The River Trade of Gainsborough

1500 - 1850

I. S. BECKWITH

THE MIDDLE AGES

There are scattered indications that Gainsborough was a small river port in the Middle Ages. In 1298 the bailiffs of Gainsborough received a grant of quayage for three years to build a quay against the inundations of the Trent. Ten years later the bailiffs were allowed a grant of pavage on all goods brought for sale in the town. Gainsborough was named in 1322 as one of the ports to supply the King with corn, and in 1333 the keeper of the port of Gainsborough was among the port keepers ordered to prevent John de Stratford leaving the country. In 1341 the bailiffs of Gainsborough were told to make "diligent scrutiny of all who come to that port for passage" and to detain any they suspected of being French spies. In 1401 Gainsborough, with Nottingham and Newark, was requested to build a barge for the King's service. Three years later a ship called 'la James' of Gainsborough, John de Barrowe master, was damaged in a storm. According to an inquisition of Torksey in Henry III's reign through and over-through tolls were due to the Lord of Torksey along the River Trent between 'Hameldod' (between Newton-on-Trent and Clifton) and Susworth, Kinnards (Owston) Ferry, and Butterwick. No goods from Gainsborough were to be landed anywhere before Torksey. This seems to suggest that Gainsborough was an out-port dependent on Torksey.

SEVENTEENTH TO NINETEENTH CENTURIES

The decay of Torksey in the fifteenth century was doubtless therefore a factor in the growth of Gainsborough as an inland port. By the time that John Leland saw Torksey in the mid 16th Century he could write that ships which had once gone to Torksey now went to Gainsborough. Further evidence that Gainsborough's trade was on the increase in the sixteenth century is provided by two petitions of the merchants of Hull in 1586 and 1596 stating that their trade was being ruined because London merchants and others had factors at Gainsborough to whom they sent foreign goods to be sold. A Star Chamber order that all merchants operating in the coastal trade of the north east were to be admitted into the incorporation of Hull does not seem to have deterred the growth of Gainsborough during the
THE RIVER TRADE OF GAINSBOROUGH

17th and 18th centuries as a centre of collection and distribution in the region.² Goods from the up-river industries were transferred at this point to sea-going vessels for export to the London market or overseas wares from down-stream were transhipped here into shallow-draught boats for carriage into the upper reaches of the Trent to supply the requirements of the industrial areas of the neighbouring counties.³ While it did not have Torksey's advantageous position at the junction of the Foss Dyke and the River Trent, Gainsborough's site was not unfavourable to the development of a port there. The town stands on an island of blown sand on the flood plains of the Trent, thirty miles above its confluence with the Humber, and, in the period of this study, at the navigable limit for sea-going vessels. In 1724 Daniel Defoe stated that ships of two hundred tons burden got up as far as Stockwith but that large ships had to load and unload at Burton Stather a few miles down river. It seems reasonable to assume that there was insufficient water for vessels of more than eighty tons burden to come up to Gainsborough. The river at Gainsborough Bridge is about 180 feet wide, although before Jessop's work on it in 1783 it may have been wider.

Although the channel of the Trent was improved between Wilden Ferry and Burton at the end of the seventeenth century, trade below Nottingham must have been somewhat intermittent since the river here was liable to shallows, obstructions, variations in course, and an inadequate haling path.⁷ At Torksey lock the river was said to be 1½" feet deep in dry seasons. The construction of several canals which opened into the Trent stimulated various attempts to improve the river channel between Gainsborough and Nottingham, beginning in the 1770's and culminating in William Jessop's operations between 1783 and 1794, giving a depth of four feet of water in the river above Gainsborough, the depth, incidentally which had been regarded as necessary for the Wollaton coal lighters nearly two hundred years before.⁸ These improvements brought Gainsborough into communication with many of the growing industrial towns by means of an extensive network of waterways. The occurrence, among the occupations mentioned in the parish registers for 1778, of a tide-waiter, stationed at Gainsborough (though still subordinate to Hull), is an indication of the likelihood that the volume of shipping in and out of the town at this time was thought sufficient to merit official supervision on the spot. Gainsborough was the point at which the products from the rising industries of the Midlands met the incoming raw materials from the Baltic countries and parts of the British Isles. Its situation at the junction of an agricultural and an industrial area meant that Gainsborough developed as a centre from which London wares and local produce were distributed within the region or shipped to London or overseas.

One of the most important items carried by river to Gainsborough was coal from Nottinghamshire pits. At the end of the 16th Century the Willoughby family, owners of coal mines at Wollaton on the outskirts of Nottingham, had warehouses and a staff of servants at Gainsborough.⁹ A statement of the charges, receipts, and delivery of coal at Wollaton from October 1597 to October 1598 gives receipts from Gainsborough of one pound three shillings.¹⁰ The cost of the carriage of coal from Nottingham to Gainsborough was three shillings a ton. From Gainsborough the coal was distributed to the neighbouring villages. When, in 1695, Sir Percival Willoughby tried to break into the Newcastle colliers' monopoly of the London coal trade Gainsborough was the point at which the Wollaton coal was to be transhipped from Willoughby's lighters to keels for shipment down to Hull.¹¹ Although the Willoughby bid for the London coal market was a failure, coal continued to be sent down river to Gainsborough. In 1740 a duty of one shilling on each chaldron and eightpence on each ton of coal delivered in the town was imposed under the act of Parliament as a means of raising the money required for the rebuilding of the parish church.¹² Gainsborough featured in another Willoughby project to produce glass in 1615. The virtue of river transport at this time was its cheapness, as the estimate of seven shillings and sixpence for the water carriage per ton of glass to Hull compared with the four shillings for the short overland haul from Wollaton to Nottingham Bridges shows. On this occasion it was said
"The convenience for carriages by water is much to further the sale at an easier rate to manie market towns viz: Southwell, Newark, Grantham, Lincoln, Boston, Torkesall, Retford, Gainsborough cum multis aliis." 13

Gainsborough served a similar function for the products of another seventeenth century gentleman entrepreneur, the Derbyshire ironmaster, Sir George Stilwell. In 1663 iron goods from his forges in Derbyshire were being sent via his agent at Bawtry to Gainsborough and thence to Hull.14

Considerable information about Gainsborough’s trade is provided by those Hull Port Books covering the coastal trade which survive for the eighteenth century.

By far the largest single item carried was lead. In the six months from 29th December 1704 to 22nd June 1705 Stockwith and Gainsborough ships between them carried nearly 6,000 pigs of lead, plus 276 pieces and 785 fodders (about 823 tons). Of this amount Gainsborough handled about a quarter. Of 55 tons of iron shipped from the two ports over the same period, Gainsborough ships dealt with 23 tons. Thus far it seems that Stockwith handled a larger share of the river trade than Gainsborough. However, ships clearing outwards from Gainsborough accounted for twice the amount of timber (70 tons) carried by Stockwith vessels. These account for some of the more significant items in the cargoes of ships outward from Gainsborough and its sister port of Stockwith, but the contents of their holds reflected the entire range of the industrial activity of Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, and South Yorkshire. The cargo carried by the ‘Content’ of Stockwith, bound for Yarmouth indicates the character of this traffic. She had on board lead, millstones, nails, iron-mongers wares, bellows, scythe-stones, pattin irons, saws, iron shovels, English iron, English earthenware, English canvas, English linen and woollen yarn. Thus in one ship’s hold was contained a cross-section of the products of most of the North Midlands industries, destined for the millers, smiths, and weavers of East Anglia.

