

TRADE AND TRAFFIC ON THE TRENT SINCE 1850

In January 2013 the Department of History of the University of Nottingham received an award from the Arts and Humanities Research Council to undertake a co-production project under the Council's Connected Communities Programme on the history of commercial navigation on the Trent since the mid nineteenth century. This is being done in association with the Newark Heritage Barge CIO, the Railway & Canal Historical Society and a number of other voluntary organisations and individuals interested in the history of the river. One of the intended outputs is a full-length academic monograph on the subject. The text that follows is an early draft of a chapter of such a book. It is being made available at this stage in the hope of attracting comment, criticism, corrections and additions. It should not be cited elsewhere. Please send all such comments or other enquiries about the project to Philip Riden (philip.riden@nottingham.ac.uk).

Chapter 000

THE TRADE OF THE LOWER TRENT

No single source provides a full picture at any date, except very recently, of the volume or composition of trade and shipping which passed through Gainsborough and the smaller wharves of the lower Trent. For the period since the mid nineteenth century it is really only possible to use a series of sources to discuss the subject at particular dates, or for short spans of years, rather than construct a continuous chronological narrative.

The port of Gainsborough, 1841–81

Until 1840 Gainsborough and the Trent below the town formed part of the Customs port of Hull. From January 1841 Gainsborough secured appointment as a port, whose limits

appear to have included the lower Trent.¹ The appointment of Gainsborough as a port was annulled on 1 January 1882, because of the decline in both coastwise and foreign trade following the coming of the railways, and the lower Trent reverted to being part of the Customs port of Hull.² Separate figures for traffic on the river therefore cease to be available after 1881. Before this date a limited amount of information about the port of Gainsborough can be culled from the *Annual Statement of Trade and Navigation*, published as a Sessional (later Command) Paper of the House of Commons annually from 1854 until 1870, and its successors (after the series was split into two), the *Annual Statement of the Trade of the United Kingdom* and the *Annual Statement of the Navigation and Shipping of the United Kingdom*. The figures which can be obtained from these three sources are summarised here in Tables 1 and 2: as yet, no data has been found for the period between 1841 and 1854. All the figures relate to the Customs port and, although most of the traffic would have been through Gainsborough itself (including all the small amount of foreign trade), it is worth noting that a Customs officer was stationed at Keadby throughout this period and later, until at least the First World War.³ This implies that some of the coasting trade through the port began or ended there.

¹ *Stamford Mercury*, 1 Jan. 1841; neither the newspaper notice nor the more detailed note in G.Y. Hemingway, 'History of navigation on the river Trent' (undated typescript, probably 1970s, copy in NUL), 56 gives the limits of the port, and I cannot find a *Gazette* notice announcing the appointment. In April 1841 Hull Trinity House appointed six pilots to take vessels into and out of the port of Gainsborough 'and upon ... the River Humber between the said port and ... Hull Roads' (*London Gazette*, 20 April 1841, pp. 1032–3). This appears to imply that the port of Gainsborough extended from the town to Trent Falls. When keels were enumerated at Gunness in 1861 the wharf was said, perhaps rather pointedly, to lie within the port of Gainsborough (TNA, RG 2401, ff. 35–38).

² *London Gazette*, 6 Dec. 1881, p. 6558.

³ The officers are listed in White's and Kelly's Lincolnshire directories from 1856 until at least 1913.

Table 1: Trade of the Customs Port of Gainsborough, 1855–81

<i>Year</i>	<i>Customs Duty received</i>	<i>Value of exports of the produce of the UK</i>	<i>Value of imports of foreign merchandise</i>
1855			
1856	£9,945		
1857	£10,415	£2,807	
1858	£10,777	£196	
1859	£11,697	—	
1860	£11,195	£1,115	
1861	£11,158	£837	
1862	£9,800	£832	
1863	£9,864	£571	
1864	£9,471	£188	
1865	£9,061	£394	
1866	£8,925	£123	
1867	£8,184	£70	
1868	£8,742	£321	
1869	£8,640	£195	
1870	£9,513	£60	
1871	£9,550	£2,659	
1872	£7,838	£120	£7,057
1873	£4,659	—	£737
1874	£5,668	£429	£5,074
1875	£6,612	£319	£12,520
1876	£5,598	—	£4,011
1877	£4,759	£413	£2,500
1878	£2,445	—	£4,920
1879	£2,438	—	—
1880	£2,179	£325	£130
1881	£912	—	—

