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The Port of Hull, 1945-2000: Change, Adaptation and Memory.

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Abstract

In this study, which draws on a large body of archival and oral history material, I outline the economic shifts, technological development and political factors that impacted the British port system after 1945 and transformed its spaces, practices and work cultures. I argue that these developments were felt particularly keenly in the port of Hull which was forced to contend with marked changes to its cargo handling profile as well as specific geographical and operational disadvantages. In addition, I will also address how these structural changes were experienced, interpreted and remembered by those working on the docks in Hull. The attitudes of some associated with the port often remained deeply rooted in the past, a feature that encouraged inertia and a reluctance to adapt to modern trading conditions. In contrast, others at the port who embraced, and benefitted from new developments, often recalled the period as one marked by progress and modernisation. These tensions between broader economic, political and social change and the ways these changes were experienced by the dock workforce have rarely been addressed in previous academic research - this thesis highlights this crucial relationship that is at the heart of the transformation of the port sector. Finally, this thesis also engages with the ways that the port and its work are remembered in contemporary Hull. Since the 1990s the port has experienced comparative success and revival. The local authority, however, is keen to re-brand the city with a modern, vibrant, pioneering image and have therefore neglected the heritage of those who once lived and worked on the industrial waterfront and many of whom suffered the destruction of a way of life. This thesis therefore also outlines how the memory and heritage of the port, and its broader roles in the city of Hull, are changing and developing in the early twenty-first century.

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Abbreviations

ABP	Associated British Ports
BJL	Brynmor Jones Library, The University of Hull
BK	Records of the National Dock Labour Corporation and National Dock Labour Board, (Held at The National Archives, Kew)
BL	British Library, Boston Spa
BR	Records of the British Transport Docks Board (Held at The National Archives, Kew)
BTC	British Transport Commission
BTDB	British Transport Docks Board
CHC	Carnegie Heritage Centre, Hull
DIWE	Docks and Inland Waterways Executive
DPD	Records of Associated British Ports and its predecessor bodies (Held at the Hull History Centre)
DPN	Records of the Hull & Goole office of the National Dock Labour Board (Held at the Hull History Centre)
DTG	Records of the Transport and General Workers Union, Region 10: Docks and Waterways (Held at the Hull History Centre)
HHC	Hull History Centre
HMM	Hull Maritime Museum
LNER	London & North Eastern Railway
MT	Records of the Ministry of Transport (Held at The National Archives, Kew)
NDLB	National Dock Labour Board
NASDU	National Amalgamated Stevedores & Dockers Union
NDLS	National Dock Labour Scheme
NPC	National Ports Council
NSF	North Sea Ferries
TGWU	Transport & General Workers Union
TNA	The National Archives, Kew

1 Introduction

1.1 **Thesis Overview**

Although not as dramatic as the first half of the twentieth century (which witnessed the Great Depression and two world wars), the second half was a period of major social, political and economic change for Great Britain. From being a major industrial and imperial power on the eve of the Second World War in 1939, the Britain that entered the twenty-first century was a much altered place. By this time sterling was much weaker and following the demise of the Empire the UK's economy became more closely integrated with Europe. Standards of living were considerably higher and opportunities for Britons were much wider. Some also suggest that by the year 2000 there had been a general 'loosening-up' of British culture.[1] The social, economic and political transformation of this period was large scale and widespread across the country, but was felt particularly keenly in Britain's industrialised port cities. Integral to the economy and movement of seaborne trade, these places were on the very frontline of change during these years.

Despite the extent of change over this period and their continued importance to the nation's economy, Britain's ports have by no means been studied extensively by academics. Since the early 1990s, the post-1945 transformation of British ports has been analysed by a relatively small number of historians and geographers. Whilst their work has certainly enriched our knowledge this body of literature contains significant gaps. The greater part of this research covers the broad, sweeping organisational and geographical changes that occurred across the port industry during these years. However, our understanding of how change impacted upon individual ports is limited. Furthermore, we know little of how these events were understood, experienced and remembered by those who lived and worked on the post-1945 British waterfront. There is, therefore, much work still to be done on this subject.

Using an innovative cross-disciplinary approach that draws from the fields of history and geography, this thesis attempts to begin redressing this gap by focussing upon the previously unstudied east coast port city of Kingston-upon-Hull, a place that began the post-1945 period as Britain's third port by value of cargo handled but ended it as one of the most socially and economically deprived places in the United Kingdom. The introductory part of the thesis is divided into three chapters. The first provides a detailed appraisal of the literature related to this field of study and an assessment of the particular gaps and areas that require further academic attention. This is followed by a discussion of how my research was conducted and why I chose to undertake it in this way. Finally, I explain how this study is structured and outline the research aims and questions that are addressed in the thesis.

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[1] Kathleen Burk, *The British Isles since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 1.

1.2 **Literature Review**

As multi-purpose interfaces that are of paramount importance to the economies of cities, regions and nations, ports and their populations have generated a host of research issues. These have been addressed by geographers, historians and social scientists in varying ways and to various degrees. Geographers tend to explore the physical and functional evolution of transport systems and port spaces, historians address the administrative organisation of ports, while social scientists are commonly concerned with the human experiences and waterfront communities. By drawing from all of these fields this study uses an innovative interdisciplinary approach that brings together, and contributes to, themes and issues that have previously been examined separately. In doing so I broaden our knowledge of ports as places, and of the lives of their inhabitants. This chapter will appraise the literature related to the thesis' research aims and identify current gaps and areas that require further development. Furthermore, I establish how this thesis will contribute to existing knowledge regarding ports and their people.

1.2.1 The British Port Industry

In response to the shifts within the global economy and developments in cargo-handling, the British port industry experienced a huge transformation during the second half of the twentieth century. However, in the late 1980's the industry entered a period of comparative stability and the country's ports have since undergone little organisational change. During this time, a small number of academic studies that examine the large-scale re-organisation of the industry since 1945 have been produced as part of a wider and growing body of literature that aims to understand the widespread development and change within Britain's maritime industries during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[2]

Drawing on state papers, the reports of inquiries into the industry, and secondary literature regarding the history of various aspects of the port industry, Alan Jamieson provided a general overview of the

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[2] Martin J. Freeman and Derek H. Aldcroft, *Transport in Victorian Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); Edward H. Lorenz, *Economic Decline in Britain: The Shipbuilding Industry, 1890-1970* (Oxford, 1991); Robb Robinson, *Trawling: The Rise and Fall of the British Trawl Fishery* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996); Gordon Jackson, 'Ports, Ships and Government in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries' in Paul C. Van Royen, Lewis R. Fischer and David M. Williams (eds) *Frutta di Mare: Evolution and Revolution in the Maritime World in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Amsterdam: Batavian Lion International, 1998), pp. 161-176; David J. Starkey and Alan G. Jamieson, *Exploiting the Sea: Aspects of Britain's Maritime Economy since 1870* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998); David J. Starkey and Alan G. Jamieson ''Change on a Scale Unequalled': The Transformation of Britain's Port Industry in the Twentieth Century' in Jaap Bruijn et al, *Strategy and Response in the 20th century Maritime World (*Amsterdam, Batavian Lion International, 2001); Alan G. Jamieson, *Ebb Tide in the British Maritime Industries: Change and Adaptation, 1918-1990* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2003); David J. Starkey (ed), *Beyond Shipping and Shipbuilding: Britain's Ancillary Maritime Industries during the Twentieth Century* (Hull: University of Hull, 2008).

organisational evolution of UK ports in response to the economic and technological changes since 1945.[3] Jamieson untangled these complex processes by recognising three distinctive eras of development that included the largely conservative years of 1945-1964, an era of reform under the National Ports Council between 1964 and 1981, and the final period during the 1980s that witnessed the de-regulation of the industry under Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government. Ultimately, Jamieson's study shed light on the diverse and constantly changing polices of successive post-1945 governments and their attempts to adapt the industry to a rapidly altering economic environment. While Jamieson's study recognised and highlighted the pattern of development, Richard Goss provided a critical evaluation of the varied port policies that governed such change.[4] Based on similar materials to those used by Jamieson, Goss's study was a welcome contribution to the politico-economic history of British ports during the era. Goss appraised the diverse polices of the post-1945 Governments and concluded that their port policy since 1945 was politically motivated, doctrinaire and, having been largely developed in other industries, had been applied without regard for the special characteristics of sea ports. Ultimately, both of these studies highlighted the varying approaches, and results of, historic state intervention within national industry.

Jamieson's and Goss' studies provided a valuable but general overview of the policies and process that underpinned the overhaul of the industry during the second half of the twentieth century. By contrast, Sarah Palmer's chapter presented an insight into the experience of modernisation at a specific port.[5] Aside from her study there have been no other detailed investigations into the impact of restructuring and the experience of administrative re-organisation within individual ports during the post Second World War period. Such analyses are vital - as the constitution and infrastructure of British ports varied hugely and generally responded differently to central government port policies. Studies of individual ports (such as this one) allow comparison between the experiences at different sites and enable better understand of the implications and value of externally imposed industrial reform.

Since the 1990s academic work on the organisation of British ports also focussed on the process and implications of port privatisation - a shift that had been driven by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government during the early 1980s and that constitutes the most recent large-scale re-

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[3] Alan G. Jamieson, '"Not More Ports, But Better Ports:" The Development of British Ports since 1945', *The Northern Mariner*, Vol. I (1996), pp. 29-34.

[4] Richard Goss, 'British Port Policies since 1945', *Journal of Transport Economics and Policy*, Vol. 32, 1998, p. 51-71.

[5] Sarah Palmer, 'From London to Tilbury: The Port of London since 1945' in Poul Holm and John Edwards (eds) *North Sea Ports and Harbours – Adaptations to Change* (Esbjerg, Denmark: Fiskeri og Sofartsmuseets, 1992), pp. 185-200.

organisation of the country's ports.[6] Academic debates on this episode have largely centred on whether the performance of British ports has generally improved since they passed from public to private ownership. For instance, Saundry and Turnbull claimed that privatisation had not brought the benefits that had been predicted and that any improvement in service at the privatised ports had been the product of labour deregulation in 1989.[7] Such discussions have, however, largely discussed the industry in general with no individual port cases being analysed. Using Hull as an example I will contribute to this debate by examining the impact of privatisation at the port since the early 1980s.

1.2.2 Dock Labour

Despite forming one of the largest and longest established industrial labour forces in Britain, there were few substantial academic studies about dock workers published before the mid-1960s. The only detailed research of note was produced by a team of researchers from the University of Liverpool's Department of Social Sciences.[8] Focused upon the dockers at the Port of Manchester, their study investigated dock labour relations following the implementation of the Labour Government's National Dock Labour Scheme in 1947. Arguably the most atypical port amongst the country's major commercial seaports, Manchester was an unusual choice for analysis. In fact, it was selected as a pilot study for a future (but never completed) investigation of the more complex case of Liverpool. The publication drew some important early conclusions about post-1945 dock labour organisation upon which academics would later build. Most notable was an observation that while the National Dock Labour Scheme was innovative and improved the security of the labour force, it possessed flaws and features that underpinned labour unrest on Manchester's Docks. The general lack of academic attention regarding British dock workers prior to the 1960s was likely due in part to the extremely complex and varied nature of dock labour across the country's ports. Indeed, geographer James Bird elected not to discuss aspects of dock labour in his seminal 1963 work on ports because of the 'complicated' nature of the subject.[9] Within a few years of his study, however, the onset of the container age plunged the country's port industry and its labour force into a period of rapid and extensive transformation and reorganisation. On the back of this upheaval dock workers became the subject of increased scholarly inquiry.

[6] Alfred J. Baird 'Privatisation of Trust Ports in the United Kingdom: Review and Analysis of the First Sales', *Transport Policy*, Vol. 2 (1995), pp. 135-143.

[7] Richard Saundry and Peter Turnbull, 'Private Profit, Public Loss: The Financial and Economic Performance of U.K. Ports', *Maritime Policy and Management* Vol. 4, 24, (1997), pp. 319-334.

[8] T. S. Simey, *The Dock Worker: An Analysis of Conditions of Employment in the Port of Manchester* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1954).

[9] James H. Bird, *The Major Seaports of the United Kingdom* (London: Hutchinson, 1963), p. 19.

R. B. Oram, an employee of the Port of London Authority (PLA) between 1912 and 1956, drew from his own extensive knowledge and direct experience to produce two studies that focussed on traditional dock work in London and how the development of modern cargo-handling methods were rapidly eroding such working practices. Published in 1965, Oram's work provided a richly detailed overview of the PLA's contemporary administration and operations alongside an assessment of the working practices, organisation and conditions of its dockworkers.[10] Within a few years the distinctive traditional working practices of the docker would disappear following widespread dock labour reforms. These changes intended to adapt the work force to the container age. This development prompted Oram to follow up his previous work with a second book in 1970. This examined the impact of modernisation and the increasing redundancy of dockers, their work and way of life on London docks.[11] Combined, both of these studies offered an unprecedented insight into the harsh, unusual and changing world of the London dock workers whose casual employment and manual work had previously distinguished them as very different from labourers in other industries.

The modernisation and reform of dock labour during the late 1960s and early 1970s following the Government's Devlin Inquiry was met with repeated and widespread industrial unrest throughout the British port industry. This included two national dock strikes - the first since 1926. Such events stimulated a new and sustained academic interest in the history of dock labour organisation and the emergence of trade unionism on the British waterfront. John Lovell's 1969 publication was one of the first to examine labour history in an industrial context.[12] Largely based upon the previously unused archives of the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers' Union (NASDU), Lovell highlighted the persistence of sectionalism and localism amongst the early waterside unions that would blight future collective workers' organisation. In turn, two studies produced as part of the University of Hull's 'occasional papers in economic and social history' series analysed the origin of labour movements in the major ports of Hull and Liverpool. Both based on newspaper sources, Raymond Brown and Eric Taplin's studies highlighted the struggle for organisation and recognition that marked the general establishment of labour movements in these ports during the late Victorian period.[13] Similar studies have also been completed that investigate the roots and development of unionisation in the major ports outside of England. Philip J. Leng's investigation of the Welsh dockers identified that, like London,

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[10] R. B. Oram, *Cargo Handling and the Modern Port* (London: Pergamon, 1965).