Besides these industrial goods there was a large export trade by river in local agricultural produce. The Hull Port Books show that in the first six months of 1704/5, for example 90 tons of cheese were shipped from both Gainsborough and Stockwith, the average tonnage carried in Gainsborough bottoms being five compared with Stockwith’s three or four. Twenty years later Defoe reckoned that about 4,000 tons of cheese went down-river to Gainsborough in a year. In the same six months period from 29th December 1704 to 22nd June 1705 Gainsborough ships carried over 350 quarters of malt, an average of about 72 quarters per vessel. At the same time about 3,750 quarters were shipped in Stockwith vessels, an average of 163 quarters per vessel. On the other hand Gainsborough, during the same period, seems to have had a bigger share in grain shipments. Gainsborough ships carrying an average of 176 quarters compared with Stockwith’s average of 46 quarters. Oats comprised the largest part of the grain shipments from the two ports, wheat amounting to about 6% of the total of grain shipped in the case of Gainsborough.

By far the largest number of sailings outwards were of ships bound for London. Thus of 98 ships cleared outwards through the Hull customs from Stockwith and Gainsborough in the period between 26th June 1704 and 22nd June 1705, 82 were bound for London. Of these Gainsborough accounted for 21. The rest were evenly divided between Lynn, Yarmouth, Chatham, Newcastle and Sunderland. Most sailings occurred in the months between February and October.15

The eighteenth century saw the growth of the great brewing firms of Burton-on-Trent, exporting ale to Russia and the Baltic. The casks of ale were taken by local carriers by barge to Gainsborough, where they were trans-shipped into schooners and carried down-river to Hull. However, as brewing could not begin until November when the harvest was fully in, this tended to be a seasonal trade, catering for ships clearing from Hull in the spring.16 According to Deering, the regular down-river trade of Nottingham in the 18th century consisted of coals, lead, timber, corn, wool, potters’ ware and cheese from Staffordshire, Cheshire and Warwickshire.
THE RIVER TRADE OF GAINSBOROUGH

During the Napoleonic War three hundred tons of ammunition of various sorts passed through the port each week, mainly from the Butterley works in Derbyshire. In 1815, after the same firm had cast the Vauxhall Bridge, it was shipped at Gainsborough for London in twenty-seven vessels.17 Precise figures of the commodities cleared outwards from Gainsborough exist for the first three months of 1799 and the last three of 1816 only.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Jan. 1 to Mar. 30 1799</th>
<th>Oct. 1 to Dec. 31 1816</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plaster</td>
<td>40 tons</td>
<td>407 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nails</td>
<td>1316 bags</td>
<td>1370 bags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pig, bar, sheet, cast iron</td>
<td>557½ tons</td>
<td>1426 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ale</td>
<td>1075 galls</td>
<td>6153 galls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>325 tons</td>
<td>397 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oats</td>
<td>1000 qtrs.</td>
<td>2971 qtrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>9640 bushels</td>
<td>16156 bushels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earthenware</td>
<td>2666 crates &amp; 83 H'nds</td>
<td>516 crates &amp; 54 H'nds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shot</td>
<td>106½ tons</td>
<td>518 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flour</td>
<td>70 sacks</td>
<td>1350 qtrs. of wheat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Lead</td>
<td>200 tons</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These figures suggest that in spite of the construction of the Grand Junction Canal in 1793 to provide a more direct link between the midland canal system and London and in spite of the end of the wartime boom in 1815, the effects of which had begun to be felt by the end of 1816, an actual increase in Gainsborough's trade was taking place over these seventeen years.18 The details of ships employed outwards annually from Gainsborough over the same period, from 1799 to 1816 show a decline co-inciding with the end of the war against France, although it is noticeable that the figure for 1816 is still above the pre-war level. By 1820, however, the number of ships recorded as having sailed from Gainsborough during the previous year had risen to 277, and this recovery continued to 1827.19 In 1817 it was stated that the combined tonnage of the shipping employed on the Trent and the network of waterways connected with it amounted to 60,000. Of this 21 sloops were said to be employed between Gainsborough and Hull, which were reckoned, in 1817, to have made about 300 voyages in the previous year. 800 keels were said to be employed between Gainsborough, Lincoln, and Boston, mainly carrying coal. Besides these, 60 ketches were calculated to be navigating the river between Gainsborough, Nottingham, and Shardlow. Nearly thirty years later there were said to be about a hundred vessels navigating the river above Gainsborough, carrying down iron, and earthenware from Staffordshire, Cheshire salt, clay from Stourbridge, nails and hardware from the Black Country, cheese, lead, colours, and wool from Derbyshire, Leicestershire, and Nottinghamshire. In 1794 it was said that three hundred coaling vessels loaded or delivered at Gainsborough in the course of a year.20
I. S. BECKWITH

Gainsborough also began to acquire importance in the early seventeenth century as a port of entry for raw materials and “London wares” supplying the needs of the industrial towns further up the river. As has been seen, even in the sixteenth century the Hull merchants had complained that London merchants had their factors or agents at Gainsborough. In 1604 the Lord of the Manor of Gainsborough, Sir William Hickman, agreed with various citizens of London to provide convenient shops and standings for the Londoners, and to prepare places for storage of wares and to arrange for the carriage of them from the waterside. Thirty two years later sixty merchants complained that their ships, loaded with goods from London for the fairs at Stourbridge, Howden, and Gainsborough, had been forcibly detained at Gravesend. An indication of the volume of London wares coming into the town at this time is provided by another complaint, also in 1636, by a group of London merchants that the three days of Gainsborough Fair were insufficient time to transact all their business. As a result the then Lord of the Manor, Willoughby Hickman, was allowed to extend the duration of the existing fair to nine days, and was granted an additional fair, also of nine days.21

When these cargoes reached Gainsborough they were trans-shipped into the barges which had brought goods down the river. According to a writer in the mid-eighteenth century:

“Nottingham shopkeepers until the last sixty years did not go long journeys but depended upon the Martinmas fair at Lenton where they bought Mercers, Drapers, and Grocers wares brought thither by Londoners and others.”22

In 1606 one of the boatmasters under contract to the Wollaton pits had stated that he had taken a boat to Gainsborough loaded with coal and had returned with London goods for the Lenton fair just outside Nottingham.23 At the end of the seventeenth century a witness in a lawsuit between the Lord of the Manor of Gainsborough and a London merchant described the trade of Gainsborough:

“... about fifty years agoe this Deponent himselfe was employed to carry up to Notting- in small Boats Griff deals wine grossaries Pitch tarr flax iron salt shalis caly sande & severell other sorts of goods, some wherefoe have been purchased out of Vessels brought up the said River to Gainsburgh & others thereof have been unloaded out of such Vessels into lesser boats and this deponent was also employed in bringing back from Nott to Gainsburgh Cheese Lead Nails & severall other sorts of goods ...”24