Table 2: The shipping of the Customs Port of Gainsborough, 1855–81

<i>Year</i>	<i>Ships entered from foreign countries</i>	<i>Ships cleared for foreign countries</i>	<i>Ships entered coastwise</i>	<i>Ships cleared coastwise</i>	<i>Ships belonging to the port</i>
1855	9	1	173	241	15
1856					
1857					
1858					
1859					
1860	25	—	153	322	—
1861					
1862					
1863					
1864					
1865	11	7	192	298	23
1866	15	3			
1867	11	2			
1868	7	6			
1869	5	4			
1870	3	1	111	215	21
1871					
1872					
1873					
1874	5	2	240	228	
1875	5	3	264	261	
1876	3	—	216	218	
1877	1	3	252	249	
1878	1	—	272	282	16
1879					
1880					
1881					

Table 2 is the more useful of the two in giving (even in its present incomplete state) a good general picture of trade between about 1840 and 1880. An obvious conclusion that can be drawn is that this period saw the virtual end of overseas traffic, which had never been large and was made up mainly of imports. The number of entries remained in double figures until nearly the end of the 1860s but then fell to a handful each year, until in 1877–8 only ship arrived in each year from overseas. The number of clearings (other than in ballast) had never been more half a dozen.

Coastwise traffic held up better, and in fact grew (although not very steadily) over the period. Figures for ship movements in the 1850s and 1860s average below 500 a year, with considerably more outward than inward traffic. In 1870 there were only 326 in all, whereas in 1874–8 there were about 500, divided almost exactly between inward and outward movements. This represents both a growth of shipping (by about 25 per cent) between the 1850s and 1870s and also a restructuring. At the beginning of the period about two thirds of movements were outward, whereas at the end the two were in balance. Some (but not necessarily all) of this may result from a change in recording, with the inclusion in later years of ships clearing in ballast, whereas earlier figures are for outwards movements of loaded ships only.

Any attempt to convert these shipping figures into traffic volumes can only be very approximate, since there appears to be no contemporary data for vessel loadings. Ships in the coasting trade which visited Gainsborough were rarely rated at more than 100 tons burden, it seems, and so the most that 500 movements could represent might be 50,000 tons. If the average loading was only 50 tons, the estimate falls to 25,000 tons. It may well have been somewhere in between.

Census enumerations 1861–1901

After 1881 there appear to be no figures for the trade of Gainsborough or the lower Trent until the 1960s. For the earlier part of the intervening period (and a little before) it is possible to use the decennial census enumerations to get a general picture of shipping in the lower Trent. Vessels in harbour or on inland waterways were not counted separately in the census until 1861. That year 25 boats can be found at 14 different places on the Trent between Knaith Hall (three miles upstream from Gainsborough) and Burton on Stather, or on the adjoining section of the Fossdyke (Table 3).⁴ Of these 25, two were said merely to be on the Fossdyke, one was at Saxilby (i.e. definitely on the canal) and another was a Torksey Bridge, which could mean either the Trent or the canal.

Table 3: Vessels enumerated on the lower Trent in the census, 1861–1901

<i>Wharf</i>	<i>1861 River Trade</i>	<i>1861 Coasting</i>	<i>1881 River Trade</i>	<i>1881 Coasting</i>	<i>1901 River Trade</i>	<i>1901 Coasting</i>
Alkborough	0	0	0	0	2	0
Amcotts	0	0	3	0	0	0
Burringham	0	0	0	0	2	0
Burton on Stather	2	1	1	0	4	0
Butterwick	3	0	0	0	2	0
Gainsborough	0	0	0	0	7	0
Garthorpe	1	0	0	0	0	0

⁴ These were located by using Ancestry, searching under Lincolnshire and then ‘Vessels’, a term which appears in the list of civil parishes with the county. The schedule for each vessel is treated by Ancestry as a separate ‘enumeration district’, whereas in fact they were filed after the ordinary book for the enumeration district within which the boat spent census night, and those sleeping on board were counted with the population for that district. One boat at Keadby was found not in the Vessels section but by searching under the name of the civil parish, where an enumerator’s book is listed, followed by a schedule for a keel named the *Hand of Providence* (TNA, RG 9/3526, f. 110).

Gunness	2	2	0	0	2	0
Gunthorpe	1	0	0	0	0	0
Keadby	1	0	27	3	16	0
Knaith Hall	1	0	0	0	0	0
Owston Ferry	0	0	0	0	6	1
Stockwith	3	1	0	0	5	0
Susworth	2	0	0	0	0	0
Wildsworth	1	0	0	0	0	0
Fosdyke Canal	2	0	0	0	0	0
Saxilby	1	0	0	0	0	0
Torksey	1	0	0	0	1	0
Totals	21	4	31	3	47	1

It must be said that the distribution revealed by this exercise seems odd. No boats were said to have spent census night at Gainsborough and only one at Keadby, nor do any appear to have been counted on the Stainforth & Keadby Canal there.⁵ Similarly, the three vessels in the river at Stockwith were the only ones of any kind enumerated there: none were listed in Stockwith basin at the end of the Chesterfield Canal, although some canal boatmen were living in cottages nearby.⁶ More striking is the absence of any vessels at Gainsborough: the river trade there was certainly in decline in 1861 but had by no means ceased. The previous year there had been 475 entries and clearings coastwise through the Customs port (Table 2), the bulk of which were probably to and from Gainsborough itself. No vessels

⁵ The enumerator's book for Keadby civil parish (TNA, RG 9/3526, ff. 97 et seq.) is reproduced very faintly on Ancestry but I cannot see any vessels in it, although some 'mariners' were living on shore in the village.