[11] R. B. Oram, *The Dockers Tragedy* (London: Hutchinson, 1970).

[12] John Lovell, *Stevedores and Dockers: A study of Trade Unionism in the Port of London, 1870-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1969).

[13] Raymond Brown, Waterfront *Organisation in Hull, 1870-1900* (Hull: University of Hull Publications, 1972); Eric Taplin, *Liverpool Dockers and Seamen, 1870-1890* (Hull: University of Hull Publications, 1974).

it was the long-established casual hiring system that led to the historic weakness of waterfront organisation in Newport, Cardiff and Swansea.[14] Other studies include William Kenefick's examination of the Glasgow dockers that provided a long-overdue insight into the important role played by Scottish dock workers in the emergence of 'New Unionism', a movement that incorporated previously poorly organised groups across Britain.[15]

These detailed case studies provided a valuable contribution to the study of the labour movement in Britain's ports. However, they were essentially local studies that made few connections to the experiences of labour forces of other ports. This task was achieved, however, in a landmark 2000 publication that brought together, and explored, the history of dock labour forces from a wide variety of ports across the globe.[16] The studies of its two volumes sit within a comparative framework that explores the organisational, economic, cultural and political dimensions of dock labour history at ports across the globe (including London, Shanghai, Mombasa, New York and Hamburg). Aside from placing the history of British dock labour in an international context, the greatest achievement of this publication is emphasising that despite the similar organisation and function of ports across the globe the experience of dock workers varied considerably between ports both nationally and internationally. Where possible my study of Hull will make comparisons with other ports. However, one of my central aims is to focus specifically on Hull and contribute to this wider, comparative analysis.

The first national study of the British dock labour force, its history and the reform that aimed to modernise it during the late 1960s was published in 1972 by David Wilson.[17] Wilson, a Labour Correspondent for *The Observer*, used a vast array of industrial and government primary source materials to provide a hugely detailed insight into the historical problems of dock labour organisation dating back to the 19th century. These, he asserted, had made both industrial relations and attempts at reform hugely difficult, particularly since 1945. So comprehensive was Wilson's study that little more research was produced in this field until the 1980s when an expanding body of literature focussing on casual labour in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain emerged.[18] Again, using archive

[14] Philip J. Leng, *The Welsh Dockers* (Ormskirk: Hesketh, 1981).

[15] William Kenefick, "*Rebellious and Contrary": The Glasgow Dockers, 1853 – 1932* (Glasgow: Tuckwell Press, 2000).

[16] Sam Davies, Colin J. Davis, David de Vries, Lex Heerna Van Voss, Lidewij Hesselink and Klaus Weinhauer (eds.) *Dock Workers International Explorations in Comparative Labour History, 1790-1970* (Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 2000).

[17] David Wilson, Dockers, *The Impact of Industrial Change* (London: Fontant/Collins, 1972).

[18] Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society* (London: Penguin Books, 1971); James H. Treble, 'The Seasonal Demand for Adult Labour in Glasgow, 1890-1914', *Social History*, Vol. 3, 1, 1978, pp. 43-60.

materials, Whiteside and Phillips' study of casualism in the port transport industry between 1880 and 1970 concluded, similarly to Wilson's study, that it was indeed a deeply entrenched culture of casual labour in ports that had caused ongoing labour unrest and the failure of industrial reform on the waterfront.[19]

Following significant upheavals in the late 1960s and early 1970s the British port industry entered a period of comparative peace in the later 1970s. There was, however, a re-emergence of industrial unrest during the 1980s as dock workers fought to protect their dwindling work from a growing force of unregistered labour. Discord within the industry was finally resolved in 1989 following the abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme, a move that effectively terminated the docking occupation and removed many dock workers from the industry. The events of this decade rekindled a degree of academic interest into the post-1945 development of dock labour organisation. A number of journal articles were authored or co-authored during the early 1990s by Peter Turnbull, an academic whose interests lay within human resource management and labour relations.[20] It was, however, a publication penned by Turnbull, Woolfson and Kelly that examined the unrest and reform on the docks during the 1980s most comprehensively.[21] Recognising that the events surrounding Britain's coal miners and their struggles with the Thatcher government had dominated academic commentary and analysis on industrial relations during the 1980s, these authors expanded upon the work of Wilson, and Whiteside and Philips. By using the ports as an example, they showed how the transformation of British industry during the 1980s had gradually shifted the balance of power from labour to the employer. Other previously unstudied aspects of post-1945 dock labour were also addressed following the abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme. For example, Trotskyist writer Bill Hunter used a combination of first-hand experience and oral testimony to examine the history of unofficial industrial action during the post-1945 period, a feature, which he asserted, stemmed from a deep seated rank and file distrust of official leadership.[22] Yet, since Hunter's study was published, there has been little research completed that examines dock labour.

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[19] Gordon Phillips and Noel Whiteside, *Casual Labour: The Unemployment Question in the Port Transport Industry 1880-1970* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

[20] Peter Turnbull 'Dock Strike and the Demise of the Dockers' "Occupational Culture", *Sociological Review*, Volume 40, 2, 1992, pp. 294-318; Peter Turnbull and David Sapsford, 'Why did Devlin Fail? Casualism and Conflict on the Docks' *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, Volume 29, 1, 1992, pp. 237-257; Peter Turnbull and David Sapsford, 'A Sea of Discontent:The Tides of Organised and Unorganised Conflict on the Docks' *Sociology*, Volume 26, 2, 1992, pp. 291-309.

[21] Peter Turnbull, Charles Woolfson and John Kelly, *Docks Strike: Conflict and Restructuring in Britain's Ports* (Aldershot, Avebury, 1992).

[22] Bill Hunter, *They Knew Why They Fought: Unofficial Struggles and Leadership on the Docks, 1945-1989* (London: Index Books, 1994).

There remains much work to be done on labour organisation and industrial unrest within the port industry. As this section suggests, literature relating to dock labour tends to focus on these issues before 1939. There exists few studies that examine the post-1945 history of dock labour forces at specific ports, and the tumultuous years of the 1980s have been particularly understudied. More work in this area would greatly enrich our knowledge, and contribute to debates about the widespread re-organisation, modernisation and demise of British labour during the second half of the twentieth century.

1.2.3 Culture and Community on the Waterfront

While the work, culture and traditions of the industrial labouring communities of Britain including miners, shipbuilders, seafarers, agricultural workers and those involved in manufacturing have received much academic attention there has been comparatively little research conducted into social aspects of the country's dock labour. [23] The studies about dock labour discussed above do address some issues relating to aspects of community within the British dock labour force. A key debate within this literature centres upon the nature of docking communities and whether they constituted a tight-knit 'occupational community'. This concept argues that the distinctive occupational culture of certain traditional working class groups such as miners and sailors caused them to form separate, identifiable communities close to their work territories. [24] For some they became a race apart with their own codes, myths, heroes and social standards.[25] Some scholars offered evidence that suggested dock workers did indeed form separate and closed communities on the waterfront. For example, the 1954 examination of the Manchester dockers suggested that 40 per cent of the labour force lived within a mile of the dock gates by choice rather than necessity.[26] Others have expanded upon evidence of residential segregation by suggesting that it was the Irish-Catholic origins of the dock labour force in large ports like London, Liverpool and Glasgow that had encouraged the formation of tight-knit

[23] Mary J. F. Gregor and Ruth M. Crichton, *From Croft to Factory: The Evolution of an Industrial Community* (London: Nelson, 1946); Dennis N. Henriques, Fernando M. Louis, Cliff Slaughter, *Coal is our Life: An Analysis of a Yorkshire Coal Mining Community* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1956); Stan Hugill, *Sailortown* (London: *Routledge*, 1967; Peter H. Fricke (Ed.), *Seafarer and Community: Towards a Social Understanding of Seafaring* (London: Croom Helm, 1973); Tony Parker, *Redhill: A Mining Community* (London: Heinemann 1986); J. A. Jowitt, *Model Industrial Communities in Mid-Nineteenth Century Yorkshire* (Bradford: University of Bradford, 1986); Ian P. Roberts, *Craft, Class and Control: The Sociology of a Shipbuilding Community* (Edinburgh: The University of Edinburgh Press for the University of Durham, 1993); John Field, *Portsmouth Dockyard and its Workers, 1815-1875* (Portsmouth: Portsmouth City Council, 1994).

[24] Clark Kerr and Abraham Siegel, 'The Interindustry Propensity to Strike: An International Comparison' in E. W. Evans and S. W. Creigh, *Industrial Conflict in Britain* (London: Cass, 1977), p. 235.

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] T. S. Simey, *The Dock Worker: An Analysis of Conditions of Employment in the Port of Manchester* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1954), p. 43.

docking communities characterised by a distinctive clannishness and suspicion of outsiders.[27] In her study of the urban dimension of British ports, Palmer also asserted that developments in the twentieth century including the survival of casual employment, strong unionisation, strict occupational inheritance and an older than average age profile compared to other labour forces 'tended to enhance differences between waterfront and other types of labour'.[28] The distinction and cohesion of docking communities has, however, been contested. For instance, Hill's sociological study of dockers during the 1960s suggested that although some evidence of occupational community existed amongst dock workers in London, this was neither very concentrated geographically nor were the dockers' lives greatly influenced by it.[29] Likewise, Whiteside and Phillips challenged notions of the cultural, ethnic and residential distinctiveness of dock workers and contended that the idea of dockers being an occupational community or 'race apart' was 'lurid and fanciful'.[30]

This neglect of labouring dockland communities also extends to Hull. Although there have been numerous studies completed regarding the nature and decline of the fishing community of Hull there has been very little research into the social and cultural aspects of the port's dock labourers.[31] Sam Davies' chapter did make some preliminary observations about aspects of community and culture on the waterfront at Hull that contributed to existing debate. For example, Davies claimed that the Irish never 'amounted to a large proportion of the dock labour force' in Hull and further, dockside neighbourhoods were both occupationally mixed and geographically dispersed due to the physical development of the dock system.[32] This suggests that a distinctive dockside community may not have

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[27] John Lovell, *Stevedores and Dockers: A Study of Trade Unionism in the Port of London, 1870-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 57-58; David Wilson, *Dockers*: *The Impact of Industrial Change* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1972), p. 29; William Kenefick, "*Rebellious and Contrary": The Glasgow Dockers, 1853 – 1932* (Glasgow: Tuckwell Press, 2000), pp. 40-45.

[28] Sarah Palmer, 'Ports 1840-1970' in M. J. Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Vol. III* (Cambridge: University Press, 2000), pp. 149-150.

[29] Stephen Hill, *The Dockers: Class and Tradition in London* (London: Heinemann, 1976), p. 176.

[30] Gordon Phillips and Noel Whiteside, *Casual Labour: The Unemployment Question in the Port Transport Industry 1880-1970* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 275.

[31] Jeremy Tunstall, *The Fishing Family in Hull* (1960); G. W. Horobin, The Fishing Community at Hull: An Occupational Subsystem (PhD Thesis, University of Hull, 1962); Alec Gill, *Village Within a City: The Hessle Road Fishing Community of Hull* (Hull: Hull University Press, 1986); John K. Walton, 'Fishing Communities, 1850-1950' in in David J. Starkey, Chris Reid and Neil Ashcroft (eds.) *England's Sea Fisheries: The Commercial Sea Fisheries of England and Wales since 1300* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2000), pp. 127-137; Stephen Friend, 'Social and Spiritual Work Amongst Fishing Communities' in *England's Sea Fisheries: The Commercial Sea Fisheries of England and Wales since 1300* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2000), pp.138-145; Jo Byrne, After the Trawl: Memory and Afterlife in the Wake of Hull's Distant-Water Trawl Fishery after 1976. (PhD Thesis, 2015).

[32] Sam Davies, 'The History of the Hull Dockers, c. 1870-1960' in Sam Davies, Colin J. Davis, David de Vries, Lex Heerna Van Voss, Lidewij Hesselink and Klaus Weinhauer (eds.) *Dock Workers International Explorations in Comparative Labour History, 1790-1970* (Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 2000), pp. 190-193.

emerged as clearly as elsewhere. Davies' findings were, however based purely on secondary literature and a 'limited survey' of census returns from 1891; the author himself admitted that 'a more detailed and systematic survey' was required for the case of Hull. Despite being one of the largest and longest established dock labour forces in the country there is still much work to be completed on docking culture at Hull, particularly in relation to aspects of the community's distinction, decline and disappearance.

This thesis contributes to debates regarding the presence of an 'occupational community' amongst dock workers at Hull during the post-1945 period. Like Hill's study of the London dockers, this is based upon data provided by research interviews. However, rather than quantifying the responses of my interviewees like Hill, I use an alternative qualitative approach to identify the extent to which the dockers were considered themselves, and by others, to be a separate and distinctive group on the waterfront.

1.2.4 The Geographical study of Ports

In response to ongoing shifts within the economy and developments within transport technology the geographies of ports have constantly evolved. This issue and its implications constitute one of the principal themes of this study. Here, I outline the existing literature regarding the geographical development of ports and establish how I will contribute towards current debates in this area.

1.2.4.1 Port Development

The first detailed academic assessment regarding the geographical development of British ports was published by David J. Owen in 1939.[33] Prior to Owen's study, literature about the economic geography, function and trade of ports was scattered and mostly produced by individual port authorities. Consequently, the greatest achievement of Owen's study was to tame a vast subject area and provide a concise, comparative overview of the origin and industrial growth of the country's numerous and varied dock systems. As Owen's study also contains a relatively detailed inventory of the geography and function of the country's ports as they stood in 1939, it has provided immense value as a primary source from which the post-1945 evolution of the port of Hull can be traced and analysed. A similar inventory-style study was produced twenty years later by another geographer - Henry Rees.[34] Rees did little more than update Owen's study of the nation's ports, although he placed more emphasis upon the shipping that utilised such facilities. Like Owen's publication, Rees' study also provided a useful snapshot of the pre-modernised industry, although, on this occasion it was completed upon the eve of large-scale geographical change across British ports.