The goods coming up river to Gainsborough included raw materials for the Midlands industrial areas. In 1640 the millers and fullers of Nottinghamshire were allowed to import forty chaldrons of wet fullers’ earth from Rochester and Gainsborough. The Hull Port Books show that fullers’ earth was an important item in the cargoes of ships going up-river to Gainsborough at the beginning of the eighteenth century. However, the largest item in the cargoes of ships returning from London were groceries and luxury goods. One such ship, the ‘Henrietta’ of Gainsborough, homeward bound from London on the 28th February 1705, carried in her hold Madeira and Port Wine, tobacco, soap, oil, paper, hops, vinegar, earthenware, dressed sheepskins, oilmen’s wares, lead seals, white wine, Canary, Brandy, spirits, lead shot, saltery, haberdashery, ironmongers’ ware, blue linen, currants, sugar, grocery, flour and cider.25

In the eighteenth century the up-river cargoes still included the traditional ‘London wares’, such as groceries. In 1751 Deering stated that Nottingham was supplied by river with grocers’ goods, oils, wines, hops, bar iron, block tin, pitch, tar, hemp, flax, deals, Norway oak, and foreign wood.26 Occasionally there was an unusual cargo, such as the bells for St. Peter’s Church, Nottingham, which were shipped up the Trent via Gainsborough in 1771.27 There were certain innovations as a result of the industrial developments in the up-river counties. Cotton for the mills belonging to the famous firm of Strutt at Milford in Derbyshire came up from London by sea to Gainsborough where it was transferred to barges for carriage to Derby.28 Owing to the absence of details before 1838 it is not easy to obtain a precise picture
THE RIVER TRADE OF GAINSBOROUGH

of the quantities of imports handled by Gainsborough at this time. However, the figures for ships entered inwards over the period of seventeen years, from 1799 to 1816, show that, as with the ships cleared outwards over the same period, there was an increase during the war years, followed by a sharp fall after 1815. Here again, by 1820 there had been a recovery amounting almost to the war-time peak.26

The years after 1820 constitute the heyday of Gainsborough's shipping industry. The recovery after the brief post-war depression continued, with slight interruption until the mid-forties, stimulated by industrial building and the beginning of railway construction, for which the Trent, somewhat ironically, provided the means of transporting the large quantities of materials required.26 In 1834 it was estimated that 30,000 tons of coal, lime and stone were brought into the town for sale or consumption annually, and a further 50,000 tons of these commodities passed the town by river in a year. Besides the building materials and fuel of industrial growth, a further 158,000 tons of goods of other sorts were said to be transhipped at Gainsborough in the course of a year. Two years later it was estimated that about 4,000 tons of goods passed through Gainsborough in transit weekly.21

In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries Gainsborough's trade, as we have already seen, had been largely coastal. There is evidence of only two Gainsborough ships passing the Sound into the Baltic between 1497 and 1783, one in 1725 and one in 1745.22 By the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, foreign trade had begun to figure more in the business of the port. About 60,000 tons of the 158,000 tons of goods reckoned to pass through Gainsborough annually in 1834 were imports of foreign goods and British goods for export. Sailings to and from European ports began to appear from time to time in the details of Gains-

shipping published in such local papers as the 'Stamford Mercury'.23 Indeed the publication of shipping news in various provincial papers (as far afield as the 'Staffordshire Advertiser') is itself a sign of the growing importance of Gainsborough as an inland port, serving an increasingly wide area. However, foreign trade did not really become prominent until after the town had obtained the status of a port in 1840 and ships could sail direct to Gainsborough instead of having to tranship their cargoes at Hull. Even in May 1844 the 'Boston, Stamford, and Lincolnshire Herald' reported only one arrival from Rostock (of wheat) compared with five sailings from Gainsborough for Newcastle, London, Lynn and Sunderland.

THE PORT OF GAINSBOROUGH

Until 1840, when the town obtained recognition as a separate port authority, ships in and out of Gainsborough had to receive clearance from the Customs at Hull. By the end of the seventeenth century, however, it seems that the merchants of Gainsborough felt sufficiently confident to assert, albeit unsuccessfully, their independence of the Hull authorities. In 1682 the ships masters of Gainsborough petitioned the Commissioners of the Customs to establish a customs office at Stockwith, on the grounds that, whereas at one time they had only been required to give security to the Customs at Hull for goods, they had lately been compelled to unload and reload before they could get clearance for cargoes,

"which is not only a loss of time but often hazardous both of shippe and goods especially come for yet of late the officers causd a vessell laden with maull to unship into lighters in Bad weather and lost by their so doing Eight Quarters of Mault."

A parallel petition from the Stockwith masters suggests that the Hull Customs Officers may have had some cause for adopting a more rigorous attitude towards the Gainsborough and Stockwith merchants. According to the Stockwith petition,

"of late in Apriall last a marriner who had cleared at Hull and was to come upp the River; two Hull men spok to him to stay one night in their roade and they would bring wine on board of him their shipp being neare hand that place; and came from France; and soe paid noe custome for that wine."
To do the Stockwith merchants justice they did point out that if a Customs office was established at Stockwith it would help to avoid the loss of duty on goods shipped up the Trent at night without calling at Hull. However, besides providing a lively insight into the more nefarious side of the river trade, these petitions imply that the Gainsborough and Stockwith masters were finding their dependence on Hull's goodwill an impediment to their growing business. It may well be that Hull was trying to insist on its monopoly of the east coast trade which had been granted in 1598.

The increased traffic on the Trent at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, not surprisingly, encouraged further attempts to secure the recognition of Gainsborough as a separate port authority. Not only did the merchant body feel itself inconveniently by the necessity of submitting to Customs examination at Hull, but the increase of shipping in the Humber and its approaches made the port of Hull very crowded and gave rise to further difficulties and expense. Moreover, the Gainsborough merchants could never hope to compete with the Hull firms so long as the former were obliged to tranship all European goods from foreign vessels to river craft, with the attendant delays and additional costs. The campaign for port status owed a good deal to pressure from the oil cake milling industry. In 1841, when the town was recognised as a port, it was estimated that

"The immediate effect of this measure (the constitution of the port of Gainsborough) upon the port of Hull will be that upwards of 50,000 quarters of the linseed and rapeseed hitherto imported into, and warehoused here, will go direct to Gainsbro'. Linseed and rapeseed cakes, timber deals, and in fact almost every description of foreign goods used in the interior of the country will pass by Hull and be landed at once fifty miles up the Trent."

The attempt to obtain port status appears to have begun in 1819 when it was said that the ship-owners and merchants of Gainsborough were trying to persuade the Lords of the Treasury to establish a branch customs house there "by which means they hope to obviate the inconvenience and detention of calling at Hull to obtain the coast dispatches". As a result a branch customs house was set up in the town in 1820. This probably stood in what are now the Co-operative Society premises in Bridge Street. At some time, presumably subsequent to this, a Port Committee composed of leading merchants was set up in order to carry on further negotiations with the Lords of the Treasury. In 1834 this again petitioned for the privilege of a port at Gainsborough, but with little result, beyond arousing a certain amount of alarm among the Hull merchants. Six years later the Gainsborough merchants took the opportunity of a bill to extend the bonding of foreign goods to inland towns to renew their petition, this time with more success. At first they simply requested that Gainsborough should be included among the places to which the right to bond should be granted. However, their deputation successfully argued before the Committee of Inquiry that the town was already to all intents and purposes a port and did not fall within the provisions of the inland warehousing bill. As a result, with the support of the Bonding Committee, an amended petition was sent up to the Lords of the Treasury. It appears that their Lordships were still reluctant to allow the petition, but after a seven months wait Gainsborough won its case. The town was constituted a port for an initial period of four years as an experimental measure, and the new port was eventually opened in January 1841. The Pilot Office was situated at Chapel Staithes. A Danish vice-consul was resident in the town in 1849. The receipt of duties for the year ending December 1841 amounted to £26,422. Over the same period twenty-nine ships were entered inwards from overseas ports, and eleven ships were cleared outwards for foreign destinations.
THE RIVER TRADE OF GAINSBOROUGH