⁶ TNA, RG 9/2407, ff. 21v.–22v.; Stockwith basin, despite its name, is in Misterton civil parish.

appear to have been enumerated in the ordinary district books for the town⁷ and it is possible that some schedules for boats have been lost. This could, of course, also have happened for the other wharves on the river or elsewhere in the county.⁸ The wharf with the most entries in 1861 is Gunness, where four boats were enumerated, but this is only one more than Stockwith or Butterwick (if 'Butterwick' and 'East Butterwick' are counted as one). It can hardly be claimed that Gunness was necessarily busier than the other wharves, especially as the figure for Keadby seems very low and the complete absence of Gainsborough is frankly suspicious. The best that can be said is that census gives a general picture of trade on the river, where clearly a number of wharves serving small villages (such as Susworth, Wildsworth or Gunthorpe) were still in use, at least occasionally.⁹

Most of the vessels listed in Table 3 were keels in the river trade. The others included a coasting ketch, the *Elizabeth* of Goole (54 tons), at Gunness, which seems to have come up from Ipswich;¹⁰ a billy boy, the *Felicity* of Goole (44 tons), which had arrived at Gunness from Harwich; the *John* of Goole (36 tons), which was in the coasting trade but was

⁷ As far as I can judge from the descriptions of the districts at the front of the ten books for Gainsborough parish (TNA, RG 9/2408, ff. 1 et seq.). I have not attempted to search the books themselves.

⁸ I have not investigated this systematically, but there seem to be improbably few boats enumerated at Boston in the Vessels section of the Lincolnshire census, and none at Lincoln, unless these appear in the ordinary enumerators' books for the city as craft on inland waterways.

⁹ Since the reference is in the Lincolnshire census, I have assumed that the boat lying at Gunthorpe on census night was moored alongside the village of Gunthorpe in Owston Ferry parish, on the west bank of the Trent (see *White's Dir. Lincs.* (1856), 637, not Gunthorpe (Notts.), higher up the river.

¹⁰ TNA, RG 9/2401, f. 37. I cannot make out for certain the name of the place where the schedule was given out, but it appears to begin 'Ips...'.

enumerated at Garthorpe, having sailed down from Keadby;¹¹ and similarly the *Sheaf* of Goole (51 tons), said to be in the coasting trade, but enumerated at Burton on Stather after a passage from Gainsborough.¹² One of the others, the *Ashton* of Hull (37 tons), was a sloop in the river trade, but all the rest were keels. A few masters gave a general indication of the which branch of the river trade they were in. The *Betsey* of Hull (85 tons), which spent census night at East Butterwick, having sailed down from Gainsborough, was in the ‘grain and coal trade’;¹³ the *George* of Kirkstall (near Leeds) (80 tons) was carrying stone when she was enumerated at Knaith Hall;¹⁴ the *Martha* of Lincoln (55 tons) was in the coal trade when she passed the night at Saxilby on the Fossdyke Canal;¹⁵ and the *Victory* of Lincoln (about 60 tons), also moored on the canal, was carrying ‘general goods’ from Hull to Lincoln.¹⁶

Two later census years have been sampled.¹⁷ In 1881, by contrast with twenty years earlier, the smaller wharves seem to have been deserted and almost all the recorded trade (at any rate in vessels on which anyone slept on census night) was on boats enumerated at Keadby. The lack of any vessels at Gainsborough remains suspicious, since there were still

¹¹ TNA, RG 9/3527, f. 90.

¹² TNA, RG 9/2400, f. 146.

¹³ TNA, RG 9/2401, f. 000.

¹⁴ TNA, RG 9/2411, f. 136.

¹⁵ TNA, RG 9/2363, f. 40.

¹⁶ TNA, RG 9/2411, f. 55.

¹⁷ I will frankly admit that checking every single vessel on Ancestry is so tedious that I have not yet been able to face 1871, 1891 or 1911. Also, for lack of time, I have not completed searching 1881 (which is dominated, even more tediously, by the Grimsby fishing fleet). The figures in Table 3 for 1881 are those for vessels with names beginning H–Z, inflated by 26/19 to allow for those in the range A–G which I have yet to do, and thus obtain an estimate for the total number.

around 250 coastwise movements in each direction through the Customs port up to the withdrawal of Customs facilities in 1881 (Table 2), or about five a week. There were a couple of boats at Amcotts, on the west bank of the Trent opposite Flixborough, and one at ‘Cliff End’, which I have assumed means near The Cliff in Burton Stather.

