

## River Derwent



### Introduction

The River Derwent was made navigable under authority of the Statute, 1 Anne V. 20 (1702), which conferred powers on certain persons, called the undertakers, to make the river navigable from Scarborough Mills to Hemingborough, the point of its confluence with the River Ouse.

The navigation was never commenced at Scarborough Mills, and from a case which was submitted in 1807 to the then Solicitor-General upon the grievance of preferential tolls it would seem that for the space of some 20 years after the passing of the Act the powers conferred by it remained dormant. The original undertakers did not appear to have exercised their rights, but probably disposed of them for valuable consideration, as

about 20 years later the rights appear to have been acquired by Lord Rockingham, to whom the greater part of Malton then belonged.

Between 1720 and 1730 two persons, supposed to have been lessees of Lord Rockingham, made the river navigable from Hemingborough (the lower end) to the beginning of the town of New Malton, by building 5 locks (which still remain) and doing some other trifling work - this part of the river being naturally in such a state that it required few alterations to make it navigable, and including 16 miles of tidal water. The outlay was understood to have been about £4,000 out of a total estimated outlay of £60,000 required to complete the navigation to Scarborough. [1]

### Manipulating the Tolls

It would appear that the tolls on the river were manipulated; at first to benefit the land owner and later the railway company. The author of a letter to the editor of the Yorkshire Gazette in 1844 [2] observes that due to the system of tolls much of the trade of Malton has passed to Driffield and York.

A newspaper report in 1913 [3] suggests that at one point a vessel was sunk across the river to prevent it being navigable beyond Lord Rockingham's wharf. This would have ensured that those with freehold property adjoining the river would not have access for their goods. The obstruction was removed and

local traders funded the necessary navigation improvements.

On the opening of the railway there was competition between the canal and the railway. Speed and the lower rates of the railway company began to kill off the Navigation Company. In 1855, Lord Fitzwilliam sold the navigation to the railway company for £40,000. Lord Fitzwilliam's agent handled the negotiations and became a director of the railway company. At that point competition

## The River in the Old Days

(The following is transcribed from the Malton Messenger, 21 June 1922)

THE RIVER DERWENT IN THE OLD DAYS WHEN THERE WERE THREE SCORE TRADING VESSELS AT MALTON MALTON & HULL NAVIGATION COMPANY

Patient, expectant anglers and the splosh, splosh of a few pike, grayling or an odd trout are not the only "objects of interest" on the riverside between the old stone bridge leading to Norton, and down to about the sister bridge leading to Malton railway station. Have a walk along the bank some day, on the station side and looking Malton townwards you will scarcely fail to see odd places which in themselves suggest that they played an important part in the industrial life of the town in the old days - before and in the early days of the steel rail and the engine in these parts - a landing place here and another there, from which the cargoes of old wooden ships or barges may have been disgorged and other cargoes taken aboard. As a matter of fact those were the purposes for which these places were used. In the course of a lecture which Mr. A.E.B. Soulby delivered some years ago, and which readers of the Messenger may remember, he stated that about the time the railway was opened there were sixty vessels on the river at Malton, and an extensive trade was done in coal, grain, and heavy goods.

The right to charge tolls was vested in Earl Fitzwilliam, and subsequently the railway company. The latter period appears to mark the beginning of the end, so far as this traffic on the Derwent is concerned. It is not herein proposed to indicate the great possibilities of such a vast water-power, but

ceased as tolls were raised from 10d to 2s8d per ton. In 1871, the railway company brought a Bill into Parliament containing clauses to vest the navigation entirely in them. Such a strong opposition was organised that a number of clauses were dropped. 'On Saturday, a meeting of the committee of owners, merchants, traders, and others interested in preventing the North Eastern Railway Company from acquiring possession of the river, was held at the Talbot Hotel, Malton' [4]

rather to give full copy of an old and, to Maltonians, interesting document which the writer had the privilege of inspecting some time ago.

It is clearly established that under an Act in the reign of Queen Anne, the Derwent was made navigable up to Malton for small craft, and corn, butter, bacon, etc., were conveyed "from hence to Hull, Leeds, Wakefield, and London," while "from Hull were returned salt, sugar, and provisions of different kinds, and coal and all sorts of woollens brought from Leeds and other parts of the West riding in considerable quantities." It is also on record that the river was made navigable up to Yedingham Bridge for vessels of 25 tons, and that an Act was passed to "make the River Derwent navigable to the mills near Scarborough, but that it was never finished beyond Malton."