The amount of imported goods paying duty at Gainsborough between its establishment as a port and December 1841, show a marked decline compared with the figures for 1838 and 1839.23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1838</th>
<th>1839</th>
<th>Dec. 1841</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linseed Cake</td>
<td>844 tons</td>
<td>972 tons</td>
<td>5,736 cwt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>10,978 qtrs.</td>
<td>26,231 qtrs.</td>
<td>4,803 qtrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>312 qtrs.</td>
<td>2,074 qtrs.</td>
<td>2,003 qtrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oats</td>
<td>1,205 tons</td>
<td>7,368 qtrs.</td>
<td>1,024 qtrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hemp (&amp; Flax)</td>
<td>71,011 qtrs.</td>
<td>1,229 qtrs.</td>
<td>3,781 cwt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linseed</td>
<td>1,160 tons</td>
<td>75,900 qtrs.</td>
<td>8,015 qtrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape Cake</td>
<td>74,709 tons</td>
<td>2,098 cwt.</td>
<td>230 hundred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staves (timber)</td>
<td>31 punches,</td>
<td>32 punches,</td>
<td>4,572 galls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>28 h’hd.</td>
<td>27 h’hd.</td>
<td>10,600 galls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandy</td>
<td>39 punches,</td>
<td>54 punches,</td>
<td>8,672 galls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rum</td>
<td>9 h’hd.</td>
<td>42 h’hd.</td>
<td>1,086 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wine</td>
<td>58 pipes</td>
<td>728 tons</td>
<td>19,284 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>621 tons</td>
<td>54 pipes</td>
<td>163,819 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>42 h’hd.</td>
<td>40 h’hd.</td>
<td>163,819 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco (leaf)</td>
<td>....</td>
<td>....</td>
<td>....</td>
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The optimism which had led to the moves to make Gainsborough a port had been created by the booming river trade of the years 1837 and 1839. In those years the Trent was the means of transporting the stone, lime and timber needed for the construction of stations, tunnels, and bridges. However, the year in which Gainsborough eventually became a port marked the end of this boom period. There was a fall-off in railway construction which reflected the nation-wide recession of the ‘Hungry Forties’.

In spite of one or two years of temporary recovery the trade carried by river gradually declined, as the table below shows, culminating in the closure of the port in 1881.44

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Receipts of Customs and Excise Duties</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1844</td>
</tr>
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<td>1848</td>
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<tr>
<td>1850</td>
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<tr>
<td>1854</td>
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<tr>
<td>1871</td>
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</table>

The increase of 177-2% between 1841 and 1844 was probably partially the result of the start of the second period of railway construction.

However, in spite of the fact that by 1848 work had begun on the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire, and the Great Northern lines in Gainsborough the river trade continued to
decline. The marked fall of 74.5% from 1850 to 1854 perhaps reflected the effects of railway competition on the river trade. Indeed the trade of Gainsborough suffered a sharper fall than that of the River Trent as a whole. From 1848 to 1854 the trade of the town fell by 78.4% compared with a fall of 52.4% for the trade of the Trent as a whole in the period 1847 to 1855. The number of coasters entering the port in 1853 was 171. Shipping inwards from foreign ports in the same year amounted to 43. The number cleared outwards in that year was 221 coastwise and 7 to foreign ports. In 1879 180 vessels were entered inwards with cargo and 102 in ballast. Those cleared outwards numbered 242 with cargo and 31 in ballast. Over five years 1875 to 1879 the gross receipts at the Customs House fell from £6,012 to £2,438, a fall of 59.2%.

The main factor in this decline is usually said to have been the railways. Thus in 1882 Gainsborough was described as “among those river ports which have been much injured by the railways.”

However, there are signs that this relationship between the coming of the railways and the decline of the port of Gainsborough was not straightforward cause and effect. For example, in 1861 the project for a bridge at Keadby was opposed by the Gainsborough shipping firms on the grounds that it would obstruct river traffic. Their spokesman, W. C. Furley, maintained that the trade of the port was on the increase, although this is scarcely born out by the figures already quoted. On the other hand the passenger traffic on the river was suffering from the competition of the railways. The fact that it was said, in 1862, that the Gainsborough traders had prevailed with the Company to continue the service of market boats on Tuesdays and Thursdays suggests that the United Steam Packet Company seems to have contemplated their withdrawal. Excursion trains were said to be having a detrimental effect on the United Steam Packet Company’s river excursions to Hull, Grimsby and “the German Ocean”. Another contributory factor in the decline of the trade of Gainsborough, besides the railways’ competition, was deterioration in the state of the river. Evidence given to the Royal Commission on Canals in 1906 said that the river trade was increasing but intermittent because of fluctuations in the depth of the Trent so that small boat-owners, who could not afford a large number of lighters, were being forced out of business. In 1908 it was said that only a few sea-going vessels ventured as far as Gainsborough, and larger vessels could not ascend the river because of silting. “The Officer appointed by the Board of Trade to report on the river from Gainsborough to the sea reported that it was in a deplorable condition, both in regard to navigation and its capacity for drainage.” There were wrecks in the channel below Gainsborough but no authority existed to clear them away. Above Gainsborough it was said that boatmen were often forced to dump their loads on the bank or in the river in order to lighten the boat to get clear of the shoals. One coal owner ascribed the decline in the coal trade on the river to the shoals which caused wrecks and loss of barges. Clearly, in the pre-railway age even the river channel for all its shallows was a more efficient means of transporting bulky cargoes than the roads.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, in spite of the rail freight charge of six shillings and eightpence a ton compared with a water freight charge of six shillings and threepence a ton, traders preferred the railway when time was short and the river low. Above Gainsborough the trouble was that until 1887 the Trent Navigation Company, the authority responsible for the condition of the channel, was restricted in its dredging operations to a depth of thirty inches. In 1887 its powers were extended to allow dredging to a depth of six feet. However, dredging was not sufficient and, in 1906, a bill was introduced in Parliament to allow the construction of weirs and locks to give six feet of water at all times. As a result of this Act of Parliament was introduced in the same year which permitted the construction of four locks to give six feet of water in the river all the way up to Nottingham. By then, however, both railways and waterways were beginning to feel the competition of more efficient road transport.
THE RIVER TRADE OF GAINSBOROUGH

SHIPS AND SHIYARDS

According to the petition of Gainsborough masters in 1683, there was thirty sail of shipping from thirty to eighty tons burden belonging to the town at that time. These ships, several of which are shown in prints of the town of the eighteenth century, appear to have been two-masted brigs with the familiar projecting stern cabin, lit by five windows. Besides sea-going vessels, there were river boats of two kinds using Gainsborough. Most familiar of all were the famous Humber or Yorkshire keels which were in use until this century. Single-masted square rigged vessels, designed essentially for cargo-carrying with vertical sides, blunt bows and stern, and a large hold, handled by one man and his family who lived on board, the keels were to be found on all the rivers draining into the Humber. The plans for carrying coal from the Wollaton pits to London in 1605 proposed to transfer the coal into keels for the leg of the journey down river from Gainsborough to Hull. A typical later example offered for sale in 1862 was fifty-eight feet long, fourteen feet broad, of eighty-five tons burden. The keels were used entirely on the Trent below Gainsborough. On the stretch of river between Gainsborough to Nottingham goods were carried in 'catches' or ketches. These were flat-bottomed boats drawn by men and horses. When loaded they carried about forty to fifty tons and drew some thirty to thirty-six inches of water. That some of these ketches were not covered is suggested by a complaint from Sir George Sitwell in 1663 that his agent in Bawtry had sent iron to Hull in "open catches to the great hazard of losing it." Another agent was appointed and told to send the iron in keels.