[33] David J. Owen, *The Origin and Development of The Ports of the United Kingdom* (London: Allman, 1939).
[34] Henry Rees, *British Ports and Shipping* (George G. Harrap & Company Ltd, 1958).

Around the same time as Rees' work was published, a more scientific approach to the geographical development of ports was introduced when geographer James Bird examined the geographical evolution of the modern Port of London from the twelfth century.[35] It was, however, Bird's seminal work that laid the groundwork for the future geographical study of ports.[36] In this 1963 publication Bird introduced a morphological model-based approach to chart the common evolution of port systems from their earliest origins through successive eras of development. This he named 'Anyport'. Through 'Anyport', Bird contended that port activity constantly migrated into deeper water downstream as the vessels that ports served became increasingly larger. On this basis he identified ports as mobile phenomena - and those with access to deeper water and adjacent land space for the development of new docks and terminals had enjoyed the most success and would logically continue to do so. Considered an ingenious innovation by many of Bird's peers, the Anyport concept was applied by its creator and others to further geographical studies of ports around the globe including Australia, East Africa and West Africa.[37] In addition, the concept was later adapted and extended by Bird during the 1970s and 1980s to incorporate the implications of the rapidly emerging container era and the attendant collapse and redevelopment of older upstream port facilities.[38]

Until the early 1980s Bird's conceptual model held firm in terms of the academic understanding of the historical and spatial development of ports. Since then, however, the validity of Bird's model has been challenged. Scholars who have examined the history of port development have also established certain weaknesses in Bird's model. For instance, Sarah Palmer's aforementioned study of the post-1945 geographical development of the Port of London highlighted the managerial decision making process that led to the relocation of port facilities from London to Tilbury and asserted that the closure and redevelopment of downstream facilities was not always inevitable.[39] In addition, Adrian Jarvis contended that, in the case of the development of oil terminals between 1882 and 1962

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[35] James H. Bird, *The Geography of the Port of London* (London: Hutchinson, 1957).

[36] James H. Bird, *The Major Seaports of the United Kingdom* (London: Hutchinson, 1963).

[37] James H. Bird, *Seaport Gateways of Australia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968); B. S. Hoyle 'East African Seaports: An Application of the Concept of 'Anyport'', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, No. 44, 1968, pp. 163-183; H. P. White, 'The Morphological Development of West African Seaports' in B. S. Hoyle and D. Hilling (Eds), *Seaports and Development in Tropical Africa* (London: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 11-25.

[38] James H. Bird, *Seaports and Seaport Terminals* (London: Hutchinson, 1971) [pp. 66-74; James H. Bird, 'Seaport Development: Some Questions of Scale' in B. S. Hoyle and D. Hilling (eds) *Seaport Systems and Spatial Change: Technology, Industry and Development Strategies* (Chichester: Wiley, 1984), pp. 21-41.

[39] Sarah Palmer, 'From London to Tilbury: The Port of London since 1945' in Poul Holm and John Edwards (eds) *North Sea Ports and Harbours – Adaptations to Change* (Esbjerg, Denmark: Fiskeri og Sofartsmuseets, 1992), p. 187.

on Merseyside (one of the major oil importing centres of the UK), all related facilities were 'without exception [deployed] upstream of original dock facilities'.[40] This, he concluded, was 'not a minor exception which proves the rule, it is a sequence of exceptions that calls into the question the validity of one of the eras upon which the model of 'Anyport' depends'.[41] In parallel with challenges to Bird's model, alternative approaches to the study of geographical development of ports have also emerged. Without doubt the most widely regarded example is Gordon Jackson's work. Published in 1983 following the development of new cargo-handling methods and the collapse of the 'old port system', Jackson's study aimed to demonstrate how fluctuating patterns of trade were responsible for the fragile nature of port prosperity and their constantly changing nature.[42] His work traced British port development from the fifteenth century by blending economic history and industrial archaeology. He drew examples from a variety of ports to provide a national portrait of historical port development. Although this study remains accurate and useful, the last part of the book 'A Survey of Disaster: Change and Decay' swiftly became dated as it was issued on the eve of a new era of geographical transition in ports.

1.2.4.2 Dockland Regeneration

During the 1980s there was an increasing re-development of many dockland areas that had been abandoned and left to dereliction in the late 1960s and 1970s following the development of new facilities away from the urban core of port cities. This very different aspect of port development and urban regeneration provided a new focus for geographers and, accordingly, a new wave of literature emerged during this period. One of the first studies was a journal article by Yehuda Heyuth.[43] Here, Heyuth recognised that the effect of the development of intermodal transport technology coupled with a growing public recognition of the asset of the waterfront was encouraging the urban re-integration and sanitisation of the waterfront. These processes witnessed an increasing separation of previously related city and port functions. Increasing academic recognition of this emergent process marked a departure from Gordon Jackson's historical analysis of British ports that highlighted the collapse, decline and dereliction of outdated port facilities. The expanded body of work about dockland regeneration encouraged a more optimistic and forward looking approach that examined

[40] Adrian Jarvis, 'Port History: Some Thoughts on Where it Came from and Where it Might be Going' in Lewis R. Fischer and Adrian Jarvis (Eds) *Harbours and Havens: Essays in Port History in Honour of Gordon Jackson* (St. John's, Newfoundland: International Maritime Economic History Association, 1999), p. 23.

[41] *Ibid.*

[42] Gordon, Jackson, *The History and Archaeology of Ports* (Tadworth, Surrey: The Windmill Press, 1983).

[43] Yehuda Heyuth 'The Port-Urban interface an Area in Transition', *Area*, 14, 1982, pp. 219-224.

aspects of re-birth and renewal across defunct dockland areas.[44] Despite this wave of academic interest and activity during the 1980s there was no integrated, systematic overview of the waterfront revitalisation movement until the 1988 study that looked at examples of dockland redevelopment across the world.[45] Based on the juxtaposition of ideas, methods of analysis and experience derived from a wide range of port cities in both advanced and developing countries this book presented a broad comparative discussion by focussing upon contemporary issues surrounding waterfront regeneration and their implications for the future physical, economic and social development of port cities. Of particular relevance to this thesis is David Hilling's chapter 'Socio-Economic Change in the Maritime Quarter: The demise of Sailortown'.[46] Approaching the subject of waterfront regeneration by assessing an urban-residential rather than the industrial area of the waterfront at the port of Cardiff, Hilling highlighted how dockland regeneration projects must consider the unique socio-economic past of such places as they outline and assess change.

Similar themes regarding waterfront regeneration were placed in a European context by several authors who contributed to the 1992 edited volume *European Port Cities in Transition*.[47] Nicholas Falk's chapter critiqued the diverse regeneration processes and strategies completed in UK docklands including London, Rotherhithe and Bristol. Based on these examples Falk highlighted the diversity of waterfront redevelopment projects in Britain and provided evidence that suggested that some had been more successful than others.[48] In addition, Jacques Charlier's chapter provided a compelling argument regarding dockland regeneration development. He suggested that greater use of disused port areas could be made by re-developing them for port use, a strategy, which he pointed out, had found success in Antwerp, Ghent and Rotterdam.[49] Of particular note, however, is Tunbridge

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[44] M. Herbbert, 'The Five Problems of Docklands Redevelopment', *Town and Country Planning*, 51, 5, 1982, 129-131; A. J. Budd, 'Land-use Conflict in Bristol's Central Dockland', *Developments in Political Geography,* M. A. Busteed (ed) (London: Academic Press, 1983), pp. 251-301; M. Clark, 'Fallow Land in Old Docks: Why Such a Slow Take-up of Britain's Waterside Redevelopment Opportunities?', *Maritime Policy and Management*, 12, 2, 1985, pp. 157-167; A. Church and J. Hall, 'Discovery of Docklands', *Geographical Magazine*, 58, 12, 1986, pp. 632-639; S. Page, 'The London Docklands: Redevelopment Schemes in the 1980s', *Geography*, 72, 1, 1987, pp., 59-63.

[45] D. A. Pinder, B. S. Hoyle and M. S. Hussain (eds) *Revitalising the Waterfront: International Dimensions of Dockland Redevelopment* (London: Belhaven, 1988).

[46] David Hilling, 'Socio-Economic Change in the Maritime Quarter: The Demise of Sailortown' in D. A. Pinder, B. S. Hoyle and M. S. Hussain (eds) *Revitalising the Waterfront: International Dimensions of Dockland Redevelopment* (London: Belhaven, 1988), pp. 20-37.

[47] B. S. Hoyle and D. A. Pinder (eds), *European Port Cities in Transition* (London: Belhaven Press, 1992).

[48] Nicholas Falk, 'Turning the Tide: British Experience in Regenerating urban Docklands' in in B. S. Hoyle and D. A. Pinder (eds), *European Port Cities in Transition* (London: Belhaven Press, 1992), pp. 116-136.

[49] Jacques Charlier, 'The Regeneration of Old Port Areas for New Port Spaces' in B. S. Hoyle and D. A. Pinder (eds), *European Port Cities in Transition* (London: Belhaven Press, 1992), pp. 137-154.

and Ashworth's chapter about the potential for the exploitation and commodification of heritage and leisure at regenerated sites on the waterside.[50] This discussion and the literature related to port heritage will be discussed further in the following section. Although Hull experienced extensive waterfront revitalisation during the 1980s and early 1990s it has seldom been used to exemplify the dockland regeneration experience in the UK. As a result, this thesis will build upon this existing body of literature by focussing upon the process and policy of dockside regeneration at Hull.

1.2.4.3 The Urban History of Ports

In contrast to works that focus on the development of dock systems and other port facilities, there are far fewer works that focus on the evolution of the urban districts of ports. Nevertheless there has been some valuable research in this area. For instance, Martin Daunton's 1977 study examined urban development in the port of Cardiff during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[51] By studying the economic, social and political development of Cardiff during these years, Daunton offered an insight into the urbanisation process in the Welsh capital and also outlined a microcosm that reflected urban development in many of the country's ports and, indeed, British cities more generally prior to World War I. Aside from Daunton's work, two studies regarding the more general urban development across British ports have been produced as part of a wider collection of essays on the urban history of Britain. [52] Recognising that there had been a scholarly inclination to allow the dock wall to define the limits of research into ports, Palmer investigated in what ways cities that provided port facilities were different to those that did not, and to what extent port cities share common features. Based on these lines of inquiry, Palmer identified that ports possessed special characteristics as places into the 1950s and whilst many shared, geographical, functional and cultural similarities, each also had their own, distinctive story. The sections of this thesis deal with aspects of port community in Hull. I intend to build upon this small body of research with research that investigates aspects of urban development within a port city during the post-1945 period.

1.2.5 Heritage and Memory on the Waterfront

In addition to investigating the process of modernisation at the port of Hull, this thesis also explores the ways the 'old port system' and its associated communities have been remembered and represented within the city and its regenerated port spaces. A small body of work has been completed

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[50] John Tunbridge and Gregory Ashworth, 'Leisure Resource Development in cityport Revitalisation: The Tourist-Historic Dimension' in B. S. Hoyle and D. A. Pinder (eds), *European Port Cities in Transition* (London: Belhaven Press, 1992), pp. 176-200.

[51] Martin J. Daunton, *Coal Metropolis Cardiff, 1870-1914* (Leicester: Leicester University Press).

[52] Sarah Palmer, 'Ports 1840-1970' in M. J. Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Vol. III* (Cambridge: University Press, 2000), pp. 133-150.

regarding heritage on the Hull waterfront, however, this has largely been discussed in relation to the city's fishing industry.[53] As yet, there has been no work completed regarding the heritage of dock workers at Hull (or indeed any other port city) since the effective dissolution of their occupation and community by the abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme in 1989. Consequently, the final chapter of this thesis examines the official and unofficial ways, and the extent to which, the Hull dockers have been remembered from the early 1990s. Furthermore, I make comparisons with memories of Hull's fishing community and the dockworkers at other ports. Below I establish and expand upon some of the key literature and debates within the field of heritage and memory studies.

Over the past two decades human geographers have deepened our knowledge regarding the nature of individual and collective social memory, of commemoration, and of the roles of the past in the present. In terms of memory studies, some inspiration has been taken from a number of works which theorised how memory was rooted in certain sites and locales.[54] Likewise, key works on heritage have also provided human geographers with an initial basis for discussion.[55] Early geographical research that conceptualised monuments and memorials as sites of memory and heritage was produced by Nuala Johnson in her 1995 paper 'Cast in Stone: Monuments, Geography and Nationalism'.[56] In this study Johnson highlighted the usefulness of public monuments as a source for understanding the emergence and articulation of a nationalist political discourse. Furthermore, she argued that the location of statuary reveals the ways in which monuments serve as the focal point for the expression of social action and a collectivist politics, and the iconography of statues exposes how class, 'race', and gender differences are negotiated in public space.

Johnson's paper was largely concerned with official sites of memory, however, academic work which discussed the expanding culture of *popular* heritage was also completed. In 1994, Raphael

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[53] Craig Lazenby and David J. Starkey, 'Altered Images: Representing the Trawling in the Late Twentieth Century' in *England's Sea Fisheries: The Commercial Sea Fisheries of England and Wales since 1300* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2000), pp.166-172; David Atkinson, 'Heritage' in David Atkinson et al (eds.) *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts* (London, IB Taurus, 2005), pp. 141-150; David Atkinson, 'The Heritage of Mundane Places' in Brian Graham and Peter Howard (eds) *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 381-395; Jo Byrne, After the Trawl: Memory and Afterlife in the Wake of Hull's Distant-Water Trawl Fishery after 1976. (PhD Thesis, 2015).

[54] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*. Translated by Lewis A. Coser (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations*, No. 26, 1989, pp. 7-24; James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven, Massachusetts: Yale University Press, 1993.

[55] Patrick Wright, *On Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain* (London: Verso, 1985); Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline* (London: Methuen, 1987).

[56] Nuala Johnson, 'Cast in Stone: Monuments, Geography and Nationalism', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Volume 13, 1995, pp. 51-65.