However that may be, there can be no doubt that in the old days the Derwent played an important part in the trade and commerce of Malton, and at the places abutting on the river at Malton, and previously indicated - some now grass-covered and weed-choked - there were busy scenes as the cargoes of the incoming and outgoing vessels were warehoused or shipped. A remnant of that old fleet was the N.E.R. dredger, which up to three years ago was in charge Mr. C. Vessey, of Norton, and which scooped up the mud left in the channel by the sluggish waters of the Derwent. Age does not spare even the "captain" of a dredger, and Mr. Vessey has found it necessary to go into dry dock - not for repairs, but for rest. He recollects as many as thirty vessels trading at Malton, and Mr. T. Lightowler, Malton, an uncle of Mrs Vessey's had as many as seven on the river.

## Local Entrepreneurs

There were enterprising townsmen in Malton in the old days. By the courtesy of a local gentleman the writer is able to give the following extracts from the original articles of agreement of "The Malton and Hull Navigation Company," already mentioned, and apart altogether from the name of the promoters and shareholders, he feels sure those extracts will be read with interest by Maltonians:

MALTON AND HULL NAVIGATION COMPANY  
ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT "Made, indented, and mutually and reciprocally agreed upon this nineteenth day of December, in the year of our Lord One thousand, Eight Hundred and Thirty-Seven, between and amongst James Dunlop, draper; Edward Rose, wine merchant; Robert Pickering and Henry Pickering, drapers; Abraham Sewell, grocer; Joseph Priestman, and Isaac Priestman, tanners; Joshua Priestman and John Hopkins, curriers; Robert Woodroffe and Showler Woodroffe, ironmongers; Richard Tomlinson and George Kingston, brewers; George Barnby, stationer; William Horsley, druggist; Joseph Taylor, factor; Robert Clegg, draper and grocer; Thomas Ety, wine merchant; Joshua Metcalfe grocer; Thomas Taylor, grocer; Robert Rutter, boot and shoemaker; John Rutter, grocer; James Metcalfe, merchant; Charlotte Smithson, stationer (all of whom reside in New Malton, in the county of York); David Priestman, of Old Malton, in the said county, miller; John Slater, of the parish of Old Malton aforesaid, nursery and seedsman; Robert Searle, of Norton, in the said county, grocer and spirit merchant; Edward Setchfield of the same place, raff merchant; and Benjamin Collins, of Scarborough, in the said county, gentleman; the present proprietors or shareholders in the company hereinafter mentioned and the several other persons mentioned and the several other persons whose names and seals are or shall be respectively subscribed and affixed."

Whereas the several parties hereto have mutually and reciprocally agreed to form themselves into a company to be called "The Malton and Hull Navigation Company" for the purposes of conveying goods, merchandise and other things from Malton to Hull, and from Hull to Malton, and to and from the intermediate and such other place or places as

may from time to time be determined upon or in such other manner as hereinafter mentioned, and for the purpose also for dealing in coals, cinders, and such other articles as may from time to time be thought expedient and proper as hereinafter expressed, and in order to carry such their intentions into effect they have also agreed to enter into the covenants, clauses, stipulations, provisions and agreements hereinafter contained." "And whereas it hath been likewise agreed that for the better management of the concerns of the said company the same shall be carried on and conducted under the superintendence of such committee and subject to such rules, regulations and provisions as are in and by these presents directed and contained."

"Now, therefore that for the purposes aforesaid and in pursuance and performance of the said agreements, and in consideration of the mutual trust and confidence which they have and repose one in another, and so far as relates to the acts, deeds, and defaults of himself or herself, and of his and her own heirs, executors and administrators only and not jointly or further or otherwise, it is hereby mutually and reciprocally agreed and declared by and between the said parties hereto in manner following, that is to say."

"That all the said parties hereto and such other persons as for the time being shall become proprietors of shares in the capital hereinafter mentioned during such time as they respectively shall hold shares in such capital shall be and form a company to be called, known or distinguished by the name, style, and firm of the 'Malton and Hull Navigation Company,' and shall at all times so long as they respectively continue co-partners therein, promote the advantage of the co-partnership to the utmost of their powers respectively."