Not surprisingly the existence of a flourishing shipping industry together with easy access to supplies of timber and iron in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire led to the development of shipbuilding in Gainsborough. A boatwright is mentioned in the parish registers in 1645, and there are references to sailmakers, ships' carpenters, blockmakers, and ropemakers in subsequent registers, which indicates that some shipbuilding was carried on in the town in the eighteenth century. A shipyard is mentioned in 1733, and a picture of Gainsborough's river front, dated 1814, shows a ship on the stocks at the north end of the town. This was the yard at the end of Lord Street which, in 1843, was said to belong to Henry Smith and Son. A yard on this site was mentioned in 1769 when it was said to stand on the site of a hempyard.

Thirty years later when Arthur Young visited the town he saw a ship of seven hundred tons, costing £35,000, on the stocks in Smith's yard, and he said that Mr. Smith "builds many".

According to Thomas Miller this shipyard and the ropewalk which stood nearby were the largest industries in the town, employing the largest number of hands. Three shipyards were given in White's Directory in 1826. A firm of wharfingers, Richard Furley, had begun to build ships in 1812, and this yard was apparently on the other side of the river. Another yard belonging to Matthew and William Moody was mentioned in 1815. According to the petition seeking port status for the town in 1833 ships of seven hundred tons burden were being built in Gainsborough; ten years later Smith's yard was said to be building ships of up to ten or twelve hundred tons.

In 1844 "Merchant Smith's Ship Yard" was said to be building ships for the West India Service. At this time John Arnold was the engineer and he was stated to be using a design based on the 'Eastern Seas' "which may lead to important experiments in navigating in countries where reefs of rocks, etc. would stop all other attempts, as vessels of several tonnage might hereby be constructed which would not draw more than one third the quantity of water to traverse in."

In 1811 a brig, the 'Trent', 247 tons was launched from this yard, followed a month later by the 'Brailsford' 465 tons. In the following year the same yard launched the 700 tons 'Elizabeth'. Thomas Miller described one of these early nineteenth century riverside yards, probably Henry Smith's.
“The great ship-yard beside the river was a strange looking place to wander through; it occupied several acres of ground. . . . . . . Hundreds of huge barkless oak trees lay about, and had so lain for years, overtopped by nettles and hemlocks, and half buried in wild weeds; and among these gigantic trunks the children would play. . . . . . You wondered how they managed to build so beautiful-looking a thing as a ship out of such large unsightly-looking pieces of timber, which to glance at there seemed no possibility of ever making them fit together. Men were busy sawing here, and chopping there; and for days you could not tell what had been done to the huge skeleton that stood on the stocks . . . . until they began to plank over the ribs and then the progress seemed marvellous. Piles of planks rose here and there, which, as you looked up, caused you to wonder by what means they could have been raised to so amazing a height. On one side of the ship-yard extended a lengthy rope-walk, built of wood, and covered with tiles, and so long that you wondered wherever the building ended: over field after field it went; and while you looked through the openings you saw busy men with immense bundles of hemp rolled around their waists, walking backwards; and heard the whirling of wheels and the humming of voices. . . . . There was no date known as to the time when that ‘yard’ was first a ship-yard; for centuries the vessels had been built and launched on that spot; and there was the remains of buildings about the place that looked as if they had been erected hundreds of years. Some of the old-saw pits were overgrown with brambles, and all around there lay the wrecks of things which age only had ruined and rendered useless. . . . .”

By 1849 however, the firm seems to have been divided, Smiths and Arnolds carrying on the business of shipbuilding, while Henry Smith and Son, at Red Hall Wharf, operated the wharfinger trade. The yard appears on the first large-scale map of Gainsborough in 1851. By 1872, however, when only two shipbuilders appear to have been in business in the town Frederick William Fidell at Crowgarth had taken over Smith’s yard. Four years later he was the only shipbuilder in the town. The firm continued in operation until the eighties, being carried on by Mrs. Emma Fidell, described in 1885 as the ‘Administratrix of the late Frederick William Fidell’. It appears on the six inch Ordnance Survey map of 1883.  

These yards traditionally built sloops, brigs, keels and ‘catches’. However, by the second decade of the nineteenth century the Gainsborough shipyards were starting to build steamboats for the river trade. The introduction of paddle-steamers on the Trent was part of the attempt by the prosperous merchant establishment of the town to extend their share of the river trade in competition with Hull. The first steam boat to run on the Trent was the ‘Caledonia’, which made her maiden voyage from Hull on October 23rd, 1814. This was only two years after the first steam boat to carry passengers, Symington’s ‘Comet’, was launched on the Clyde, and one year before the commencement of a passenger-carrying paddle-steamer service between London and Gravesend. In 1815 Gainsborough shipyards followed suit with a steam-packet called the ‘John Bull’, launched from Matthew and William Moody’s yard in June to commence a regular service to Hull. This was followed, seven months later, by another steam-packet, the ‘British Queen’, built by Henry Smith’s yard, which also began a regular run to Hull. In July 1815 Smith launched a steam tug, the ‘Maria’, which made it possible to bring ships up the river against the ebb tide and a contrary wind. One of the immediate effects of the appearance of paddle-steamers on the river was an increase in passenger traffic. Previously sailing packets had regularly made the trip from Gainsborough to Hull, taking from three to seven days on the voyage. The steamboats cut the journey to five hours, and were indeed capable at times of what seemed in those days to be prodigious turns of speed. In 1822 the ‘British Queen’ left Gainsborough for Hull at nine o’clock in the morning, discharged her cargo, and was back in Gainsborough by seven in the evening; a round trip of a hundred and twelve miles in under twelve hours, including stops
THE RIVER TRADE OF GAINSBOROUGH

at all the ferry places. In 1826 there were five steam-packets which took it in turns to run a daily service to Hull, leaving Gainsborough from one or other of the wharves at nine in the morning and returning from Hull, so it was claimed, three hours before high water. In addition to these packets which seem to have carried in the main passengers and parcels, there were also two steam tugs, which, in addition to towing sailing-ships up river, carried goods to Hull. Another steam-packet, the 'Robin Hood', carried passengers and goods to Newark and Nottingham on Tuesdays and Fridays, returning to Gainsborough on Mondays and Thursdays. By the thirties of the nineteenth century steam packets were apparently running between Gainsborough and London, doing the journey in a day and a half for a fare of four and ninepence. At some point between the first appearance of steamers on the river and 1820 the Gainsborough United Steam Packet Company was founded, which seems at first to have operated two boats the 'British Queen' and the 'Albion'. Unfortunately documentary trace of this company seems to have disappeared. Shares in its steam packets were advertised for sale in 1818 when the Company was said to be clearing on an average forty or fifty per cent. By 1839, when three one hundred and seventy second shares were put up for auction, the Gainsborough United Steam Packet Company had a fleet of five steamers. In 1841 the River Trent Steam Packet Company was set up to trade between Nottingham, Gainsborough and Hull, using iron instead of wooden ships. This company started off with a capital of £15,000 in 3,000 five pound shares. Its headquarters were in Nottingham. There was intense competition between the owners of the steam tugs and packets, with prices being slashed to a minimum. In August 1818 it was announced that passengers were being carried from Gainsborough to Hull for only sixpence as a result of this price war.