Only two of the vessels at Keadby were coasters.¹⁸ The *Ton Mawr* of Fowey (122 tons), had a master, mate and crew of three on board, as well as a woman of 24 described as ‘friend on a visit’ and what looks like her four-year-old daughter. The master simply declared his business as ‘home trade’.¹⁹ The much smaller *John and Alice* of Goole (54 tons) with a crew of three (of whom only the mate had been left on board, implying the master lived in or near Keadby) was in the ‘London and Keadby trade’. This could mean that contract sailings were still running as late as 1881, with goods being taken further inland from Keadby in keels, although this seems unlikely and the boat was probably tramping.

All the other boats were ‘river keels’ and almost all returned ‘coal trade’ on the census schedule. This monotony is occasionally relieved by more detail or even a different cargo. The *Zephyr* of Goole (80 tons) was carrying chemical manure, possibly from the factory at Misterton,²⁰ while the *Naomia* of Gainsborough (50 tons) was in the ‘general trade’,²¹ which may have included grain as well as coal. The *Two Brothers* of Thorne (70 tons) was loaded

¹⁸ The figure 3 which appears in Table 3 is the result of inflating my real data by a factor to produce a whole-year estimate, as described in the previous note.

¹⁹ TNA, RG 11/4699, f. 167. The name is Welsh (unless Cornish Celtic has exactly the same spelling of both words), meaning ‘Great Wave’ (‘*ton*’ has other meanings in Welsh but only ‘wave’ fits the sense here). Dorothy Gibbon, aged 24, had been born at Gateshead and was a widow, Isabella had been born at South Shields. This argues against them visiting family anywhere near Keadby.

²⁰ TNA, RG 11/4699, f. 133; need to add more detail about the manure factory and check if there were any others on the river apart from the Misterton one.

²¹ TNA, RG 11/4699, f. 146.

with coal for the British Gas Light Company Ltd when she was moored in the canal at Keadby on census night.²² This was probably destined for Hull, the company's nearest provincial works, rather than London.²³ The *Sarah* of Hull (80 tons) was definitely taking coals to her home port,²⁴ as were the *Lydia* (95 tons), *Joseph* (80 tons) (which was the boat moored at Cliff End) and *Hannah* (75 tons), all of Hull, and the *Hope* (70 tons) of Thorne.²⁵ The *Oak* of Burton Stather (70 tons) was carrying 'coals to the River Trent',²⁶ possibly meaning she was delivering small quantities at several wharves. She seems to have been coming up the river, perhaps having turned at Burton. The master was enumerated at Amcotts but had been given his form at Meredyke, about two miles downstream. The wharf (or landing place) there was presumably the nearest point on the river at which a delivery (probably of coal) could be made for Luddington, just over a mile away.²⁷ Similarly, the *Mixer* (90 tons) of Thorne was said to be carrying coal to Hull, but was on her way home, since the master was given his form at Hull and handed it in at Keadby.²⁸

Where the coal had come from is less easy to establish, but the limited evidence

²² TNA, RG 11/4699, f. 131.

²³ An introductory note to a catalogue of the records of the company, founded in 1824 and registered as a joint-stock limited liability company in 1857, which are now with Transco and are listed on Access to Archives, names the other provincial works in this period as Norwich, Trowbridge, the Potteries, Holywell, Ayr and Clonmel.

²⁴ TNA, RG 11/4699, f. 164.

²⁵ TNA, RG 11/4699, f. 141.

²⁶ TNA, RG 11/4699, f. 124.

²⁷ Luddington was briefly connected to the railway system after this date by the Isle of Axholme Light Railway, which opened a station there in 1903 and closed it in 1933 (R.V.J. Butt, *The Directory of Railway Stations* (1995), 150).

²⁸ TNA, RG 11/4699, f. 162.

suggests the South Yorkshire coalfield, not further up the Trent. The *Una* of Thorne (90 tons) was enumerated at Keadby but the master had been given his schedule at ‘The Springs, Worsbro’ Dale’ and both he and his mate had been born not far away at Stainforth.²⁹ The master of the *Sarah Ann* of Hull (80 tons) had been given his form at Doncaster,³⁰ and the master of the *Prince of Wales* of Rotherham (70 tons) declared that he was carrying from Sheffield (where he had been given his form) to Hull, although he did not state his cargo.³¹ Presumably most, if not all, the keels enumerated at Keadby in 1881 that were in the coal trade had loaded at the collieries served by the South Yorkshire waterways and were carrying to either Trentside wharves or Hull in one bottom. It is possible that the coal was brought by rail to Keadby and loaded into keels at the staithe there, but there seems to be no means of establishing how far this was done. Coal arriving at Keadby by rail could have continued on the Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire line over the bridge to Grimsby, if it was to be shipped to London or the East Coast, whereas coal sent by rail to Hull would have gone via Thorne and Goole on the North Eastern Railway, not through Keadby.