"That the object and business of the said company shall be in conveying goods, merchandise, and other things in vessels or boats from Malton to Hull and back again, and from Malton and Hull respectively to and from other places upon, under and subject to the terms, conditions, regulations, and agreements hereinafter expressed, and for the carrying on of such other business as shall be from time to time agreed upon, and be within the true intent and

meaning of the several regulations and provisions hereinafter contained or any of them"

"That the original capital of the said company shall be Two Thousand and Five Hundred Pounds sterling divided into shares of Ten Pounds each, with power to increase such capital by additional shares, as hereinafter provided, and the shares which at the date of these presents have not been taken or subscribed for and also those which hereinafter be created as hereinafter provided shall be allotted and distributed to such persons and in such manner as the committee of the said company shall think advisable and that all the shares in the said company shall be numbered, beginning with number one in the arithmetic progression and every

such share shall be distinguished by the number to be applied to the same."

In paragraph six it is provided that "no shareholder of this company shall possess or hold more than fifteen shares in the capital stock thereof" unless such shares shall have come by marriage, legatee, etc. In paragraph twenty-one appear the names of the first committee of the company - James Dunlop, Edward Rose, Abraham Sewell, John Hopkins, John Slater, Thomas Taylor, and Robert Clegg.

It is provided that "the contract as to the liability of all be held to commence on the twenty-first day of February one thousand eight hundred and thirty-seven."

#### THE SHAREHOLDERS

The following is the list of the shareholders and the number of their shares:-

Edward Rose, New Malton, wine merchant 15 shares	Thomas Ety, New Malton, wine merchant, 10
John Hopkins, new Malton, carrier, 5	Joseph Priestman, New Malton, tanner, 5
John Slater, parish of Old Malton, nursery and seedsman, 5	Isaac Priestman, Norton, tanner, 5
James Dunlop, New Malton, draper, 10	Wm. Horsley, Malton, druggist, 10
Robert Clegg, New Malton, draper and grocer, 10	Jas. Metcalfe, Malton, merchant, 10
Abraham Sewell, New Malton, grocer, 10	Charlotte Smithson, New Malton, stationer, 5
Thomas Taylor, New Malton, grocer, 10	John Henderson, Castle Howard, land steward, 5
Tabitha Pickering, New Malton, draper, 5	B Collins, Sanburgh, gentleman, 10
Henry Pickering, New Malton, draper, 5	Joshua Priestman, Thornton, farmer, 5
John Rutter, New Malton, grocer, 10	S. Priestman, 5
Robert Searle, Norton, grocer, 10	Geo. Barnby, New Malton, stationer, 2
Edward Setchfield, Norton, raff merchant, 10	Overton and Newmans, New Malton, merchants, 10
Jos. A. Metcalfe, New Malton, grocer, 10	John Slater, parish of Old Malton, nurseryman, 3
Robert Woodroffe, New Malton, ironmonger, 1	Richardson & Ella, New Malton, merchants, 10
Showler Woodroffe, New Malton, ironmonger, 1	John Hopkins, New Malton, currier, 3
Robert Rutter, New Malton, shoemaker, 5	Wm. Taylor, New Malton, draper, 5
George Barnby, New Malton, stationer, 8	Wm. Medd, New Malton, 5
	John Rutter, New Malton, grocer, 5

## The End of the Navigation

Clearly there were big advantages of transporting goods by rail. Just how quickly the river traffic had reduced can be deduced from the wording of a newspaper report in 1867. ". . . a most unusual occurrence for an inland town took place at Malton. One of the few sea-going sloops that even in these railway times still continues to ply to Malton, and belonging to Messrs. Metcalfe, merchants, was burnt at her moorings. The vessel had been discharged of coals during the day . . ." [5] The

situation was compounded by the railway company failing to maintain the river i.e. dredging and cutting back overhanging trees. In 1874 a typical incident was reported [6] 'the navigation of this river is becoming so much impeded near Malton, by the silting up of the bed, that it is no uncommon occurrence to see the few vessels that now track to the town, stuck fast when near their voyage end. Yesterday, one stuck right in the centre of the stream right beneath the new railway bridge, and