Evidence of the appearance of the early steamers is scanty and must be mainly sought in advertisements. The first steamer on the Trent, the 'Caledonia', was built at Dundee. She was very small, having a sixty-five foot keel, and a beam of thirteen feet, and drew only three and a half feet when loaded. The 'Albion', built by Smith's yard early in 1816, was seventy-two feet in length, thirteen feet nine inches in breadth, six feet in height and drew less than four feet of water. She was powered by a twenty horse power engine. An advertisement for the 'Eagles' in 1826 stated that she was two years old, seventy-two feet long, with a beam of sixteen and a half feet, and was driven by a twenty-eight horse power engine. A later example, rebuilt by Furlay's in 1836, was schooner-rigged with two boilers, a 33 inch cylinder and a stroke of three feet six inches. Her wheels were each twelve feet in diameter. She drew four feet of water when loaded and carried a cargo of seventy tons on the river. Her length was eighty-two feet and her beam seventeen feet. Illustrations of these earliest steam boats are little more than conventional but they show that they were equipped with a tall smoke stack, were steered by a tiller, and had lines not unlike those of a lugger. Advertisements refer to cabins fore and aft, but the illustrations show that passengers and parcels were also carried on deck. Explosions were frequent in the early days of the paddle steamers, and many of the steam proprietors died with each other in adopting safety valves. In spite of these hazards however, the new paddle-steamers were highly successful. In June 1837 it was stated that "Gainsborough Town's market has for many years been much neglected, for want of a steam packet to bring country people, residing on the Trent to sell their produce. Application has been made to the proprietors of the Gainsborough Packets, that they would furnish a steamer for the purpose, to which they have acceded; hitherto, owing to the steamers leaving Gainsborough early every morning at a stated time, the inhabitants have taken the advantage of going to Hull to buy and sell—thus the steamers have acted most disadvantageously to the trade of the town—As a steamer will now bring all up from Keadby for a trifling charge and take them back again after market, there is no doubt that it will prove a considerable acquisition."
The possibility of accomplishing the round trip in one day also created the seaside day excursion by steam packet in the summer months to such resorts as Scarborough and Cleethorpes, advertisements for which appear in the local press at holiday times in the 1860's.

MASTERS AND MERCHANTS

The Hull Port Books are useful for giving the names of Gainsborough vessels and their masters. In April 1704 a Richard Furley was named as master of the 'Lilley' bound for London. Robert Gleedell, master of the 'Speedwell', also bound for London, was mentioned in the same month. (Furleys and Gleedells still figure prominently in the river trade of Gainsborough). They are all described simply as masters and there is no indication as to whether they were the sole or part owners of their vessels and cargoes. It would appear that a number of people might have shares in a vessel. An inhabitant of West Butterwick, on the other side of the river was said in 1674 to have "the Eighte of a vessell called by the name of the "Advise", valued at £38, and the "Sixteenth part of a vessell that Willm. Barker is now master of", valued at £12. Robert Hoyser of Gainsborough had £118 invested in vessels when he died in 1678, and Jane Stawley, a Gainsborough widow who died in the same year, owned part of an old keel, worth £5.64 It seems that, at least in some cases, a vessel might trade from both Gainsborough and West Stockwith. The details of the shipping owned by the respective ports in the petition of 1682 are identical, while on a number of occasions the Hull Port Books show a ship sailing from Gainsborough one month and from Stockwith the next.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century there were several important family firms in the town, some of which had been involved in the river trade since the middle of the previous century. Their business operations in some cases covered several branches of the river trade. Some of them certainly became powerful as a result of the growth of the river trade in the war years 1793 to 1815. In 1784 only four firms are named as wharflingers in the town. Ten years later the number had increased to nine.65 As has been seen, Richard Furley, master of the ship 'Lilley' of Gainsborough, appeared in the Hull Port Books in 1704. Some time before 1784, when the firm is mentioned in Bailey's British Directory, a William Furley (1749-1800) went into partnership with a wharfinger called John Goodger in the trans-shipment of goods by water. In 1812 William's son, Richard Furley, added ship building to the family business of carriers of goods by water, although the shipbuilding side seems to have been kept separate from the wharfinger's trade which continued to be carried on under the name of Goodger and Furley. Pigot's Directory of 1828-9 described Richard Furley and his brother William as glass and lead merchants, ship-builders, ropemakers, shipowners, and wharfingers. In addition to the ships he owned Richard Furley appears to have had shares also in several others at one time or another. White's Directory of 1826 showed weekly sailings from Goodger and Furley's wharf in Bridge Street to London, Shields, Sunderland, Sheffield, Rotherham and Doncaster, Lynn, Colchester, Ipswich, Yarmouth and Norwich. Every three days there were sailings to York, Leeds, Wakefield, while there were daily boats to Hull, Newark, Grantham, Nottingham, and the other towns along the Trent, as well as to the important canal junctions like Stourport, Birmingham and Manchester. By 1840 Furleys appear to have had their own wharf at King's Lynn.

In 1826 one of Furley's strongest competitors was Robert Flower, whose family had been operating as wharfingers in the town since the middle of the eighteenth century. The parish registers mention a Freeman Flower in 1746. In 1761 he sold his warehouse and business premises in Caskgate Street, Gainsborough, to John Coates.66 Ten years later a Robert Flower appears in the parish registers, described as a wharfinger. He died in 1807 and the
THE RIVER TRADE OF GAINSBOROUGH

business was carried on by his eldest and only surviving son, also Robert who was born in 1773. He was given in the 1828 directory as a ship owner, wharfinger, and glass and lead merchant. The directory described his premises as being in Lord Street, but according to his will, made in 1830, the year of his death, he had a house, warehouse, and wharf in Caskgate Street. His only child was a daughter and the business appears to have been ultimately taken over by another important and old-established Gainsborough shipping firm, that of Henry Smith. In the 1828 directory Henry Smith appeared as a shipbuilder and wharfinger but he must have done well out of the river. White's 1842 Directory named him a Freeman of the Russia Company, Subcommissioner of the Pilot Office, a bonded timberyard keeper, ship and boat builder, ropemaker, wharfinger and shipowner. Like the Furleys and the Flowers, Smiths had a long connection with the river trade of the town. A John Smith appeared in the mid-eighteenth century as the Gainsborough agent of the big Burton brewer Benjamin Wilson. Henry Smith was probably the son by his second marriage of John Smith, 'wharfinger', who died in 1811 at the age of fifty-eight.64