Although the census enumeration of 1881 may not give a complete picture, it is clear that the main traffic on the Trent below Gainsborough at that date was the movement of coal from South Yorkshire through the canals to the river at Keadby, and from there to Hull or (probably to a much lesser extent) to landing places serving villages on the lower Trent. There is no evidence for coal arriving at Keadby going upstream to Gainsborough, Lincoln or elsewhere in that direction. Nor is there any sign of tugs on the river towing barges between Hull and Nottingham, Newark or Lincoln. This may be a function of the source and it is

²⁹ TNA, RG 11/4699, f. 142.

³⁰ TNA, RG 11/4699, f. 140.

³¹ TNA, RG 11/4699, f. 150.

possible that tugs simply were not moored on census night at places in Lincolnshire, or it may mean that this traffic, in its later form, had not yet got underway. Finally, there were very few coasting vessels in the river that night, suggesting that this trade, so important at Gainsborough in the early nineteenth century and to a lesser extent at Stockwith and possibly Keadby, had almost died out by 1881.

The most striking difference between the enumeration of vessels on the Trent in 1901 compared with twenty years earlier is not so much the 40 per cent growth in numbers (from 34 to 48) as the wider range of place at which they were found. Keadby still had the largest number of boats (16, with another 32, all but two of them keels, enumerated on the canal there),³² but there were also seven vessels at both Gainsborough and Owston Ferry, neither of which make any showing in the earlier years sampled, as well as five at Stockwith the four at Burton Stather (Table 3). It may be that this increase in numbers, and the wider distribution of boats, does reflect a growth of traffic around the turn of the century, or it may (at least in part) be further evidence that the earlier enumerations are incomplete.

The growth in traffic apparently evident from the 1901 census conceals a further decline in coasting vessels visiting the river. The only boat whose master said he was in the coasting trade (and also the river trade) was a small sailing sloop, the *Rising Hope* of Hull (32 tons), enumerated at Owston Ferry.³³ Two of the seven vessels at Gainsborough were in the

³² TNA, RG 13/4420, ff. 45v.–47, at the end of the enumerator's book for Keadby civil parish. The two vessels that were not keels were a river pilot and a small steamship. It seems clear that a rule existed that boats on a canal should be counted in this way but boats on a river (even when they were the same type of boat and were lying within yards of each other) should be given the form for 'Vessels'. This means that slightly different information was collected about the crews on board on census night, depending on exactly where they were moored.

³³ TNA, RG 13/3111, f. 124.

‘river passenger trade’, presumably meaning they were packets which sailed to and from Hull. Both were registered at Grimsby. One was the *Atlanta* (59 tons), with two seamen, a steward and stoker on board (the master spent the night ashore); the other was the *Columbine* (44 tons), which had been left in charge of the steward and a fireman.³⁴ Two boats were described as sailing barges. One was at Stockwith, the *Boaz* of Newark (50 tons), which was in the ‘river and canal trade’, and the other, the *Trent* of Stockwith (also 50 tons) was at Gainsborough.³⁵ Another sailing barge, the *Endeavour* of Fiskerton (50 tons), enumerated at Owston Ferry, was merely in the river trade, as were two more small sloops, the *Elizabeth* of Owston Ferry (20 tons), moored at her home port, and the *Francis* of Goole (32 tons), which was at Burton Stather, and the slightly larger sloop, the *Masterman* of Goole (43 tons), at Gunness.³⁶ The *Princess Royal* of Lincoln (85 tons) was a sailing ketch, again in the river trade.³⁷ One steam tug was enumerated, at Keadby, the *Norman*, used for ‘river towing’, three of whose crew (but not the master) were on board on census night, the mate, a ‘driver’ and a stoker, all in their twenties.³⁸ There was also a ‘towing lighter’ at West Butterwck, the *Merchant* (90 tons), said to be in the canal trade. Otherwise, all the boats were returned either as keels or merely as sailing vessels.

In 1901 masters were not asked to state in as much detail as in 1881 what trade they

³⁴ TNA, RG 13/3114, ff. 105, 107. Their official numbers were 17411 and 17413 respectively and may well have belonged to the Gainsborough United Steam Packet Co.

³⁵ TNA, RG 13/3112, f. 41; RG 13/3114, f. 103.

³⁶ TNA, RG 13/3114, f. 99; RG 13/3111, f. 113; RG 13/3104, f. 58; RG 13/3106, f. 109.

³⁷ TNA, RG 13/3106, f. 107.