Samuel's influential research was published as part of a three volume work.[57] In these publications Samuel investigated cultural links between the present and recollections of the past and suggested that articulations of popular memories, or 'unofficial knowledge', is no less valid than professional history. Furthermore, he asserted that both versions are shaped by present day concerns. As well as addressing these issues in relation to a variety of cultural phenomena including Retro-chic, Resurrectionism and Costume Dramas, Samuel also discussed them within the context of heritage. He established that heritage had traditionally been mobilised for political purposes, yet, in recent times, it had become increasingly accessible to ordinary people. Consequently, the concept of a unified national past was being challenged by more fragmented, plural versions of the past.

More recently, Samuel's work on memory has been extended by human geographers and applied to the role of heritage in contemporary landscapes. David Atkinson, for example, has examined dissonant heritages, particularly within everyday spaces and places of cities. For instance, he explored how partial representations of maritime heritage required by capital and local authorities in Hull were materialised in the city. More specifically, he evidenced how modern, vibrant and heroic versions of Hull's maritime past were prioritised and articulated through festivals and statues on the city's regenerated waterfront whilst memories of the port's less glamourous former fishing community were elided.[58] Atkinson expanded upon this work by analysing another example of heritage commodification by local authorities in Hull and its implications within the locality. Using the city's Victoria Dock Village (a former timber dock that had been opened in 1850 but following its closure in 1979 was redeveloped into an elite residential 'urban village') as a case study he focussed on the 'historic' maritime kitsch motifs that had been integrated into the landscape of the development and included anchors, capstans, and street names such 'Sailor's Wharf' and 'Admiral's Court'.[59] Atkinson concluded that, although residents recognised these historic referents as one-dimensional, they valued the simple, ready comfort of this general aesthetic as it made them feel that they lived in a historic place. The idea of alternative popular heritages was explored further in his investigation about the increasing democratisation of memory and how it had encouraged individuals and groups in Hull and elsewhere to challenge 'official heritages' by identifying and articulating their own more commonplace social, industrial and cultural histories - particularly those in ordinary,

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[57] Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory, Volume I: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London, Verso, 1994).

[58] David Atkinson, 'Heritage' in David Atkinson et al (eds.) *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts* (London, IB Taurus, 2005), pp. 141-150.

[59] David Atkinson, 'Kitsch Geographies and the Everyday Spaces of Social Memory' in *Environment and Planning*, A, 2007, Vol. 39, pp. 521-540.

everyday places.[60] By drawing on Atkinson's conceptualisation of partial heritages and dissonance this thesis explores a further example from Hull, however, the focus will be on an official site of memory: the city's Maritime Museum.

In parallel, others have also explored alternative heritage narratives with an increasing interest in the notion of memory and its association with particular places and spaces. For instance, Tim Edensor conceptualised and examined the 'ghosts' or 'hauntings' that are attached to the disordered space of industrial ruins in cities.[61] He argued that such 'affective and sensual memories', which are conjured up by such places, act as an 'antidote' to the ordered social remembering encouraged by the fixed, classified and commodified memories purveyed in official heritage narratives and commemorative places. Edensor expanded his work on former industrial spaces in a 2005 monograph that challenged modern conceptions of industrial ruins as 'waste'. Instead, he explored the new kinds of spaces that such places produce – space imbued with meanings and activities that can stand in juxtaposition to the dominant interpretations of post-industrial society.[62] Furthermore, he also discussed how the items and objects contained within industrial ruins also acquire new meanings, for instance, as historical monuments.

Alongside every day places, other geographers have also explored the spatiality of memory and other themes relating to heritage at more traditional sites. Hilary Geohegan's journal article recognised that museums and their collections were 'inherently spatial'.[63] Building on work in museum studies that identified that museum space was open to change and therefore 'had a history of its own', Geohegan contended that such places provide an important area of focus for further geographical study. Consequently, I will investigate a number of the themes identified by Geoghegan in relation to the spatiality and history of the 'Docking Gallery' at Hull's Maritime Museum in order to understand the ways in which the dock labouring community at Hull has been represented.

1.2.6 Summary

Based on this literature review it is apparent that there is still much to be done to broaden our knowledge of how economic and technological forces have impacted the organisation, the geography and the people of Britain's commercial ports. Although the widespread post-1945 re-structuring of the industry by (often conflicting) government policy has been thoroughly appraised at a national

[60] David Atkinson, 'The Heritage of Mundane Places' in Brian Graham and Peter Howard (eds) *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 381-395.

[61] Tim Edensor, 'The Ghost of Industrial Ruins: Ordering and Disordering Memory in Excessive Space', *Environmental Planning D: Society and Space*, Volume 23, pp. 829-849.

[62] Tim Edensor, *Industrial Ruins: Spaces Aesthetics and Materiality* (Oxford: Berg, 2005).

[63] Hilary Geoghegan, 'Museum Geography: Exploring Museums, Collections and Museum Practice in the UK' *Geography Compass,* Vol. 4/10, pp. 1462-1476.

level, there remains much work to be done on the impact of reform upon the organisation and operations of individual ports. Such research would provide a greater degree of detail but also permit comparative studies in the future. Furthermore, the dearth of academic study about the experience of labour reform upon the dockers of individual ports (particularly during the 1980s) means that there is scope for further work in this area too. The tendency of academics to focus upon the trade union organisation and industrial action of dock labour has meant that aspects of culture and community amongst waterfront workers has often been overshadowed particularly when compared to workers in other industries. Consequently, there is a substantial gap in our knowledge regarding the social history of port cities. In a similar fashion, the origin and geographical evolution of British ports in relation to the constantly changing world of maritime transport has been widely appraised and many common patterns of development have been identified. The complexity of the geography of individual port sites, however, has often been overlooked in relation to the geographical development of ports and the pace and process of waterfront regeneration which occurred during the 1980s. Finally, studies regarding heritage and memory and their spatialisation have developed hugely since the 1990s but they too elide aspects of docklands history, and whilst such issues have been explored substantially in relation to Hull's former fishing community, less research has been completed about the port's dockers. Consequently, this thesis examines aspects of memory and representation both in the regenerated areas of Hull's waterfront as well as the city's official heritage sites. Furthermore, it draws together, and builds upon, the various facets of port study discussed here to provide a fuller understanding of the monumental transformation that was experienced by ports and their populations during the second half of the twentieth century.

1.3 **Sources and Methodology**

This chapter demonstrates how my research was conducted and the ways in which materials were gathered and analysed. To date, academic studies that focus on ports and their labour have been produced within the disciplines of history and geography but with little methodological overlap between the two fields. As this study examines issues that are both historical and geographical I have identified, and drawn from, methodological practices used in both of these disciplines. Various facets of this cross-disciplinary approach will now be discussed.

1.3.1 Case Study: The Port of Hull

Studies that focus upon the post-1945 transformation of British ports have tended to focus upon the industry and its associated labour at a national level. Consequently, the experience and response to change of individual ports and localities have often been overlooked. Research into individual ports is therefore useful and relevant. There are several reasons why the Port of Hull has been selected. Until the 1960s, Hull was Britain's third port by value of cargo handled (after London and Liverpool respectively).[64] Its economic profile was therefore national and international during the second half of the twentieth century. Furthermore, it possessed the third largest dock labour force well into the post-1945 period. In 1955 it numbered 4,739 dockers, around 5.9 per cent of the national register of dock workers.[65] The composition of the port's trade was extremely diverse when compared to the country's other major seaports. Unlike Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, Southampton, Swansea and Cardiff, Hull's trade connections were strongly linked with northern Europe and Scandinavia, a feature that encouraged the port's branding as the 'Northern Gateway' during the 1990s. Alongside these links, Hull's trade also engaged extensively with the Commonwealth countries of Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand into the early 1970s. Despite its importance during this period, however, the case of Hull has previously been overlooked by academics. Some aspects of the port's trade, organisation and development during the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were investigated thoroughly in the 1970s, yet there have been no detailed studies that focus on the port during the years after 1945.[66] Aside from its significance as a place of trade, Hull possessed other

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[64] J. H. Bird, *The Major Seaports of the United Kingdom* (London: Hutchinson, 1963), p. 26.

[65] Turnbull, *Docks Strike,* p. 16.

[66] Joyce M. Bellamy, *The Trade and Shipping of Nineteenth-Century Hull* (York: East Yorkshire Local History Society, 1971). Gordon Jackson, *Hull in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Economic and Social History* (London: Oxford University Press for the University of Hull, 1972). Raymond Brown, *Waterfront Organisation in Hull, 1870-1900* (Hull: University of Hull, 1972). Gordon Jackson, *The Trade and Shipping of Eighteenth-century Hull* (York: East Yorkshire Local History Society, 1975). Gordon Jackson, 'Shipowners and Private Dock Companies: The Case of Hull, 1770-1970' in Akveld L.M. and J. R. Bruijn, *Shipping Companies and Authorities in the 19th and 20th centuries: Their Common Interest in the Development of Port Facilities* (Den Haag, 1989), pp.

unique attributes that supported its selection for this study. For instance, it was one of the main theatres of labour unrest and industrial action during the post-1945 period.[67] Furthermore, the port was unusual because, alongside its commercial trading activities, it was also a major and long-established centre for deep-sea trawl fishing until the 1970s, an entirely different and separate maritime industry.[68] While Hull's fishing industry and its community were concentrated at St. Andrew's Dock to the west of the city centre, the port's cargo-handling operations took place to the east of the River Hull and the city. This has led to a geographical divide within the city as well as a cultural distinction within Hull on an east-west basis.[69] In combination, all of these features provide sound criteria for this study of Hull.

1.3.2 Archival Research

Archival research constitutes one of the main components of this study. Materials from three documentary archives were identified, located and critically analysed in order to achieve my research aims. These include the National Archives at Kew, the Hull History Centre, and the East Riding Archives at Beverley. In addition, I have also engaged extensively with published and unpublished primary sources held by the University of Hull's Brynmor Jones Library, Hull's Carnegie Heritage Centre and the British Library at Boston Spa.

1.3.2.1 Port Administration

As a port that spent a large part of the post-1945 period under public ownership, Hull's performance and organisational development during this time was documented substantially within the large body of materials produced and published by the two nationalised bodies that controlled it: the British Transport Commission (BTC) (1948-1962) and the British Transport Docks Board (BTDB) (1963-1981). Amongst this material, the port's handbooks and *Annual Reports & Accounts* published between 1948 and 1981 have been used extensively as they provide detailed qualitative and quantitative information

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47-61; Sam Davies, 'The History of the Hull Dockers, c. 1870-1960' in Sam Davies, Colin J. Davis, David de Vries, Lex Heerna Van Voss, Lidewij Hesselink and Klaus Weinhauer (eds.) *Dock Workers International Explorations in Comparative Labour History, 1790-1970* (Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 2000), pp. 180-211.

[67] David F. Wilson, *Dockers: The Impact of Industrial Change* (Bungay, Suffolk: Fontana Press, 1972), pp. 314-317; Peter Turnbull, Charles Woolfson, and John Kelly, *Dock Strike: Conflict and Restructuring in Britain's Ports* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1992), p. 16; Keith Sinclair, *How the Blue Union Came to the Hull Docks: The 1954 Filling Strike and its Aftermath* (Hull, 1995).

[68] See: Robb Robinson, Trawling: *The Rise and Fall of the British Trawl Fishery* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996); David J. Starkey, Chris Reid and Neil Ashcroft (eds), *The Commercial Sea Fisheries of England and Wales since 1300* (London: Chatham, 2000); Jo Byrne, After the Trawl: Memory and After Life in the Wake of Hull's Distant-Water Trawl Fishery After 1976 (University of Hull, PhD Thesis, 2015).

[69] Sam Davies, 'The History of the Hull Dockers, c. 1870-1960' in Sam Davies, Colin J. Davis, David de Vries, Lex Heerna Van Voss, Lidewij Hesselink and Klaus Weinhauer (eds.) *Dock Workers International Explorations in Comparative Labour History, 1790-1970* (Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 2000), p. 192

on trade, capital expenditure, port development and re-organisation at Hull and within the wider industry. This material has been further supplemented by the records of the National Ports Council (NPC). Initially created to plan and implement port development by the *Harbrours Act 1964,* the NPC was later reconstituted as purely advisory body. In this capacity, the council published many detailed general records until its abolition in 1981 including annual reports and accounts, a port progress report and digests of port statistics. More specific records pertaining to the council's involvement at Hull can be found at The National Archives. For example, DKS1/316, 317 and 322 provide details regarding the development of major dock facilities at the port during the late 1960s and early 1970s, while Dk1/387 and 388 contain useful information about the council's overseeing of the amalgamation of port and related authorities on the Humber between 1965 and 1967.

Providing regular, neat and concise overviews and images of the port's development the records of the BTC, BTDB and NPC were primarily produced to inform the government and public about the activities of the ports. Consequently, they have a tendency to project an overly positive and smooth spin regarding performance and progress. Instances of weak management and bad service are seldom mentioned, with the blame for failures or poor performance often deflected towards dock labour or other forces beyond the authority's control. Furthermore, the *Annual Reports & Accounts* do not provide consistent statistical data with regards to tonnages of shipping and goods handled at the port. The way in which figures were compiled and presented often differed yearly and between successive port authorities. I have negotiated this problem by using quantitative data from secondary sources that provides a snapshot of the volume and composition of Hull's trade at various times during my period.

The availability of insightful textual and numerical data reduced greatly when Hull and the other nationalised ports were privatised by the *Transport Act 1981*. Once placed under the authority of the newly created Associated British Ports (ABP), the privately-owned authority was no longer answerable to the public and they published no detailed information on port administration, profits, investment or performance. Although an annual report is produced by ABP, these volumes contain little statistical data and are often limited to a general summary regarding progress, future plans for development, and investment at the company's various sites. As a result, there is a comparative lack of archival evidence for the latter part of my period. Consequently, I have made use of alternative sources, most notably oral testimony and media materials, to evidence this part of the thesis.