In 1808 Henry Smith married Rachel, the daughter of another important Gainsborough wharfinger William Etherington, whose premises on Chapel Staithe Henry Smith ultimately took over. Bailey's British Directory described William Etherington in 1784 as a 'merchant and druggist'. At this date he appears to have been in partnership with Robert Etherington his elder brother. Ten years later the Universal British Directory calls him simply a merchant. He was described by Mozley as

"...the largest merchant in the town; (he) had an immense warehouse for the reception of all kinds of foreign produce, extending from the chief street to the river just above Chapel Staithe."65

Two other firms whose business interests seem to have extended themselves as a result of the increase in the river trade were J. W. Pashley and William Sharp, both described in 1842 as Freemen of the Russia Company. Pashley appeared in White's Directory in 1826 as wine and spirit merchant, but by 1849 he had added to this the post of Danish vice-consul, and was an agent of the Custom House, as well as a bonded warehouse keeper. William Sharp was simply a ruff and timber merchant in 1826. Sixteen years later he was given in the directory as Subcommissioner of the Pilot Office, seed-crusher and oil merchant, keeper of a bonded timber yard, shopkeeper and a timber and ruff merchant.66

WAREHOUSES AND WHARVES

The earliest reference to the existence in Gainsborough of warehouses connected with the river trade is in 1605 when the Nottinghamshire collier Sir Percival Willoughby was said to have "warehouse and sarventes" there. Warehouses are shown along the river bank in both John Hibert's and George Vertue's prints of Gainsborough in the mid-eighteenth century, and according to a witness in a lawsuit in 1769

"Many private Wharfs and Warchouses (have been) built at great Expense since the Increase of Trade there — of very great Extent which are commonly used for landing corn & absolutely necessary for carrying on the Trade there."67

Some early warehouses and maltings still survive in Bridge Street and Caskgate Street. Number 54 Bridge Street, belonging to Messrs. W. Gleadell, was originally a maltings but is now used as a warehouse. Its date has been put at about 1750. It is brick-built, with pantiled roof and a frontage of 42 feet onto the street on the east. It runs back to the river for a distance of 60 feet. Another warehouse in Caskgate Street, belonging to the Gainsborough Co-op erative Society carried a date stone of 1787 over a window, but the deeds show that a warehouse stood on this site in 1761.

16
The various prints of the town in the eighteenth century indicate that, at this time, the ‘pool’ of Gainsborough lay at the northern end of the town at the ‘Lord’s Staith’. At the western end of Lord Street. In 1838 it was stated that ships drawing twelve feet of water could come in on one tide, and that there was mooring room for 150 vessels of this size. The ‘Lord’s Staith’ was one of several ‘common’ staithes in the town. Goods landed at these staithes paid toll to the lord of the manor. However, goods for the use of the burgesses of the town did not have to pay toll in consideration of the payment of a burgh rent and the performance of suit and service at the court leet. Until the later part of the eighteenth century the repair of the ‘Lord’s Staith’ was the responsibility of the lord himself. Accordingly to a statement in 1694 the ‘Lord’s Staith’ was originally built of wood but about forty years prior to that date the wooden staith was taken up and a stone staith built in the same place by Sir William Hickman. In 1663 George Wharton was allowed thirteen shillings and threepence in part payment of money disbursed by him when he was constable for the repair of the Lord’s Staith. In the same year five shillings and tenpence was paid out for stones for the town’s use at the Lord’s Staith. By the fifties of the eighteenth century the southern end of the Lord’s Staith had been enclosed with a paling fence and was let to various successive merchants. The lord continued to take toll on goods landed in the northern part, although he was accused of neglecting to repair his part of the staith. In fact it seems to have reverted to natural shore by this time and merchants claimed that this was grounds for refusing to pay toll. Goods were landed from the river boats by being rolled along ‘gantrees’ or carried by labourers along planks laid between the vessels and the shore. The boats were fastened to the shore by grappling irons.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century a number of merchants had begun to develop the Nottinghamshire bank of the river, no doubt as a result of the pressure on waterfront space on the eastern bank, although the desire to avoid payment of toll to the Lord of the manor may have been another contributory factor in this. This new development must have received additional impetus from the construction of the Bridge to replace the ferry, and the turnpiking of the road to Retford, which brought Gainsborough into more direct communication with the countryside on the west side of the river. This area lay partly in Saxondy parish, on Lord Middleton’s land, and partly in Beckingham parish. White’s Nottinghamshire Directory of 1833 stated that Trent Port

“on the West Bank of the Trent opposite to Gainsboro’ . . . contains a good inn, two large shipyards, an oil mill and several wharfs, warehouses etc.”

One wharfinger, two shipbuilders and a ropemaker are given for Trent Port, Beckingham. One of the shipbuilding firms named on this side of the river was that of the brothers Furley. Furley’s seems to have been established on the Nottinghamshire bank of the Trent as early as 1804, when it was said that

“at a little distance from the Trent Port Inn . . . . . . . is Trent Port Wharf. The premises are every way suited for a genteel residence as well for the reception of ship’s cargoes. The dwelling house is singularly ornamented, and the gardens are laid out with some taste.”

All that now remains of what must have been a large complex of buildings on this side of the Trent is a rectangular area of scrub and woodland hiding the remains of brick walls. A few piles at the water’s edge and some brickwork are probably the remains of the wharves which can be seen in the water colour of the river front in 1814.

Conclusion

In the mid-nineteenth century one important factor in the decline of Gainsborough, was the growth of Grimsby resulting from the development of a rail-head there. It became possible to export or import goods direct through Grimsby by means of the rail communication
THE RIVER TRADE OF GAINSBOURGH

between that port and the midland industrial centres, and so avoid the tedious haul via the Humber and the Trent to the transhipment point at Gainsborough. To this was coupled the deterioration in the condition of the river channel below Gainsborough. The river channel suffered from being nobody’s responsibility. By the end of the nineteenth century at any rate the bulk of the population of Gainsborough was dependent upon the employment afforded by the agricultural engineering works of William Marshall and Sons. This works, which grew up in the town in the 1850s, probably saved it from suffering severe hardship as a result of the decline of its river trade. A certain amount of shipbuilding survived, as has been seen into the twentieth century. However, the river borne trade of the town depreciated to a sufficient extent to merit the withdrawal of its hard-won port status in 1881.

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Notes

6 For the economic importance of the River Trent at this time see A. C. Wood ‘History of Trade and Transport on the River Trent’ Transactions of the Thoroton Society, Irv. 1950, pp. 1-44; T. S. Willan ‘River Navigation in England 1600-1750’.
7 A. C. Sixth. op. cit., p. 13-23.
10 H. M. C. Middleton op. cit. p. 169.
I. S. BECKWITH

13 Hull Port Books, microfilms in the Hull Central Library; Until the late eighteenth century London was the greatest English seaport and the volume of its coastal and foreign trade was at least equal to that of all the other ports together. In the seventeenth century it imported timber and iron on a large scale for house and shipbuilding; and Newcastle coal. R. Davis 'The Rise of the English Shipping Industry' 1962, p. 34.


15 T. Mosley 'Reminiscences chiefly of Tockn, Villages and Schools', 1885, i. p. 181. But Mottram and Coote 'History of the Butlerley Company' states (p. 162) that the company constructed the first Vauxhall Bridge in 1860.


19 Lincolnshire Archives Office, Bacon Deposit, Box. 132; Calendar of State Papers Domestic 1636-7, p. 302; ibid. 1635-6 p. 171.

