	0	
Top Sale	4	2	0
Topmast yard 3 blocks and 2 sheets	18	4	
8 ded eyes and tea pot	6	6	
Flour and milk can	3	0	
Coffee Can and Canester	2	6	
Sugar Can and Bred barge	2	6	
Sospan and steamer	4	9	
Iron Sospan	1	6	
puddin tin and hard kit (?)	2	6	
Gun	1	10	
0			
Tea Caddy			
10			
Watch	4	4	
0			
fat tin			1
0			
Steamer tin			1
0			
puddin stand			
6			
Wash-and bowl	2	0	
New Lee boards	6	9	
8			

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

2 blocks	...	...	...	...	...	3	
9							
Candl stick	...	...	...	...	...	2	3
Ladle	...	...	...	...	...	2	6
Lock	...	...	...	...	...	1	0
2 clamps	...	...	...	...	...		7
0							
2 fiddle blocks	...	...	...	...	...		9
0							
Mexbro 1845	for a new boat lanchd 27 Nov				...	9	0
0							
Nov/18/1845	A new Auser 40 fathams long 48S a hundred weight	...	...	...	...	3	7
4							
Dec/29/1845	A cut line length 37 fathams				...	1	4
11							
Jan/31/1846	4 new lanyards 5 pence farthing a pound Weight 13 pound			...	...		5
8½							
March/20/1846	A new wede brush	...	...			1	0
April/2/1846	11 foot 2 inch deal at 7d.			...		6	5
	Beney Worford ¾ day at 3/6	...					<u>2</u>
<u>7½</u>							
						9	0
Mear Made lanchd	April/23/1846						
March/10/1846	Marling 6½	...	...	...		2	8
	Cordige 8½	...	...	...		3	0
1846							
	Sail halyards length 15½			...		6	11
	Topsale Sheets 13½			...		4	10
13/May/1846							
	A new stay fall 53 yards	...	...			16	9
23/May/1846	New Mainsle 140¼ yards			...	10	16	2
	2 Sets of Reef points	...	...			7	0
	Coper thimbles 3:6 10:6			...			
	6 Burling thimbls	...	...			<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

23/July/1846	Sail Halyards	8	6
Jan/1/1847	A pare of new Main Sheets ...		16
10½			

Notes on the Sale of the ‘Sarah and Martha’
 Sold for £140 and £35 for materials on
 board

The Sarah and Martha and Mr. Benson
 ... £140

For the Bachelor and the Bachelor for the
 Exchange £220

The total Sum £535

Settled May/1/1844

Sale of the Exchange

From one purchaser £170

on Jan/29/1848

and from another £57

on Jan/31/1848

Notes and Memoranda on General Topics.

October/25/1845 – Rotton Tatos hall over thee
 world.

1846 – A large fall of snow on 19.20 March.

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

Feb/28/1853 Doncaster Old Church Burnt down.
Cause not nown.

A large flood in April/13/1846 Havin gon Korks
Green and Sykehouse with a boat. 1 foot and
half water in John Parish house Stainforth.

At Aradsley Oak Colliery Lives lost 73 by the
fire damp on 5th March 1847.

Feb/14/1849 Livs lost by the Fire Damp 75 at
Darley Main Colliery

Wospro Dale.

December 1857 Lives lost by the fire damp 50
and 15 wounded at Kilnhust coal pit.

Sparow heads sold in April for a peney a
piece.

(This refers to payment by Parish Officers for
vermin destroyed).

Length of mast for a keel sayl. eight yards.

Topsal sheets. length 29 yards.

Sayle Alyards length 16 fathoms.

A keel main yard length 28 feet.

A keel topsale yard ... 26½ feet

Stay fall length 53 yards

Notes are also given of the cost of a tombstone –
presumably in 1850.

May 16 Bricks 2 0

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

Lime and Labour	...	...	2	9	
Lounce (? allowance)	...	...	1	6	
Clamps	...	...	1	0	
For the stone goin into the Churchyard			1	0	0
Top stone and sides	...	...	<u>5</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>
Total Sum			<u>£6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>7</u>

Two Humber Keels and their Captains

Published by Thorne Local History Society
Supported by Thorne Moorends Regeneration Partnership
2014