Other administrative sources utilised in this study include the records of the Humber Conservancy Board, the body responsible for the maintenance and navigation of the Humber estuary between 1908 and 1966. These sources that cover the entirety of the Board's existence offer details of the management of the river and the nature of its traffic for the early part of my study. Such duties

were acquired by the British Transport Docks Board in 1968 and details regarding conservancy on the Humber thereafter are available in the *Annual Reports & Accounts.*

1.3.2.2 Dock Labour

In his study of Hull dock workers between c.1870 and 1960, Davies claims that 'the primary sources for the history of Hull dockers are limited', he noted that:

> Unlike most other large towns, the records of the local labour movement (most notably those of the Trades Council and the Labour Party) have largely been lost. Hull was never the main centre of any political movement or trade union, so in national records it appears always as a sideshow to the main events, usually in London or the main northern cities of Liverpool, Manchester, Bradford, Leeds. In the numerous official Inquiries into the dock industry and the casual system Hull was equally overshadowed.[70]

As a consequence of this lack of evidence, Davies drew largely drawn from a limited body of secondary literature. Although the volume of primary sources relating to the early history of the dockers at Hull is undeniably sparse, Davies' summation of the availability of source material availability for the post-Second World War period is somewhat pessimistic. Indeed, a substantial body of previously unused documentary material pertaining to the organisation and administration of the Hull dock workers during the post-1945 years has been identified and utilised extensively within this study.

Chief amongst these are the records of the Hull and Goole office of the National Dock Labour Board which are held at the Hull History Centre and cover the years 1941 to 1989. The National and local Boards were created by the *Dock Workers (Regulation of Employment) Act* 1947, to administer the statutory National Dock Labour Scheme, a unique and innovative plan that aimed to improve the efficiency of the country's largely casual dock labour force via gradually increasing permanent employment. From this archive, which generally covers the day to day running of the scheme at Hull between 1947 and 1989, I made extensive use of the Board's published *Annual Reports.* Similar to those volumes produced by the port authority during this period, these publications provide regular, concise and detailed qualitative and quantitative data relating to dock labour at Hull and the other scheme ports. This includes the numbers of dock workers employed, accident rates and detailed information on the development of training and welfare measures. Other materials utilised from this archive include meeting minutes, disciplinary proceedings, training manuals and reports into the standard of amenities on the docks.

[70] Sam Davies, 'The History of the Hull Dockers, c. 1870-1960' in Sam Davies, Colin J. Davis, David de Vries, Lex Heerna Van Voss, Lidewij Hesselink and Klaus Weinhauer (eds.) *Dock Workers International Explorations in Comparative Labour History, 1790-1970* (Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 2000), p. 180.

Also available at the Hull History Centre are the regional records of the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU). Deposited in 1995 by Brian Barker (a long-time Docks and Waterways Officer for the TGWU) these materials cover the period 1951 to 1990 and contain useful correspondence, minutes and reports that shed light upon the administration and activities of the main dockers' union at Hull. These documents were of great use in evidencing aspects of industrial action at Hull, one of the more militant ports of the period. These sources are, however, limited as they cover little prior to the 1960s and, therefore, only provide substantial evidence regarding trade unionism for the 1970s and 1980s. Furthermore, some of these documents are subject to closure as they contain personal information. Some archival materials relating to the National Amalgamated Stevedores & Dockers' Union (NASDU) (a rival dock workers union that existed in Hull between 1954 and 1982) were also accessed as part of this study. Available at Hull University's Brynmor Jones Library, the *News of the Blues* was the regional newsletter of NASDU. Although the copies held by the library only cover the years 1953 to 1963 they offer valuable textual data relating dock labour during a vital period in the union's history. Naturally, the documents contained within the archives of both of these unions are inflected by the politics of the left.

While providing hugely detailed and useful administrative information, the materials regarding dock labour discussed thus far were produced about, rather than by, dock workers at Hull. In consequence, they reveal nothing about the attitudes or opinions of the dock workers regarding the organisation of their work or their conditions of employment. Also absent is information about the social and cultural aspects of the dockers, particularly outside of the workplace. This absence encouraged my use of oral history in this project, the details of which will be discussed later in this chapter. Alongside oral history, I also used the papers and publications of Anthony J. Topham, a Hull University academic and trade union leader who sought to advance the movement of workers' control in British industry in the 1960s and 1970s. This was partly attempted through the education of fisherman and dock workers across the Humber area in industrial affairs. Two documents produced by Hull dockers under Topham's supervision have been used particularly extensively during the research process. *Diary of the Docks Dispute, 1972-1973* (1979) written by Hull docker Terry Turner details the events leading up to and during the second national dock strike of the post-1945 period, whilst *Hull Dockers' Essays on Freight Transport Systems in Yorkshire and Humberside, and other Matters* (1980) provides an account of the history and contemporary configuration of regional transport infrastructure as it related to the port's operations. Not only did these informed and well-written documents provide a rare insight into various aspects of the port's history during this critical time, they were produced by ordinary workers - whose voices and opinions of are largely absent from all other archival materials relating to dock labour.

1.3.2.3 Government Reports

The enhanced level of central government inquiry, intervention and planning in the British port industry during the post-1945 period generated a large and detailed body of published and unpublished materials. These documents have been used as evidence in many studies of the industry, however, the details and insights into the organisational development at specific, individual ports that are contained within this documentation have seldom been utilised as they have in this thesis.

Held at the National Archives at Kew, the series of reports and documents produced by government working parties and committees during the late 1940s and 1950s offer great detail regarding the operational problems of, and development strategies for, the major country's ports during the early post-Second World War period.[71] While these include references to operational issues at Hull, other ports (most notably London and Liverpool) receive far greater coverage. Nevertheless they testify to the widespread problems within the industry at this time and highlight the comparative lack of government attention paid to Hull's recovery and development.

The government report which has undoubtedly been of greatest use in this study was the *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Major Ports of the United Kingdom* (Cmnd. 1824). Issued in September 1962 by a Committee chaired by Chaired by Lord Rochdale (a Lancashire industrialist and army Brigadier) this report considered "to what extent the major docks and harbours of Great Britain are adequate to meet future and national needs; whether the methods of working can be improved; and to make recommendations".[72] As the most detailed body of information on the country's ports at that time, the report contains a large amount of qualitative and quantitative data regarding the trade, organisation and operations of the pre-modernised port of Hull. Furthermore, it contains a series of recommendations designed to improve capacity and efficiency. It must be borne in mind, however, that Rochdale and the other members of the Committee were outsiders to the port industry; their selection for the inquiry was based on their respective positions within British industry rather than their expertise in matters concerning ports. Furthermore, the information gathered about the ports (an extremely large and diverse industry) was done very rapidly by a small committee. As a result, the insights and opinions contained within the report were treated carefully in this research and the absence of information from more experienced authorities was noted. A valuable critique of the Rochdale Report's findings and recommendations was provided by James Bird in the appendix of his widely regarded study on the country's ports.[73]

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[71] *Report of The Working Party on Turnaround of Shipping in U.K. Ports* (1948); *First and Second Reports of the Ports Efficiency Committee* (1952); *Third Report of the Ports Efficiency Committee* (1955); *Joint Special Committee on the Ports Industry* (1974).

[72] *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Major Ports of Great Britain,* Cmnd. 1824 (London: HMSO, 1962).

[73] James H. Bird, *The Major Seaports of the United Kingdom* (London: Hutchinson, 1963), pp. 417-426.

The records of the National Ports Council (NPC) have also been researched substantially as part of this thesis. On the back of the 1962 Rochdale Report the NPC (also chaired by Lord Rochdale) was created in July 1963 and mandated to report to the Secretary of State for Transport on matters relating to harbour development, regulation and administration. Until its abolition in 1981, it also oversaw the modernisation of the country's port provision and sponsored research, education and training in the industry. During its existence the NPC generated a large amount of paperwork and publications, most of which are widely available to researchers at several institutions including the National Archives at Kew, the Boston Spa site of the British Library and Hull University's Brynmor Jones Library. Amongst these, the Council's *Port Development: An Interim Plan* (1965) proved very important to this study as it outlined the early schemes for modernisation and rationalisation at Hull and the other ports. Covering the years of the NPC's existence, the Council's *Annual Reports & Statement of Accounts* have also been invaluable to this research. Similar to those published by the port authority and National Dock Labour Board, these provide yearly overviews of development in the industry, and particularly details of expenditure on major new facilities. Unfortunately, smaller investment schemes at the ports and issues relating to dock labour during these years are not covered.

The Government's attempts to improve the incredibly fraught industrial relations on the post-1945 waterfront also yielded a number of large and detailed reports into the problems regarding British dock labour. Again these have been used extensively to evidence this study. Following ongoing labour unrest across ports the Government appointed the High Court Judge Lord Devlin in 1956 to chair a committee charged with investigating the function of the National Dock Labour Scheme. The *Committee of Inquiry into the Working of the National Dock Labour Scheme: Report* (Cmnd. 9813) offers a hugely detailed insight into the casual organisation of dock labour under the scheme and some of the issues (which the Committee believed) were the cause of unrest. It was particularly useful for assessing the Government's strategies that attempted to resolve unrest on the docks, and for providing an insight into the assumptions and attitudes of the state towards dockers and their work during this period.

Another, more substantial report was produced in 1965 following a further inquiry into dock labour issues by a Committee again chaired by Devlin. The *Final Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Certain Matters Concerning the Port Transport Industry* (Cmnd. 2734) or the 'Devlin Report', formed a vital source in this study as it provided text and statistics relating to the major reform of dock labour at Hull and elsewhere in light of the development of new methods of cargo handling. Although providing a level of detail regarding dock labour that would otherwise have not been available, these sources have specific weaknesses. Like the other Government reports used in this study, the voices contained in these materials are official and reflect the ideas and opinions of a small (and not

necessarily the best qualified) number of individuals rather than labour and employers with which they were concerned. Furthermore, it must be noted that Devlin's personal beliefs may have also informed these documents. According to one account, as a devout Roman Catholic, Devlin believed casualism and its associated ills on the waterfront was a sin that must be excised.[74] There is, therefore, a clear lack of objectivity in these materials.

1.3.2.4 Media Materials

Both historians and human geographers have noted that media materials are important sources of information that can reveal much about attitudes, assumptions, mentalities and values.[75] These materials should, however, be treated critically and interpreted as carefully as other primary materials, particularly as they often possess a political leaning and, in some cases, a tendency to sensationalise. Some previous studies of port labour have utilised and incorporated evidence from national newspapers, most notably Brown and Taplin's study of the origin and early development of trade unionism in the ports of Hull and Liverpool respectively.[76] These two publications are almost entirely based on local newspaper reports, primarily as few other source materials detail events involving the working classes during this period. As national newspapers tend to report only on major industrial developments within the port industry in general, far greater use of more detailed local and regional media has been made throughout this study. Local newspapers, particularly the *Hull Daily Mail* archive held at the Hull History Centre, have been utilised substantially as a source of evidence. The *Hull Daily Mail,* for instance, provides detailed information, images and statistical data relating to events within the port and city that is simply not recorded or available elsewhere. Indeed, for the majority of the period covered by this study this publication contained a daily feature entitled 'Dockland Diary' which provided a valuable daily record of events within the port.

Aside from providing information on industrial and economic events with the port and city, some of the *Hull Daily Mail*'s 'nostalgia' supplements have also been invaluable, particularly in terms of providing details of community, culture and memory on the waterfront. These supplements, which commonly feature in this newspaper, contain images and anecdotes about aspects of local working-class history. For instance, *Docklife* a supplement that featured in an August 1996 issue of the *Hull Daily Mail* has been used extensively in part 5 of this thesis that focusses on aspects of the heritage

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[74] Peter Turnbull, Charles Woolfson and John Kelly, *Docks Strike: Conflict and Restructuring in Britain's Ports* (Aldershot, Avebury, 1992), p. 19.

[75] Arthur Marwick, *The New Nature of History: Knowledge, Evidence, Language* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 168; Robin Flowerdew and David Martin (eds), *Methods in Human Geography: A Guide for Students Doing a Research Project*, Second Edition (Harlow: Prentice Hall, 2005), p. 63.

[76] Raymond Brown, Waterfront *Organisation in Hull, 1870-1900* (Hull: University of Hull Publications, 1972); Eric Taplin, *Liverpool Dockers and Seamen, 1870-1890* (Hull: University of Hull Publications, 1974).

and representation of the Hull dockers. The Carnegie Heritage Centre at Hull has also proved immensely useful in terms of accessing local and regional newspaper materials. This repository has a collection of files containing cuttings from newspapers and other local media relating to the port of Hull and its labour. Gathered and compiled by local volunteers, these clippings (which predominantly cover the period from the 1980s) provide a substantial and readily accessible body of media information about geographical development within the docks as well as aspects of militancy and community on the waterfront.

Journals and periodicals which reported on trade and industry in the Humber area during the post-1945 period have also been utilised extensively. Located at the Hull History Centre and Hull University's Brynmor Jones Library, they include *Trade of the Hull and Humber Ports*, *Port of Hull and Humber Ports Monthly Journal* and *Intalink.* Each covering specific portions of my period, these sources have been useful for providing news on trade and industrial development in the port and surrounding region. As the majority of the reports contained within these materials are written by people involved in local government, industry, transport and mercantile activity, they provide a useful insight into the attitudes and perspectives of those served by the port and its labour. This was particularly the case as they regularly critiqued the service provided by the port, as well as offering insight into the events and developments within their respective areas of interest at a local, regional, national and international level. However, I noted that the journals were often used by their contributors as a platform to bring pressure on the port authority and local government to invest in facilities and other infrastructure that would be beneficial to their interests. Furthermore, these journals, like the *Annual Reports & Accounts* issued by the port authority, do not provide consistent statistics on trade and traffic at Hull. Again, this has created a reliance on quantitative data drawn from secondary sources.

1.3.2.5 Maps

A wide variety of archived maps, plans and charts from the Hull History Centre, East Riding Archives and Hull University's Brymor Jones Library have also been identified and analysed during the course of this research. In addition, I have also utilised Digimap: an online academic resource that provides historic maps and geospatial data.[77] These materials have been primarily used to trace the origin and geographical development of the dock system and associated transport infrastructure at Hull during the post-1945 period. Other maps have been utilised to help create an understanding of the parallel urban, suburban and industrial evolution of the city during the second half of the twentieth century

[77] http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/ [Accessed 2 September 2015].

