

Acaster's of Goole

A name long associated with commercial barge operations on the north eastern inland waterways is Acaster. The company is run by Graham Acaster, with his office at Swinefleet near Goole, who trades as Acaster Water Transport.

In the late 1860s, when the port of Goole was still growing, Graham's great grandfather was the first in the family to be directly involved with cargo carrying on the inland waterways. Goole at the time was very busy, having been transformed from a small hamlet into a bustling port by the opening of the Knottingley and Goole Canal in 1826 by the proprietors of the Aire & Calder Navigation.

Mr Acaster senior was a coal merchant with a yard at the rear of the Dog and Duck public house, adjacent to the canal. All his coal supplies came by water from collieries in south and west Yorkshire, in vessels owned by small private traders.

He decided that instead of paying others to transport the coal to his yard it would be financially a more profitable proposition to purchase a vessel himself to do the work.

It was not long after the acquisition and satisfactory operation of his first craft that he bought a second one. He found to his complete satisfaction that barge ownership and operation was more rewarding than selling coal and so gradually he concentrated more and more on water transport, carrying

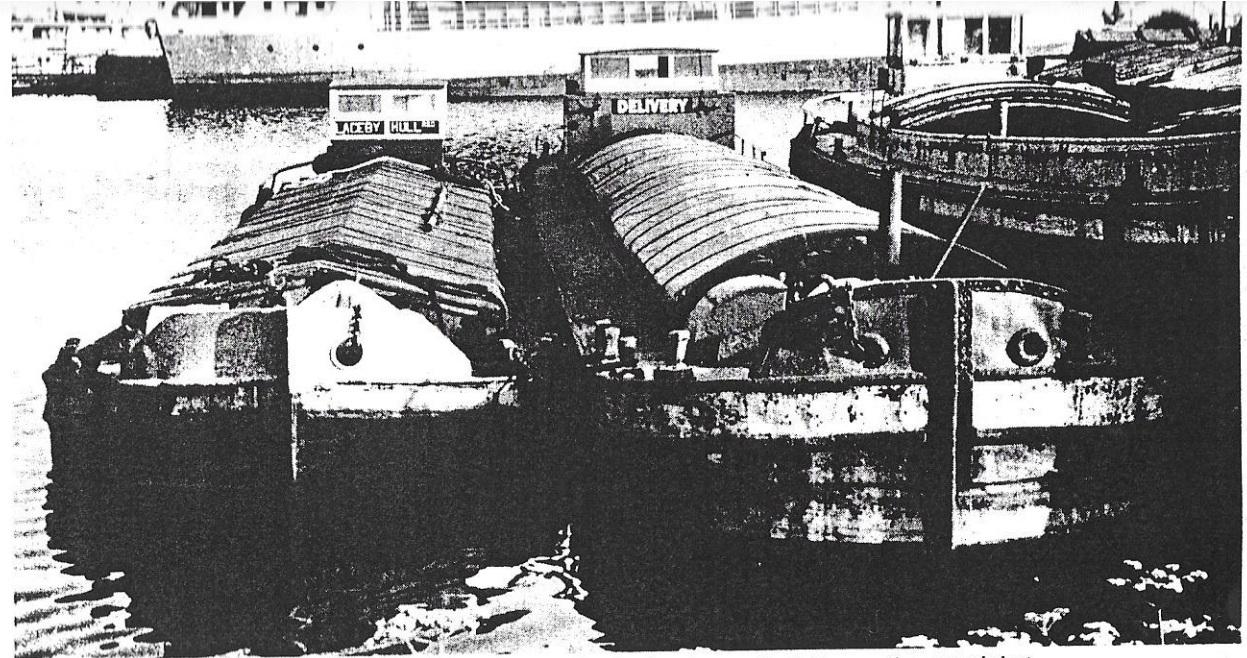
by
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Rally, Bessie and Olive, which were all steel constructed vessels with an approximate cargo capacity of 100 tons each, were to be purchased by his brother Tom.

At the retirement of Fred, with Bill already dead, the family name of Acaster remained on the list of active carriers because of the continuing efforts of the remaining brother Tom and his son Wilfred. Wilfred had joined the family business in the late 1920s when his grandfather was still in charge.

After the 1937 split up, Wilfred joined his father and worked for him until 1943 when he decided to work for himself. He went to the offices of James Hargreaves (Leeds) Limited, and purchased from them the 63ft long and 14ft 6in wide steel dumb barge *Lacey* that he motorised.

He was able to obtain sufficient work to keep him and his vessel



Some of Acaster's former vessels moored in the port of Goole. *Lacey*, on the left, was the vessel that Graham Acaster learned the art of barge operation.

successful and had built up a substantial fleet of his own, took over his father's contracts, but sold most of the vessels. As it turned out the sand contracts were to cease in the next few years, and although obtaining new work was far from easy Wilfred managed to keep his fleet operational.

This was done in two ways, firstly because of the serious problem of the continual increases in barge operation, the fleet was reduced, but the same tonnage capabilities was retained by obtaining some larger craft. Secondly, by going out and getting new work such as wire to Wakefield and Leeds, regular monthly loads of sulphur from Goole to a Croada factory on the River Hull, seasonal work for BOCM-Silcock that included deliveries to Selby and York on the River Ouse, and work for the British Waterways Board with deliveries to their depots at Leeds and Nottingham.

next generation



IWA



40 YEARS ON

The Inland Waterways Association, a registered charity founded in 1946, is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. This will be marked all round Britain by a series of campaigning and social events, rallies and boat gatherings, dinners and celebratory cruises.

In May 1946 a small band of dedicated enthusiasts met in a flat in London's Gower Street, concerned about the state into which Britain's inland rivers and canals had been allowed to fall and alarmed by the progressive deterioration of those waterways which were still navigable. From those beginnings, stirred by the sterling work and effort of such men as Robert Aickman, Charles Hadfield

to men like Robert Aickman and the early pioneers of the waterways restoration movement, and it was due to their insight and forethought that many of Britain's canals were not now closed and abandoned. "But we also owe a great deal to our ordinary members, up and down the country, who work without reward and from a deep sense of commitment. Without them the IWA would be nothing and