³⁸ TNA, RG 13/4420, f. 56. Its tonnage (i.e. burden) was entered as ‘1 ton’, presumably in error, although for what is unclear.

were in and most simply wrote 'river trade'. Inference from where the vessels belonged and where the schedules were handed out or collected suggests that most were taking coal from Keadby to Hull, as they had been twenty years earlier. The *Bee* of Sheffield (tonnage not given) was at Keadby on census night but the master handed in the completed form at Hull, as did the *Elsie* and *Excelsior*, both of Hull (for neither of which also was the tonnage stated) and both enumerated at Keadby.³⁹ The *Enterprise* of Hull (90 tons) was issued with a schedule at Stockwith, spent census night at Owston Ferry and returned it at Hull;⁴⁰ similarly the *Nancy* of Hull (90 tons) collected her form at Keadby, was enumerated at Burton Stather and gave it in at Hull.⁴¹ The *Princess Royal* was moored on census night at East Butterwick, where the master was given his schedule but he must have sailed very early the following morning, since it too was handed in at Hull.⁴² The *Robert and Mary Ann* of Gainsborough (tonnage not stated) was travelling in the opposite direction: having been issued with a form at Hull, she was enumerated at Owston Ferry but handed it in at Wildsworth, higher up the Trent.⁴³

A few other routes can be deduced in the same way. The master of the *Dane* of Nottingham, which was at Trent Falls at midnight on 31 March, handed in his form at Goole,⁴⁴ and the towing lighter *Merchant* was making a similar passage in the opposite

³⁹ TNA, RG 13/4420, ff. 61, 65, 66.

⁴⁰ TNA, RG 13/3111, f. 122.

⁴¹ TNA, RG 13/3104, f. 94.

⁴² TNA, RG 13/3106, f. 107.

⁴³ TNA, RG 13/3111, f. 117.

⁴⁴ TNA, RG 13/441. The back of the form, which contains the crew list and also the folio number, has been omitted on Ancestry; boats lying at Trent Falls on census night were counted as being in the parish of Alkborough.

direction, collecting the form at Goole, lying at West Butterwick on census night, and returning it at Lusworth.⁴⁵ The *Providence* of Doncaster (81 tons) received and returned the schedule at Garthorpe, but was at Barrow in the Humber on census night.⁴⁶ The *Joseph C. Rhoda* of Brigg (100 tons), both collected and returned the form at South Ferriby but was said to be ‘in the River Trent’, which the checker decided meant Alkborough.⁴⁷ The *John and Maria* of Gainsborough (95) tons was enumerated at Owston Ferry, evidently on a short passage to and from Gunthorpe, where the schedule was both issued and returned, and the *Laura* of Mexborough seems to have made the same journey immediately before and after census night.⁴⁸ Finally, the *Victory* of Lincoln (110 tons) was enumerated at Lincoln but the master was issued with (and returned) his schedule at Hull.⁴⁹

From the 1960s to the present

After the census enumerations cease to be available, there appears to be no source of even moderately systematic information about the trade of the lower river until the 1960s. The National Ports Council, established in 1964, published a *Digest of Port Statistics* annually between 1966 and 1972, which was superseded from 1973 by an *Annual Digest of*

⁴⁵ TNA, RG 133111, f. 126.

⁴⁶ TNA, RG 13/3107, f. 187; this vessel has not been included in the figures in Table 3, because she was not in the Trent on census night.

⁴⁷ TNA, RG 13/3104, f. 60.

⁴⁸ TNA, RG 13/3111, ff .118, 120.

⁴⁹ TNA, RG 13/3062, f. 64; this vessel has also been omitted from Table 3, even though the master described his position on census night as ‘Lincoln (River Trent)’. He probably meant that he was in the Trent trade.

Port Statistics.⁵⁰ Both series included figures for the trade of a number of smaller places, which were not themselves Customs ports, including one described as ‘River Trent’. For 1972 only an aggregate figure for all the Trent and Humber wharves combined was published, and for 1973–6 only a figure for the total trade of the Trent, with no break-down between foreign and coastwise traffic or imports and exports.

The volumes also contain lists of landing places included within each Customs port: in 1968 those within the port of Hull that lay on the lower Trent and for which operators were named were Flixborough Wharf, Frodingham, Gainsborough, Gunness Wharf, Keadby and Scunthorpe.⁵¹ The only addition to the list came in 1973, when King’s Ferry Wharf at Burton Stather was included for the first time. No names were removed, even though ‘Frodingham’ was not operational throughout this period and appears to be a duplicate entry for Gunness Wharf. The lists also continued to print two entries for ‘River Trent’ and ‘Trent’ (under R and T in an alphabetical list), for neither of which were any operators named.. From 1970 the lists included a note as to whether any traffic in goods or passengers had been recorded at the wharf in question in any year since 1965, a piece of information that diminished in value as the years since 1965 grew in number. From 1973 they also included a symbol to indicate which of the operators listed under each wharf made a return of traffic to the Council.