Charts of the Humber estuary, regional roads and waterways have also been studied to demonstrate the geographical setting of the port both to sea and landward.

These sources, like other archive materials, have been treated critically. J. B. Hartley criticised cartographers for not situating their maps within the discourse of cartography and suggested that cartographers seldom addressed issues of class, gender, race, ideology, power and knowledge, or myth and ritual.[78] Cartography, he argued, also belongs to the terrain of the social world in which it is produced and, as such, maps needed to be deconstructed and their assumed autonomy and objectivity should be challenged.[79] These issues have been considered during the analysis of maps for this study. To support my arguments, a number of these materials have been inserted as evidence into the text of this thesis.

1.3.3 Oral history

The archival materials utilised during this research provided information, statistics and images which largely represented the views and opinions of official bodies and individuals associated with the port industry. These official perspectives, however, do not encompass the whole story of events within the port of Hull during this period. Consequently, the voices and experiences of many of the workers who were integral to, and impacted by, aspects of the port's development during this period are excluded. Despite the extent, significance and long history of the Port of Hull, there were surprisingly few primary materials that contained the voices of ordinary individuals or groups connected with commercial port work. Such sources were limited to a single recorded oral history interview with a Hull dock worker stored at Hull's Maritime Museum, and a small collection of materials gathered by the participants for the community plays 'Vital Spark' (1992) and 'No Surrender!' (1996) - both of which charted aspects of life on and around the Hull docks.[80] Indeed, there is a distinct lack of oral and written sources produced by ordinary people associated with most British ports in general. While sizeable oral history collections produced by dock workers are accessible in the archives of museums in London and Bristol, there has been only one substantial collection of dockers' oral testimony published. This is contained within a 2001 publication entitled *Voices of Leith Dockers: Personal Recollections of Working Lives.*[81]

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[78] J. B. Harley, 'Deconstructing the Map' in Trevor J. Barnes and James S. Duncan (eds), *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 231-232.

[79] *Ibid.*

[80] HMM, Mick Jackson Interview, 24 October 2008; 'Docklife', *Hull Daily Mail*, 3rd August 1996; Trevelyan Wright, *Voices of Hull: Real Life Stories from the Hull City Play* (Humberside Leisure Services. 1992).

[81] Ian MacDougall, *Voices of Leith Dockers: Personal Recollections of Working Lives* (Edinburgh: Mercat, 2001);

It has been suggested that 'it is often only oral evidence which allows study of a transient economic activity which may be a vital part of the wider picture'.[82] To explore the memories, opinions, attitudes and perspectives of those absent from the official accounts, I conducted and recorded a series of in-depth, semi-structured oral history interviews. It must be stressed that these oral testimonies were not generated for this study to simply supplement the documentation gathered from archives or official reports. Rather they contrast to, and bring an alternative dimension to, such materials. It therefore constitutes a key part of my methodology and contribution, one which is equal in importance to the archival research discussed thus far.

Before elaborating on the process I undertook to complete my interviews, it is necessary to discuss some of the strengths and problems related to oral histories. Positivists have often criticised in-depth interviews - claiming that interviewers bias the respondents' answers and that interviewers are not, or cannot be, objective or detached.[83] This view, however, is not unanimous amongst all academics - with those who take a humanist or post-structuralist approach to research arguing that there is no such thing as objectivity in social science research. Rather they argue that all research work is explicitly or implicitly formed by the experiences, aims and interpretations of the researcher who designed the questionnaire or the interview schedule, and that researchers should treat participants in their research as people, not objects to be exploited or mined for information.[84] It has been pointed out that a key benefit of oral history is its poetic nature, its permeability and its ability to cross disciplinary boundaries.[85] Amongst the potential problems which may occur during an actual oral history interview, however, are the difficult or uncomfortable issues that may arise and cause the interviewee to recall distressing experiences.[86] Aware that death, serious injury, theft, violence, alcohol abuse and allegations of corruption were all common and recurring features on the Hull docks, particularly during the early part of my study period, I explained to my interviewees at the start of an interview (and reminded them throughout) that they were under no pressure to discuss any issues with which they did not feel comfortable. In order to plan, conduct and analyse my interviews effectively I participated in the University of Hull's Post Graduate Training Scheme module 'The Research Interview' (35702). This training provided an introduction to the various types of interview

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[82] Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 3rd Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 85

[83] Robin Flowerdew and David Martin (eds), *Methods in Human Geography: A Guide for Students Doing a Research Project*, Second Edition (Harlow: Prentice Hall, 2005), pp. 110-112.

[84] *Ibid.*

[85] Lynn Abrahams, *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 1

[86] Robin Flowerdew and David Martin (eds), *Methods in Human Geography: A Guide for Students Doing a Research Project*, Second Edition (Harlow: Prentice Hall, 2005), pp.122-123

formats and ethical considerations, as well as an opportunity to gather experience by designing and executing my own interviews and questionnaires.

1.3.3.1 Data Collection and Sampling

In total I conducted 36 interviews with individuals and small groups of no more than three participants (Appendix I) as well as numerous informal discussions with people and other researchers at local social events and heritage days. I contacted interviewees using a variety of methods including the displaying of posters at local libraries, community centres, working men's clubs, pubs and museums (Appendix II), as well as through a project Facebook page (www.facebook.com/HullDocksMemories) and Twitter feed (www.twitter.com/Hull_Docks), both of which were created at the outset of the study. In addition, I acquired further respondents through snowball sampling: making contact with potential interviewees through previously established contacts.[87] I ensured, however, that I was not over reliant on this method as I did not want to recruit respondents from a narrow circle of like-minded individuals and risk the skewing of my interview data.[88]

To provide a wide variety of opinions and perspectives from within the port and across my period I made efforts to ensure that my sample contained a wide variety of respondents who were connected with the port in varying ways and at differing times. Although dock labourers and their family members constituted the largest group within my sample, it also contains trade union officials, merchant seamen, labourers and administrators formerly involved in port transport, management employees of the port authority and associated bodies, and others who had engaged in policing, nursing and fire services on the docks (Appendix I). As this study also explores aspects of the port's local heritage representations I also interviewed two people employed at Hull City Council's Maritime Museum. Although efforts have been made to ensure that the sample is representative, it does possess two weaknesses, both of which are unavoidable. First, the vast majority of my interviewees are male. This has occurred due to the fact that both port transport work and administration was overwhelmingly dominated by men. Consequently, there is the risk that men's stories and issues are reproduced here. Second, most of my interviewees were engaged in port related activities between 1960 and 1990. With only a small number of people still alive who were involved with the docks during the late 1940s and 1950s I have only been able to gather a small amount of oral data relating to the earlier part of my time period.

For purposes of convenience, comfort and to avoid the awkwardness of a formal interview setting, interviews took place at a time and place selected by my respondents. The vast majority were conducted at the homes of my respondents with the exception of a small number that took place at a

[87] *Ibid*., p. 117.

[88] *Ibid.*

public locations including pubs and libraries. Both individual and group interviews were semi-structured, that is, I introduced specific topics from a schedule and invited my respondents to discuss their memories in relation to them. This method was used to ensure that my interviewees' testimonies where not completely free-flowing but, at the same time, not shaped by rigid questioning.[89] Ultimately, I wanted my respondents to have the opportunity to emphasise the memories and thoughts that *they* believed where important and relevant, this has allowed a deeper insight into my respondents' feelings and attitudes.[90] In order to stimulate the discussion of memories during an interview I occasionally used photo elicitation, a methodological practice that involves the insertion of photographs or other pictorial materials (by either the interviewer or the interviewee) into a research interview. Developed during the 1950s and commonly used in the fields of anthropology and sociology, it has been suggested that photo- elicitation can provide researchers with a tool to expand on questions, and simultaneously, participants can use photographs to provide a unique way to communicate dimensions of their lives.[91] In addition, it has also been argued that using photographs in this way helps to evoke deeper elements of human consciousness and add validity and reliability into a word-based survey.[92] In some interviews, participants introduced their own photographs into the interview, while in others I encouraged them to view a local, pictorial heritage publication.[93]

1.3.3.2 Transcription and Analysis

In order to facilitate the analysis of my interview data I transcribed each interview. During this process I sought to retain the original quality of the speech so as to not lose detail and meaning. For example, I included pauses, digressions, made use of italics when emphasis was used on specific words, used phonetic spelling to retain dialect and was always careful not to impose grammatical forms into the speech. Following transcription I manually annotated the scripts and then 'coded' them by identifying and highlighting re-occurring themes, and specific points of interest or contestation. I found it more effective to complete this process manually rather than using software such as NVIVO as I could become familiarised with my interview data, particularly its details and nuances. Once the process of analysis was completed, I took steps to archive my interview materials. Notable oral historian Raphael

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[89] Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 3rd Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 227;

[90] Robin Flowerdew and David Martin, *Methods in Human Geography: A Guide for Students Doing a Research Project*, Second Edition, (Harlow: Prentice Hall, 2005), p. 76.

[91] Marisol Clark-Ibáñez, 'Framing the Social World with Photo-Elicitation Interviews', *American Behavioural Scientist*, Vol. 47, 12, (2004), p. 1507.

[92] Douglas Harper, 'Talking About Pictures: A Case for Photo-Elicitation', *Visual Studies,* Vol. 17, 1, (2002), pp. 22-23.

[93] Michael Thompson, *Hull Docklands: An Illustrated History of the Port of Hull* (Beverley: Hutton Press, 1990).

Samuel claims that the collector of the spoken word - of oral memory and tradition - is the creator of an archive and therefore has a duty to preserve his or her material.[94] Consequently, I have created both a digital and compact disk archives of my interviews alongside digital and hard copies of the transcripts. Upon completion of this project I will deposit these in the city's public archives for future research.

1.3.3.3 Ethics

All individuals involved in the interview process were issued with an introductory letter that contained the details of my research project, interview process, data protection as well as providing information regarding the University of Hull's complaints mechanism (Appendix III). In addition, I supplied all respondents with an 'oral history recording and consent' form through which they could select and authorise the ways in which their testimonies could be used (Appendix IV). Interviewees were given the option of signing the form before or following the completion of the interview. These forms have been retained for my own records with copies given to those interviewees who requested.

1.3.4 Images and film

For Burke 'images, like texts and oral testimonies, are an important form of historical evidence. They record acts of eyewitnessing'.[95] As this research includes a prominent cultural and geographical component, it has been necessary to incorporate a number of images into the thesis. Rather than simply providing visual accompaniments to the text, these are intended to sit alongside archival and oral history evidence and support the central arguments of the study. They also allow the reader to imagine the port's past more vividly. Images of the port, its facilities and customers are plentiful in the official literature and marketing materials issued by the port's various authorities and associated bodies. These include depictions of towering cranes, newly constructed roads, warehousing, storage facilities and modern office buildings. They provide substantial visual evidence of the port's development, adaptation and modernisation. Indeed, I was kindly allowed access by Associated British Ports to a huge un-archived cache of such photographs and marketing materials spanning the entire period. These materials, however, contained few, if any, representations of the more mundane, every day and un-sanitised aspects of port life. For example, images of dockers at work and leisure as well as pictures of derelict dock facilities are absent. Such aspects were provided by alternative visual sources. Some photographs have, with consent, been drawn from the private collections of my interviewees or from the body of images taken, and kindly provided, by Robert Golden, a photographer who engaged in the research and production of the 1975 publication *Dockworker.*

[94] Raphael Samuel, 'Perils of the Transcript' in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds) *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 391-392.

[95] Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (London: Reaktion, 2001), p. 14.

Forming part of a series of books entitled 'People at Work', *Dockworker* contains numerous images of Hull dockers at work and play.

Three relevant film sources have also been utilised. Of greatest use has been the British Transport Film's *Berth 24*. Released in 1950, *Berth 24* is a semi-dramatised account of the turnaround of the Ellerman's Wilson Line vessel *S. S. Bravo* at Hull's Alexandra Dock that provides invaluable, rare and detailed footage of the Port of Hull's pre-modernised operations, labour, administration and landscape. Filmed during the late 1940s in the wake of war, this production presents a highly positive portrayal of economic revival, thriving industry and an efficient transport systems within the Port of Hull and its surrounding region. In reality, the national economy was, at this time, struggling immensely, local industry remained archaic and devastated by bomb damage, while Britain's ports were marred by inefficiency and labour unrest. Nevertheless, *Berth 24* is a rare (and possibly unique) documentary that provides an insight into port activities during the early Post-Second World War period including the casual hiring of dockers and the particularly harsh nature of their working conditions. I also made use of the 1988 sociological documentary film *Dockers.* Produced by Praxis Films Ltd and sponsored by Channel Four Television, this film used interviews as well as archive film to sympathetically relate the story of the Hull dockers, their hardships and trade union struggles on the docks. As this production was released during a period of heightened industrial unrest at Hull and other large ports (for which dock workers were largely blamed in the mainstream media) it served as an alternative insight into the lives and work of dock labour. The 2011 BBC documentary *Life on the Docks* has also been utilised. Also based upon oral testimony and archive film footage, this piece presented a more nostalgic view of life on the Humber waterfront between the 1950s and 1980s, and placed the story of the Hull dockers into a regional context. As it was recently produced, this film was highly useful for the recruitment of interviewees for my own research. Not only have all of these films informed the research process, they also provided visual evidence in the form of stills, some of which I have extracted from the footage and, where necessary, inserted into the pages of this thesis.