had to be lightened of its load before it could be moved.' A government inspector in 1884 concluded that 30 years previously there were 'nearly 20 keels plying on the Derwent to Malton, there are now only 3, a result due to the action of the North Eastern Railway Company, to whom the Derwent Navigation was leased by Earl Fitzwilliam. A railroad probably from Malton to York, would soon remedy this, and render the river of comparatively little use and importance' [7] In 1893, the Board of Trade held an inquiry into the canals owned by the North Eastern Railway Company [8]. At this inquiry, Mr. John Soulby, president of the Malton and Norton District Traders' Association recalled that previous to the arrival of the railway there 'was a very considerable amount of traffic to Malton on the canal, some sixty to eighty vessels trading up and down, carrying coals and general cargo.' The canal

traffic was finally strangled, and at the time of writing the 1913 report referred to above [9], no vessels were trading on the river.

#### DERWENT NAVIGATION

. . . a Government inspector under the Canal Boats' Act had paid a visit to Malton and on enquiry he found there were three boats on the river to which the Act applied, and which must be registered forthwith . . . Of the three on the river, one is the navigation boat . . . leaving only two keels plying to Malton with merchandise. This state was contrasted with that existing 25 to 30 years ago when there were 20 vessels plying to Malton.

York Herald, 29 November 1884

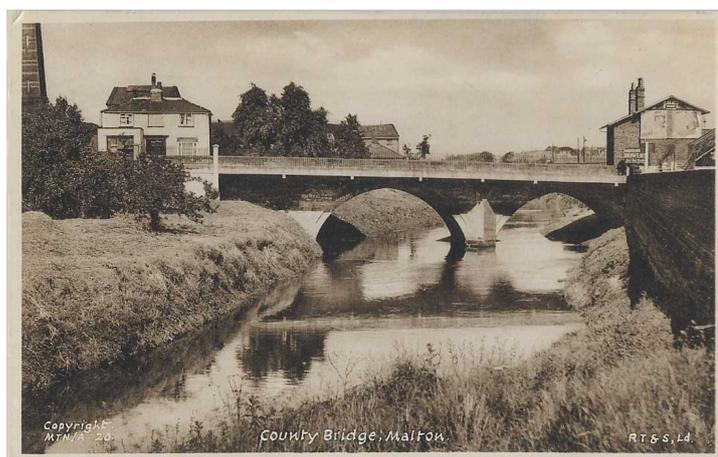
## Boatbuilding

Before the arrival of the railway, the River Derwent helped maintain Malton's status as a trading centre. Malton had at least one resident boat builder, and launches from Thomas Smith's yard were a local spectacle. 'The Brothers' was built for the corn and coal and carrying trade, to Wakefield, Leeds, and other parts of the West-Riding . . . in the evening the owner, workmen and other friends

partook of a supper in connection with the event [10].

Mr. Smith also built the 'Charles and Jane', belonging to Mr. Charles Wood of Malton [11], and the 'James Russell', belonging to Messrs. Russell & Son [12]. Following the launch of the latter, 60 persons attended a launching supper at the Royal Oak Inn.

## The County Bridge



Postmarked 1940, County Bridge from the East

The existing bridge was originally constructed around 1760 [13] and given the river is the dividing line, is part in Malton and part in Norton. A new footpath on the west side of the County bridge was laid down in 1871 [14], 'and is a great convenience for passengers'.

The coming of the motor car made it hazardous for pedestrians to use the bridge and they also had to cross the railway. In 1914 there was discussion as to whether a bridge that went over both the river and the railway was feasible. The general conclusion by the Malton Chamber of Trade was to have a footbridge alongside the existing road bridge. [15]

## References

- [1] Malton in Olden Times, first article, Malton Messenger
- [2] Yorkshire Gazette, 28 December 1844
- [3] Yorkshire Gazette, 1 March 1913
- [4] York Herald, 18 February 1871
- [5] York Herald, 14 December 1867
- [6] York Herald, 29 September 1874
- [7] Hull Packet, 28 November 1884
- [8] York Herald, 4 November 1893
- [9] Yorkshire Gazette, 1 March 1913
- [10] York Herald, 23 May 1840
- [11] York Herald, 14 August 1841
- [12] York Herald, 9 July 1842
- [13] British Listed Buildings website
- [14] York Herald, 10 June 1871
- [15] Malton Messenger, 6 January 1923