When the National Ports Council was abolished in 1981 its statistical work was taken

⁵⁰ R.E. Baxter and C.M. Phillips, *Reviews of United Kingdom Statistical Sources Volume X: Ports and Inland Waterways and Civil Aviation* (1979), 68–9. The British Library Catalogue states that the earlier title was published annually between 1968 and 1975, containing statistics for 1966–73, and that the later one commenced publication in 1973 (a terminal date is not given). The BL press mark for both is BS 43/501.

⁵¹ *Digest of Port Statistics* (1968), 271–8.

over by the Department for Transport and the British Ports Association.⁵² Between 1981 and 1997 these two bodies jointly issued an annual volume of *Port Statistics*,⁵³ which continued to publish data (in more detail than the National Ports Council series) for the wharves of the lower Trent. In 1998 the Department for Transport began to issue a new annual volume, *Maritime Statistics*, which contained data previously published in *Port Statistics* and in *Merchant Fleet Statistics*, both of which ceased publication in 1996–7. *Maritime Statistics* continued to be published by the Stationery Office until at least 2008.⁵⁴ The compilation of UK overseas trade and shipping statistics has since been transferred to a non-departmental public body, UK Trade Info, and their publication has migrated to the internet. (www.uktradeinfo.com).

Nottingham University Library has an incomplete set of the two statistical series published by the National Ports Council (lacking the volumes for 1966–7, 1974 and any published after 1979), one odd volume (for 1983) of the later *Port Statistics*, and no copies of *Maritime Statistics*. Table 6 here has been compiled from the figures published in the immediately available material for Gainsborough and the other wharves of the lower Trent. It should be possible to extend and refine this table as missing volumes in the four series are located.

Since the 1960s the organisation of the lower Trent wharves within the system of Customs ports (and their successors) has changed several times. During the era of the

⁵² R. Goss, ‘British ports policies since 1945’, *Journal of Transport Economics and Policy*, 32 (1999), 66; see this article generally for an outline of the Council’s work.

⁵³ The covering dates have been taken from the BL Catalogue, where the volumes are said to contain statistics for 1980–96; the press mark for the series is BS 43/620.

⁵⁴ This sequence of titles has been inferred from entries in the BL Catalogue, where 2008 is the last year of publication given for *Maritime Statistics*. The BL press mark for the title is BS 43/695.

National Ports Council (or at least until 1979)⁵⁵ they continued to form part of the port of Hull, as they had done since 1882. By 1983 they had been grouped into what was called the Customs trade port of Scunthorpe, which that year included eight wharves and nine operators, all of which made traffic returns for inclusion in *Port Statistics* (Table 4).⁵⁶

Table 4: The Customs trade port of Scunthorpe in 1983

<i>Wharf</i>	<i>Operators</i>
Althorpe	Gunness Wharf Ltd
Beckingham	John Brash & Co. Ltd
	Trent Wharfage Ltd
Burton Stather	King's Ferry Wharf Ltd
Flixborough Wharf	British Steel Corporation
Gainsborough	RHM Agriculture (NE) Ltd
	William Gleadell & Co. Ltd
Grove Wharf	J. Wharton (Shipping) Ltd
Gunness Wharf	Gunness Wharf Ltd
Neap House Wharf	Trenship Agency Ltd

Source: Port Statistics (1983), 112. Note that this table uses the name J. Brash & Co. Ltd but the registered name of the company is as above.

At some later date, which has yet to be established, the port of Scunthorpe was renamed Trent, and a list appears on the UK Trade Info website of the nine wharves between Gainsborough and Burton Stather making up the port (Table 6). A tenth name, Point Bid, is not a place but a logistics company which used to have a depot and wharf on the river at Trent Lane, Nottingham.⁵⁷ Gainsborough also appears in the list but has not seen any commercial

⁵⁵ The year to which the last volume of *Port Statistics* which I have yet been able to consult relates.

⁵⁶ Dept of Transport and British Ports Association, *Port Statistics* (1983), 112. Earlier volumes of this series have yet to be consulted to establish exactly when the trade port of Scunthorpe was created.

⁵⁷ Information kindly supplied by Chris Lester.

shipping for some years.

Table 5: The Trade Port of Trent in 2013

<i>Wharf</i>	<i>Operator</i>	<i>Website</i>
Althorpe	RMS Trent Ports	www.rms-humber.co.uk
Beckingham	TW Logistics Ltd	www.twlogistics.co.uk
Burton Stather	Charles Willie Group	www.williegroup.co.uk
Flixborough Wharf	RMS Trent Ports	www.rms-humber.co.uk
Grove Wharves	Groveport Logistics	www.groveport.co.uk
Gunness Wharf	RMS Trent Ports	www.rms-humber.co.uk
Keadby	PD Ports Ltd	www.pdports.co.uk
Neap House	Groveport Logistics	www.groveport.co.uk
Scunthorpe	TW Logistics	www.twlogistics.co.uk

Source: www.uktradeinfo.com.