1.3.5 Field Work

I spent a considerable amount of time visiting and exploring the various sites and places that are discussed in this thesis. My intentions were two-fold: I wanted to orientate myself better with the historical and geographical development of the Hull docks and its environs during my period, and to acquire an understanding about the modern operations and landscape of the working port. During these visits I engaged in many informal conversations with people connected to the port and its heritage. I also took numerous digital photographs (primarily for use on my project Facebook page, Twitter feed, posters and PowerPoint presentations). I also made extensive field-notes, a practice deemed hugely useful by many human geographers:

> Field-noting is an ongoing sense making process. It is a process of creative writing based on first-hand experience. It involves attempts to tie together minutiae of theoretical and empirical detail gleaned in and between the different locales of a project's expanded field.[96]

My field work involved visits to a wide variety of places connected with this research project. For instance, I spent much time at the city's various regenerated dock areas and, where safe to do so, visited derelict and disused port facilities alongside other industrial sites that had been involved in the processing of seaborne products. This included an investigation of the Hull waterfront from the River Humber using a rigid inflatable boat (RIB) owned by the University of Hull's Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences Department. I also visited locations within the city that were formerly associated with the dockers and their community such as the Willows Sports and Social Club (formerly National Dock Labour Board Club), the 'Blue Union' Dockers Club in Posterngate and the former offices of the Transport and General Workers' Union. In addition, I undertook periods of research at official sites of port heritage both in and outside of Hull including the Hull Maritime Museum and the Museum of London Docklands on the Isle of Dogs. Finally, I participated in two formal guided tours of the modern working port of Hull during the City's annual Heritage Open Days.

1.3.6 Summary

In this chapter I have established that Hull was selected for this study due to its economic importance, the lack of previous academic attention for its seaborne trade and its atypical qualities as a port. I have also discussed the cross-disciplinary nature of my methodology which primarily involved the use of a broad range of archival sources (many of which have not previously been used) in conjunction with oral history which was generated from a series of research interviews. The archives have provided a large and rich body of material from which I have evidenced aspects of economic, technological, organisational and geographical development at Hull; the interviews have enabled me to gather and present a sense of the human experience of change in the port. Finally, other methodological aspects of this study have also been addressed including the use of rare film and my involvement in field work. Together, these methods allow the best insight feasible into the port, its operations, its change and its communities.

[96] Paul Cloke et al, *Practising Human Geography* (London: Sage, 2004), p. 197

1.4 The Research Aims and Rationale of the Thesis

This study concentrates on the broad economic shifts and developments in transport technology that occurred during the second half of the twentieth century and assesses their impact upon the Port of Hull. Rather than discussing the economic history of the port's trade and performance, it explores how the British government and the industry reacted to these external forces and the way in which these responses, in turn, shaped the organisation, operations, labouring communities and geographies of the Port of Hull. Furthermore, I assess the ways, and extent to which, this process, once completed, has been remembered and represented in the city. The over-arching aim of this thesis is five-fold.

1. To show how port cities responded to the external forces of economic, technological and political change.
2. To identify, and provide enhanced detail of, the broad economic and technological forces that developed during the post-1945 period and impacted on ports, and to assess how, and why, their impact and implications varied for different regions and locales.
3. To establish the nature and impact of the post-Second World War British governments' port policies upon the industry and its labour amidst this changing context.
4. To enhance our knowledge of working-class port communities by exploring how widespread change during this period was experienced, understood and remembered by labouring groups at Hull.
5. To undertake this research in an interdisciplinary manner drawing upon the insights of history and geography.

To achieve these research aims, this thesis is structured in the following way. The structure aims to take the reader from the scale of the broad, sweeping global economic changes that occurred over the second half of the twentieth century, right down to the perspective of the individual dock worker on the quayside. Part 2 provides an overall context for the parts of the thesis that follow, and identifies the largescale international and domestic economic shifts of the post-1945 period. Furthermore, I trace the technological development in sea and land transport during these years. Although contextual, this chapter also incorporates an analytical dimension as I answer the key questions of how did economic developments during the second half of the twentieth century impact the Port of Hull's trade and prosperity? I also ask what were the implications of advancements in transport technology for the port's sea and landward communications?

In order to reflect the two distinctive phases of development at Hull during my period, Parts 3 and 4 have been divided chronologically and then subdivided into thematic chapters that discuss the port's organisation and operational development, labour issues, and the nature of community and culture

on the waterfront. Part 3 investigates the years between 1945 and 1964, a period when the British port industry remained largely unaltered from its late Victorian configuration, despite the wider emergence and quickening pace of economic and technological change. How did the port authority, customers and those involved in port transport respond to these developments and challenges? Why did they react in this way? This part of the thesis also investigates dock labour at Hull in light of the implementation of the Labour government's innovative National Dock Labour Scheme in 1947: what was the nature of this reform? How did it alter the organisation of Hull's dock workers and was it successful? Furthermore, this chapter also explores the nature of community amongst the port's dock labourers and assesses to what extent the Hull dockers constituted an occupational community and whether the culture and traditions of the Hull dockers had a bearing upon their industrial actions?

Part 4 covers the years 1965 to 1989, a time of widespread economic shift and technological advancement across the globe. This section considers the nature and impact of the far-reaching reform and reorganisation of British ports and dock labour during this period. What was the strategy that underpinned port and labour reform during this period and how was it implemented? What were its specific implications for the Port of Hull's organisation, operations and labour and were these reforms judged to be successful? Part 4 also analyses developments within the docking community during this period and explores how the reform and re-organisation of these years impact aspects of culture and community amongst the dockers? How did they respond to change individually and collectively?

Finally, Part 5 explores the ways, and the extent to which, the city of Hull has remembered and represented the old port system and its collapse since the 1990s.

As a number of cargo-handling terms (many of them unique to Hull) are used throughout this thesis a glossary has been provided in Appendix V. In addition, Appendix VIII offers a timeline of the Port of Hull's ownership for the period.

2 Historical Context: Trade and Transport during the Second Half of the Twentieth Century

2.1 Introduction

The business and development of ports are shaped by a variety of external factors. David J. Starkey and Alan Jamieson suggested that the level of seaborne trade (itself a function of the international economy) is chief amongst these agencies.[97] In the second half of the twentieth century, the volume of seaborne trade increased significantly in line with the huge economic growth that had been stimulated, in part, by increased industrial inputs of capital and labour, technological innovation, and widespread industrial and commercial organisation.[98] In 1956 seaborne trade equalled 900 million tons and in 1966 it was almost double that figure.[99] However, the rate of growth slowed from 1973 following an increase in oil prices that led to a reduction in demand for petroleum and decline in world commodity markets generally.[100] Alongside shifting levels of seaborne trade, Starkey and Jamieson also identified other, more specific factors with which port authorities must contend. These include change within the domestic economy, the actions of shipping customers (most notably their decision as to which port facilities they elect to use and the technology they deploy) and the development of landward transport technology.[101] The authors used their model to identify the broad changes within the British port industry during the twentieth century, however, this framework has not been applied to the country's individual ports during this period. Using Starkey and Jamieson's model, I systematically examine the factors with which the successive port authorities at Hull were faced during the post-1945 period, this will provide an important broad backdrop for the following chapters. I argue that, due to a combination of specific economic shifts and Hull's unfavourable geographical location, the port was amongst those faced with the greatest challenge in adapting its operations during the second half of the twentieth century.

2.2 The Domestic Economy

During the second half of the twentieth century the British economy experienced a huge transformation. As this change directly impacted the nature and pattern of Britain's seaborne trade, the nation's ports were required to adapt their cargo-handling operations in response. Depending upon the composition of their trade, some ports were affected more greatly than others. For Hull,

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[97] David J. Starkey and Alan G. Jamieson, ''Change on a Scale Unequalled': The Transformation of Britain's Port Industry in the Twentieth Century' in Jaap Bruijn et al, *Strategy and Response in the 20th century Maritime World (*Amsterdam, Batavian Lion International, 2001), pp. 137-137.

[98] Sidney Pollard, *The International Economy since 1945* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 13-34.

[99] R. Gardiner (ed), *The Shipping Revolution: The Modern Merchant Ship* (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1992), p. 7.

[100] *Ibid*., p. 11.

[101] Starkey and Jamieson 'Change on a Scale Unequalled', pp. 138-139.

these developments impacted virtually every aspect of the port's traditional trading profile (see Appendix 7.6). Consequently, post-1945 authorities at the port were faced with a greater challenge than most in adapting their operations. This section explores some of the key post-1945 shifts within the domestic economy and the affect they had upon several of Hull's long-established trades.

Although British coal mining had been in decline since the First World War, it was in the decades after 1945 that the industry experienced large-scale contraction. The slow pace of mechanisation, labour troubles, foreign competition from the United States, Germany and Poland, and the increasing use of alternative fuels such as oil and petroleum all contributed to the collapse of the industry and, with it, British coal exports.[102] The post-1945 collapse of the industry had particularly serious implications for Hull. Having been a major exporter of coal since the opening of the Alexandra and King George Docks in 1885 and 1914 respectively, Hull had long been a leading exporter of coal at the time of the Second World War.[103] With coal production disrupted and persistently low over the second half of the twentieth century, the port's coal trade, both foreign and coastwise, entered a sharp decline. The annual volume of coal shipments from Hull repeatedly remained below pre-War levels and an unsatisfied domestic demand encouraged the port to become a regular importer of small amounts of foreign coals by the mid-1950s.[104] Yet Hull did not suffer as much as some other coal exporting ports during these years due to the port's close proximity with the South Yorkshire and East Midlands coalfields. With the latter increasing its output of saleable coal from 31 million tons in 1938 to 46 million tons in 1955, this was the largest coal producing area in the country after 1945.[105] In contrast to the decline at the other major coal ports of Newcastle, Cardiff and Newport, Hull actually increased its value share of exports by 10 per cent.[106] Despite this increased share, Hull's coal export trade entered overall decline with the lowest ever shipments of coal, coke and patent fuel from the port leaving the docks in 1960.[107]

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[102] William Ashworth, *The History of the British Coal Industry Volume 5*, 1946-1982: The Nationalised Industry (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 235-328.

[103] Gordon, Jackson, *The History and Archaeology of Ports* (Tadworth, Surrey: The Windmill Press, 1983), pp. 126-128.

[104] HHC, *Trade of Hull and Humber Ports* (1947), p. 20; *Trade of Hull and Humber Ports* (1948), p. 32; *Trade of Hull and Humber Ports* (1949), p. 29; *Trade of Hull and Humber Ports* (1956), p. 20; *Trade of Hull and Humber Ports* (1957), p. 7; *Trade of Hull and Humber Ports* (1958), p. 7; *Trade of Hull and Humber Ports* (1959), p. 5.

[105] Joyce M. Bellamy, 'The Foreign Trade of Humberside: A Comparative Analysis' in *The Port of Hull Journal*, April, 1957, Vol. XLV, No. 4, p. 10.

[106] *Ibid.*

[107] HHC, *Trade of Hull and Humber Ports* (1960), p. 24.

In contrast, there had emerged an increasing need for imported oil across Britain from the early twentieth century. Having established deep-water oil jetties downstream at Salt End in 1914 and 1928, Hull had established itself as a major oil importing centre prior to the Second World War.[108] After 1945 the domestic demand for oil products expanded enormously. While the manufacturing regions across Lancashire, Yorkshire and the Midlands emerged as consumers of large amounts of imported oil and chemicals, Britain became a major oil refining country during the post-1945 era, with refineries at Grangemouth, Llandarcy, Fawley and the Lower Thames all exporting vast quantities of refined products from the late 1950s.[109] In line with this demand the tonnage of oil and related products handled by the port expanded significantly after 1945. By 1956, imports of oil and spirit at Salt End had approximately doubled since the War and continued to increase into the latter part of that decade.[110] Consequently, port authorities at Hull were faced with the challenge of deploying major investment to develop dock facilities in order to compete for the booming post-1945 trade in oil.

Unlike many other nations both in Europe and the Global South Britain displayed a distinct lack of industrial spirit after 1945. With capital investment in industry low and often misdirected, the modernisation of industries limited, and labour relations poor, British economic growth lagged behind that of other countries during the post-1945 years.[111] As a long-established exporter of machinery and manufactures, and an importer of raw materials used in domestic industrial processing, this development had particular resonance at Hull.[112] Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that traditional imports and exports at the port were affected more acutely in this regard than at other British ports. A significant factor here was the severe bomb damage sustained by local industry during the Second World War. The city's industry (a large percentage of which processed imported raw materials and exported finished goods handled through the port) had been a relatively easy target for the Luftwaffe (see Figure 1). Enemy bombing was so extensive during the conflict that, upon the cessation of hostilities, the city's Mayor J. D. L. Nicholson, declared that Hull had been 'a frontline city'.[113] Indeed, an assessment of damage compiled in 1945 revealed that:

> The concentrated fury of the Luftwaffe has left its traces in no uncertain manner in the central area of the city, though the general clearance of buildings is

[108] James Bird, *The Major Seaports of the United Kingdom* (London: Hutchinson, 1963), p. 132.

[109] Henry Rees, *British Ports and Shipping* (George G. Harrap & Company Ltd, 1958), pp. 76-77.

[110] HHC, *Hull and Humber Ports Journal* (1956), p. 20.

[111] A. Cairncross, *The British Economy since 1945: Economic Policy and Performance, 1945 -1990* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 19-23.

[112] David J. Owen, *The Origin and Development of The Ports of the United Kingdom. Second Edition* (London: Allman, 1948), p. 95.

[113] HHC, *Hull and Humber Ports Journal* (1945) p. 7.

somewhat scattered and leaves large plots of partially damaged and undamaged buildings in between. In no way is the damage so concentrated and almost uninterrupted by undamaged property over vast areas as it is in Plymouth and London. Nevertheless, although no actual figure is yet available for providing a comparison of the extent of damage done in these three cities, it seems likely that the total acreage of damaged property in Hull and Plymouth will not prove dissimilar.

The obliteration of much of Hull's waterfront industry in particular was also detailed:

> The principal industries as well as smaller ones have suffered severely. For instance, two out of the three large flour mills have been almost entirely demolished, whilst in the Oil, Seed Crushing and Extraction group, several Mills and Oil Refineries have been entirely demolished. It is estimated that extensive reconstruction will be required throughout the industry to re-establish it. This may also be said of most of the various groups of Industry in Hull.[114]

Based upon this inventory of damage it is probable that, with the exception of London, Hull sustained more damage than any other British commercial port. Consequently, the productive capacity of Hull's industries along with their associated trades were greatly reduced as they emerged from the War.