20 C. Deering 'An Historical Account — of the town of Nottingham', 1751, p. 91. The Martinmas Fair was held at Lenton, on the outskirts of Nottingham.

21 H. M. C. Middleton, op. cit., p. 175.

22 Lincolnshire Archives Office, Bacon, op. cit.

23 Calendar of State Papers Domestic 1640, p. 332; Hull Port Books, op. cit.

24 C. Deering, op. cit., p. 91.

25 I am indebted to Mr. R. S. S. Train for drawing my attention to this information.


28 G. R. Snelling, op. cit., p. 80-84.


30 N. E. Bung 'Tabeller over Shikshafte 1497-1660' and, with K. Korst, 'Tabeller over Shikshafte 1661-1783', 1945, i. p. 236 and p. 266.

31 A. Stark, 2nd edition, op. cit., p. 238; the 'Lincoln, Rutland & Stamford Mercury' reported, on November 21st, 1800, that the 'Newark' of Gainsborough, bound from Hamburg to Newcastle, had been captured by the 14 gun French privateer 'Le Mariage'.

32 Lincolnshire Archives Office, Asw 2/66/6 and A sw 2/66/7. Until 1778 there was no wet dock at Hull and ships had to receive and discharge cargo while lying in the roads: J. J. Shee man 'History of Hull' 1866, p. 372. Hull's trade was beginning to expand again at this time, after a recession in the early nineteenth century: R. Davis, op. cit., p. 39.

33 Stark, 2nd edition, op. cit., p. 239, n.16 J. J. Shee man, op. cit., p. 372-6, states that the advent of steam vessels rendered the existing docks inadequate to accommodate them, which resulted in the construction of the Railway Dock, opened in 1846 and the Victoria Dock opened in 1850. An advertisement in the Hull Advertiser, December 3rd, 1814, referred to the crowded and inconvenient state of the old Harbour at Hull and the great risk attending vessels mooring there.

34 At this time the port was under the control of the Port Committee of Gainsborough, where Peter Farnham was chairman, and the two chief promoters of the port application was John Tidd, a leading linen importer and chairman of the Port Committee in both 1819 and 1840.


36 A. Stark, 2nd edition, op. cit., p. 256; Directory of Lincolnshire 1849; D. Ibbeton. Map, op. cit.; at the dinner to wish success to the new port Lord Worley spoke, "let making a political job of it", Lincolnshire Archives Office Anderson 572/286. Worley had been a member of the Boarding Committee in 1840 and Stark gives him much of the credit for the ultimate success of the application. The jurisdiction of the new port extended from a straight line drawn from the East bank of the Trent near its confluence with the Nene and another straight line drawn from the opposite side of the Trent near its confluence with the outfall of the Ouse, upwards comprising the whole breadth of the Trent, Public Records Office, E178/7131, Special Commission 4 Victoria (1841).


40 Gainsborough News, April 27th, 1862, and May 3rd, 1862.


42 Royal Commission on Canals, 1906, H. p. 246.


44 Gainsborough News, May 10th, 1862.

19
THE RIVER TRADE OF GAINSBOROUGH


42 A. Stark, 2nd edition, op. cit., p. 410; Lincolnshire Archives Office, *Bacon*, op. cit.; in the early seventeenth century the ship building industry on the north-east coast was comparatively unimportant; by 1787 the coast from Newcastle to Hull had become the largest centre of shipbuilding; R. Davis, op. cit., p. 61-2. This author believes that the north-east coast industry was responsible for replenishing the English merchant fleet with coal and timber carriers on the model of the cheaply operated Dutch Ryboat prizes taken in large numbers during the Anglo-Dutch wars of the seventeenth century.

43 A. Young *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Lincoln*, 1799, p. 407.


45 *Star Directory of Lincolnshire*, 1849; *Hagar Directory of Lincolnshire*, 1849. Red Hull stands at the south side of Lord Street.

46 D. Ibbetson, Map 1851; *Kelly Directory of Lincolnshire*, 1885.


48 *Lincoln, Rutland & Stamford Mercury*, June 16th, 1815; ibid., December 22nd, 1815; ibid., July 10th, 1815.

49 Sailing packets took up to fourteen days on the voyage. A. Stark, 2nd edition, op. cit., p. 219 and p. 520; Lincolnshire Archives Office, Adam Stark’s Newsbook *Bacon* 14/39.

50 *White Directory of Lincolnshire*, 1826; *Lincoln, Boston, Gainsborough, & Newark Gazette*, June 20th, 1837.

51 C. Moor, op. cit., p. 230 states that the date was 1814. Originally it seems to have been known as the Gainsborough and Hull Steam Packet Company; *Eastern Counties Herald*, March 28th, 1839; ibid., March 4th, 1841; *Lincoln, Rutland & Stamford Mercury*, August 28th, 1818.

52 *Hull Advertiser*, September 24th, 1814 and July 1st, 1815; May 11th, 1816; ibid., September, 8th 1826.

53 *Lincoln, Boston, Gainsborough, & Newark Gazette*, June 20th, 1837.

54 Lincolnshire Archives Office, *Inventories* 178/111; 178/231; 178/378: for an account of the structure of shipownership at the end of the seventeenth century, op. R. Davis, op. cit., pp. 881-89. The ownership of a ship was usually divided into equal shares of eighth, sixteenth, thirty-second or sixty-fourth units. Thus in 1760, Thomas Finningley of West Stockwith, Mariner, was described as the principal owner of a vessel called the Lady Ann; *Thurston Society Records Series*, 21, p. 31. Not until the end of the eighteenth century did shipping own its own right; R. Davies, op. cit., p. 81. Previously it had been combined with a wide range of interests. Even at the commencement of the nineteenth century many of the Gainsborough traders combined ship-owning with other functions, which were mainly concerned with the handling of the staple items in the Baltic trade.

55 *The British Almanack* 1794. This may be the result of a more complete compilation by the later directory-makers. On the other hand it probably reflects also a greater degree of self-consciousness on the part of the subscribers to the directory.

56 Deeds in the possession of the Gainsborough Co-operative Society, Ltd.

57 P. Mathias, op. cit., p. 176. His first wife, Mildred Greenbridge, died in 1781, probably giving birth to their third daughter. Although neither event is mentioned in the registers John Smith seems to have married again and his son, Henry, must have been born some time between 1781 and 1790 when the registers state that Jane, daughter of John and Elizabeth Smith, whale-finger, was christened. In April, 1776 John Smith and Samuel Mosley were reported as having taken over a wharf and warehouse from Joseph and Aaron Smith to carry on business as wharfers. The Burton firms made extensive use of this firm.

58 T. Mosley, op. cit., p. 100. Their father was Henry Etherington, “Distiller & Druggist, at the Still & Mortar in Gainsborough”; Lincolnshire Archives Office, *Monson* II/55. He was a Trustee of the charity to Louth Turnpike. William was one of the shareholders in the Grimsby Haven Company.


60 Lincolnshire Archives Office, *Bacon Deposit Box* 132.


63 William Wharton *A Brief Description of the Co. of Lincoln in which is given a Minute Account of the Town of Gainsborough*, 1804, B.M. 9078 a.a.16, p. 221. The Grid Reference is 596814. Furley’s appear to have maintained their premises on the right bank of the river at least until the end of 1809 when they were offered for sale; *Hull Advertiser*, December 2nd, 1809.