In 2007–8, during an exercise by the European Union to harmonise data on member states' Customs declarations and IT systems, the UK amalgamated many of its port codes, and HMRC have since been undertaking a data cleansing exercise to ensure that the information held in their tariff and Customs handling systems, and that used by UK Trade Info, was consistent. As part of this, the name Scunthorpe has been revived for what is now called a 'parent port', each of which contains a number of secondary ('orphan') wharves, jetties and quays. The parent port of Scunthorpe includes Althorpe, Flixborough, Grove, Gunness, Keadby, King's Ferry Wharf (at Burton Stather) and Neap House.⁵⁸ This list is similar to that given in Table 5, apart from the omission of Beckingham.

Irrespective of the name used, and slight changes in the concept of a 'port' for Customs purposes, the basic point is that since 1966 reasonably consistent official statistics for trade and shipping are available for most years for the group of wharves between Gainsborough and

⁵⁸ I am greatly indebted to HMRC for this information and for explaining recent changes in their systems.

Burton Stather, but not for individual places. These are given (to 1983, the last year for which data has so far been extracted from the sources discussed here) in Table 6.

Table 6: The trade of the lower Trent, 1968–83

All figures are in thousands of tons

Year	Foreign Imports	Foreign Exports	Foreign Total	Coastwise Inwards	Coastwise Outwards	Coastwise Total	Grand Total
1968	344	257	601	—	—	114	715
1969	453	185	638	...	67	67	706
1970	537	107	644	1	56	56	700
1971	523	233	756	90	58	147	904
1972	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1973	—	—	—	—	—	—	2263
1974	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1975	—	—	—	—	—	—	1726
1976	—	—	—	—	—	—	1806
1977	1375	510	1885	58	6	64	1949
1978	1402	720	2123	78	18	96	2218
1979	1583	586	2168	43	9	52	2220
1980	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1981	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1982	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1983	2311	936	3247	58	5	64	3311

Sources and Notes: National Ports Council, *Digest of Port Statistics* (1968–73); *Annual Digest of Port Statistics* (1973–9); Dept for Transport and British Ports Association, *Port Statistics* (1983). The symbol ... means that the quantity is less than half the smallest digit used elsewhere in the row; the symbol — means that the figure is not available (as to why, at different dates, see the text).

Even in this incomplete state Table 6 illustrates how the trade of the lower Trent had been transformed by the 1960s, compared with the late nineteenth century. Unfortunately, there is no way of establishing when, during the intervening period, these changes mostly took

place, although it seems likely to have been after, rather than before, the Second World War. It must also be admitted that there are some oddities in the table, notably the almost complete absence of any inward coastal traffic in 1969–70, whereas in other years movements in this direction were much greater than coastal traffic outwards. Over the period between 1968 and 1983 as a whole, on the figures at present available, coastwise traffic averaged 82,500 tons a year, of which on average about 47,000 tons was inward. If the two anomalous figures for 1969–70 are omitted, the inward average rises to 65,400 tons, or just under 80 per cent of the total. A hundred years earlier there were about 500 coastwise entries and clearings through the port of Gainsborough (see Table 2). We have no real idea of the average loading of each ship (any more than we have in the later period, since the number of ships arriving and departing coastwise does not seem to have been recorded), but if we allow 50 tons per vessel, total traffic would have been around 25,000 tons. Even if we choose a higher average (bearing in mind that coastal vessels of that period calling at Gainsborough seem rarely to have been rated above 100 tons burden, and they would not always have been fully loaded) the estimate will not come near to the average for 1968–83. Given the decline in coastal trade apparent from the census enumerations of 1861–1901, we might suggest that no more than 20,000 tons (and possibly much less) was arriving and leaving by the end of nineteenth century. Between then and the 1960s there had been a very striking growth of trade.

The figures collected by the National Ports Council and its successors do not include river traffic on the lower Trent that went no further than Hull or Grimsby in one direction, or Goole, Leeds or York in the other. There is therefore no means of comparing the volume of this traffic in the 1960s or 1970s with that found a century earlier, much less discover anything of its make-up.

Far more dramatic than the revival of the coasting trade was the growth of foreign

trade, which had come almost completely to an end by the time the port of Gainsborough was annulled in 1881 (see Table 2). By the late 1960s over 600,000 tons a year was moving in both directions through the wharves at Gainsborough and lower down the river, and by 1971 three-quarters of a million tons. Despite the general economic gloom (and occasionally crisis) which characterised that decade, by the end of the 1970s the total had passed 2 million tons, and in 1983 was about 3¼ million. The annual average for the entire period (1968–83) on currently available figures was about 1½ million tons, of which just over two thirds were imports. This traffic must have developed over a period of years to have reached 600,000 tons by 1968, but it has yet to be established when this growth began — was it entirely after 1945 or had there been a revival between the two World Wars?