Figure 1: British Oil and Cake oil seed crushing mill burns in May 1941 (left) and a bomb damaged grain silo (right). Hull's industries, which processed seaborne products, sustained particularly heavy damage during the Second World War.

Despite this heavy devastation, Hull, unlike other regions, struggled to acquire financial assistance from the Government during the early post-1945 period. Consequently, the revival and expansion of local and regional industry along with the port's associated trades suffered from a severe lack of development after 1945. Having not been deemed worthy of inclusion in the Government's inter-war 'Special Areas' scheme (designed to encourage economic growth in the peripheral areas of the country) the Humber region was also omitted from the list of UK Development Areas which

[114] Edwin Lutyens and Patrick Abercrombie, *A Plan for the City and County of Kingston upon Hull* (Hull: A. Brown & Sons, 1945), p. 17.

operated from 1945 to 1960.[115] By contrast, Merseyside, which was scheduled as a Development Area in 1949, had progressed as 'an outstanding node of [industrial] growth' by the early 1970s.[116] Although Government aid for the Humber area and Hull was not forthcoming there was still some substantial industrial growth within the region by the 1960s. For example, iron and steel manufacturing in the Scunthorpe and Frodingham district expanded considerably and increased its position within the national industry.[117] Furthermore, the abundant, cheap, flat, stretch of land on the Humber's south bank also encouraged the development of a large chemical industry processing raw materials.[118] Yet, the benefit of this industrial growth to the trade of Hull was limited. The absence of a crossing over the Humber Estuary until the early 1980s created a physical barrier between the port and these emerging industrial areas, the raw materials and the finished goods of which were predominantly handled by the south bank ports of Grimsby and Immingham. By comparison, the north bank experienced little industrial expansion. For Instance, the grain mills and oil seed crushing refineries in Hull that had been destroyed or damaged by bombs during the War had still not been replaced by the late 1950s and, as result, the capacity of the industry remained significantly reduced.[119] Furthermore, the city struggled to attract new industrial investment by outside firms, the Imperial typewriter factory established in 1954 being the only new installation of note.[120]

Although the region did secure development status at various times thereafter, these projects and their plans were adversely affected by a series of external factors. For instance, the Humber area's estuarial site, available tracts of land, and close proximity to the continent had secured its selection for a grandiose urban and industrial development scheme in the late 1960s, however, the project was abandoned in light of slow UK population growth and deteriorating national economic performance.[121] During the 1970s and 1980s the region's development was again thwarted. The changes in Government regional policy in 1977 and 1982 raised Hull, Grimsby and Scunthorpe from

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[115] John North, 'Development of the Humber Region During the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries' in S. Ellis and D.R. Crowther (eds) *Humber Perspectives: A Region through the Ages* (Hull: Hull University Press, 1990), pp. 428-429.

[116] Gerald Manners, *Regional Development in Britain*, Second Edition (Chichester: Wiley, 1980), pp. 287-288.

[117] Douglas C. D. Pocock, 'The Development of Scunthorpe' in S. Ellis and D.R. Crowther (eds) *Humber Perspectives: A Region through the Ages* (Hull: Hull University Press, 1990), pp. 336-337.

[118] North, Development of the Humber Region, pp. 429-432.

[119] Joyce M. Bellamy, 'The Foreign Trade of Humberside: A Comparative Analysis' in *The Port of Hull Journal*, April, 1957, Vol. XLV, No. 4, pp. 7-11.

[120]North, Development of the Humber Region, pp. 429-431.

[121] The Central Unit for Environmental Planning, *Humberside: A Feasibility Study* (London: HMSO, 1969); North, Development of the Humber Region During the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (1990), p. 432.

intermediate to full Development Area status, although this came too late to enable Humberside to obtain a significant share of mobile manufacturing industry.[122] Although exports of manufactures and machinery, and imports of raw materials were still handled at Hull during the late 1980s, their importance had declined appreciably.[123] A number of ports, most notably Liverpool, facilitated and benefitted from the industrial renaissance of their surrounding regions during the second half of the twentieth century. However, the Humber ports, and Hull in particular, had not enjoyed such advantages.

The domestic political decisions of the period also effected significant changes within the composition and pattern of Hull's trade. Following increased integration with European trade from the 1950s and a double rejection of membership during the 1960s, the Conservative Government succeeded in joining the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973. [124] This move greatly weakened the previously strong trade links between Britain and her former overseas colonies in favour of intra-European trade. For Hull, an east-coast, European facing port, this shift at first appeared to be a positive development. Yet, the gains brought by enhanced European business were not enough to offset the loss of trade with the Commonwealth. After 1945 the port's import trade in agricultural produce from Commonwealth countries had experienced significant growth; incoming cargoes of raw wool, grain, meat, dairy produce and fruit from areas including Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the Far East had increased to such an extent that, by the early 1960s, berthing facilities at King George Dock (where such goods were predominantly handled) had to be expanded (see Figure 2).[125] Following the country's entry into the EEC Hull struggled to increase its share of traffic within the fast-growing but intensely competitive short-sea unit-load sector operating between Britain and the near continent. This, was primarily a symptom of the port's unfavourable geographical position on the northernmost range of daily services to the continent.[126] While the crossing time from Hull to Europe was 14 hours, journeys from the more southerly ports of Dover and Felixstowe were just 1 hour and 4 hours respectively.[127] Having successfully engaged in imperial then Commonwealth

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[122] North, Development of the Humber Region, p. 432.

[123] Phillip Jones and John North, 'Ports and Wharves' in David Symes (Ed.), *Humberside in the Eighties: A Spatial View of the Economy* (Hull, Department of Geography, University of Hull, 1987), p. 105.

[124] Stephen Wall, *The Official History of Britain and the European Community: Volume 2, From Rejection to Referendum, 1963-1975* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 456-510.

[125] Bird, *The Major Seaports of the United Kingdom*, p. 132.

[126] Jones and North, 'Ports and Wharves' (1987), p. 106

[127] *Ibid.*

trade since the 1930s, Hull's switch to a more European focus from the early 1970s was yet another challenge with which the port was forced to contend during the post-1945 period.

Other post-1945 economic decisions made by the Government also caused shifts in the patterns of British seaborne trade during the second half of the twentieth century. For instance, the post-1945 policy that caused domestic agriculture to become more production orientated had a serious effect upon the country's imports of grain, fruit, meat and other foodstuffs - vast quantities of which arrived had arrived through Hull since the middle of the nineteenth century.[128] By the 1970s, the growth and development of British agriculture had not only curbed the demand for imported agricultural goods, it had also encouraged Britain to become an exporter of produce such as grain.

Figure 2: Australian wool at No. 12 transit shed King George Dock July 1962 (left) and the vessel "Newcastle Star" discharging frozen lamb from New Zealand at King George Dock June 1972 (right). Britain's entry into the EC in 1973 effected the loss of numerous important trades at Hull. (Photos courtesy of Associated British Ports).

Indeed, the agricultural industry of Humberside was a particularly strong, efficient, innovative and expanding sector within the region's economy.[129] In the wake of declining imports, Hull was required to further alter its operations to facilitate the shipment of domestically produced agricultural goods.

With shifts in the domestic economy affecting the country's trade in coal, oil, manufactures and machinery, raw materials, foodstuffs, and agricultural produce, virtually every aspect of Hull's long-established trading profile was impacted. Consequently, the port authority at Hull was presented with an ongoing challenge of change and adaptation.

2.3 **Port Customers**

Following an era of conservatism there were widespread technological advances in merchant shipping during the second half of the twentieth century. While the Second World War had witnessed the destruction of much merchant shipping, the widespread post-1945 rebuilding programmes and huge growth of seaborne trade encouraged a marked increase in the size of shipping and rapid progression

[128] Joyce Bellamy, *The Trade and Shipping of Nineteenth-Century Hull* (York: East Yorkshire Local History Society, 1971), p. 65.

[129] North, Development of the Humber Region, p. 433.

in the design and construction of vessels. Not since the transition from sail to steam had such a revolution taken place. Rather than providing a comprehensive overview of development during these years, this section of the chapter highlights some of the general advancements in ship design and their implications for Hull and other British ports during the post-1945 period.

One of the most significant areas of change within the world fleet after 1945 was the considerable increase in the number and size of bulk-carrying vessels. The revival and then spectacular post-1945 growth of European, Asian and American industrial economies had greatly increased demand for a steady, low-cost supply of shipping space, especially to accommodate the ores and mineral fuels that were essential industrial inputs.[130] As a result, the number and dimensions of dry-bulk carrying vessels rose significantly from the 1950s. In addition, the huge expansion of the Middle Eastern oil trade after the Second World War also encouraged the growth in the size and number of ships transporting liquid-bulk cargoes. Some 620 'T2' tankers of 16,400 deadweight tons (dwt) had been constructed in the United States between 1942 and 1946 making it the standard tanker into the early post-1945 years.[131] From the 1960s there was a vast increase in tankers of all sizes. These included the 'medium crude carriers' (MCC), 'very large crude carriers' (VLCC) and 'ultra large crude carriers' (ULCC), the latter reaching sizes of over up to 500,000 dwt by the 1980s.[132]

There were also major developments in terms of the carriage of general goods. Although conventional multi-purpose cargo liners of up to 15,000 dwt remained common into the early 1960s, the design of this vessel type became larger and more varied from the second half of that decade.[133] However, during the late 1960s there were more radical advancements in relation to the carriage of general cargoes. While advances in unitisation during the Second World War had encouraged the adaptation of conventional North American vessels to carry containers and road vehicles after 1945, purpose-built container and roll-on/roll-off (ro/ro) ships had both been introduced on short-sea routes by the early 1960s.[134] The greater efficiency of cargo handling and intermodal capability provided by these new and increasingly large types of ship ensured that they came to dominate the carriage of general goods over both short and long sea routes from the early 1970s. Collectively, these examples of the post-1945 technological advancement in world shipping constitute some of the main developments of what is widely accepted as the second shipping revolution.

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[130] Gardiner, *The Shipping Revolution*, p. 14.

[131] *Ibid*., p. 66.

[132] *Ibid*., pp. 67-70.

[133] *Ibid*., p. 32.

[134] B. J. Cudahy, *Box Boats: How Container Ships Changed the World* (New York: Fordham Press, 2006), pp. 68-98.

For the Port of Hull, this revolution in shipping was extremely challenging. Indeed, the gravity of increasing vessel size became a growing cause of concern as early as the mid-1950s when the Secretary of the Humber Conservancy Board, H. T. Edwards, warned:

> The net register tonnage of vessels using the port [of Hull] in 1954 was less than in 1937. There is also a tendency towards bigger vessels and Hull, as a river port, 17 miles from the open sea is at a disadvantage in handling them. Not only is continuous expensive dredging necessary, but adequate berths are not always available.[135]

A few years later, Edwards was again alerted to the increasing size of vessels and its implications for Hull:

> The number of ships paying dues to the [Humber Conservancy] Board was greater in 1908 than at present day – actually there were 15,151 ships compared with 13,953 in 1956. The ships were a good deal smaller, however, the average net register tonnage having risen from 512 in 1908 to 773 in 1956 and the aggregate tonnage from 7,752,050 in 1908 to 10,781,891 in 1956. In 1908 there were only 90 ships of more than 3,000 tons net but in 1956 there were 755. [136]

As Edwards indicated, the cause for concern in this matter related to Hull's unfavourable water-site. Positioned on the north bank of the tidal Humber Estuary, 35 km from the open sea, the port was located at the inland extremity of the river's deep-water channel (see Figure 3). Consequently, it was either very difficult or even impossible for increasingly large vessels of all types to reach the docking facilities at Hull. Even with intensive dredging and estuarial investigation, after 1945 only ships of 40,000 dwt could reach the port's deepest downstream jetties at Salt End by the late 1980s.[137] In addition, the large tidal range of the Humber meant that the greater part of the facilities developed at Hull were impounded docks. As a result, vessels were therefore forced to spend added time passing through lock gates. Furthermore, as the dock system had been constructed between 1778 and 1914 when ships were considerable smaller, the locks were already too narrow to accept larger classes of shipping by 1945. An exception to this was King George Dock which, due to the foresight of its engineers, was constructed with a particularly spacious entrance lock. Nevertheless, this dock remained limited to the admittance vessels of 34,000 dwt and up to 196 m length and 25.5 beam by the second part of the 1980s.[138] With such an unfavourable water-site, port customers (particularly those operating larger classes of vessel) were encouraged to look to alternative sites for their cargo handling needs after 1945.

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[135] HHC, *Trade of Hull and Humber Ports Journal*, 1956, p. 7.

[136] HHC, *Trade of Hull and Humber Ports Journal* 1958, p.9.

[137] Jones and North, 'Ports and Wharves' (1987), p. 104.

[138] *Ibid.*

In contrast to Hull, the sites and water approaches of many other port facilities were far more favourable, particularly those situated close to the open sea. Consequently, such places were, unlike Hull, at liberty to develop deep-water facilities to accommodate the increasingly large vessels of the post-Second World War period. For example, the neighbouring south bank port of Immingham exploited its location directly on the deep-water channel of the Humber Estuary and developed a new generation of deep-water jetties during the late 1960s and early 1970s.[139] At Finnart on Loch Long there was deep-water of a minimum of 55ft and close by at Tail o' the Bank there was the safest, largest and most sheltered anchorage on the west coast.[140] Here oil terminals were developed during the 1950s, when vessels of up to 100,000 dwt could discharge at any state of the tide.[141] Likewise, Milford Haven, a sheltered deep-water harbour near the port of Swansea, had a minimum depth in its approaches of 54 feet.[142] The port of Southampton was also advantageously located to deal with large vessels. Sited on a peninsula between two rivers, it also had the good fortune to possess capacious water approaches that were rendered even more commodious by a favourable tidal regime.[143] As the spring tidal range at Southampton was just 13.1 feet, it had not been necessary to construct impounded docks, and, consequently shipping had direct access to the port's facilities at any state of the tide.[144] Via a combination of superior water sites and large scale investment, these ports, and others, were able to expand their share of traffic hugely, often at the expense of Hull and other unfavourably located ports.

2.4 **Land Transport**

In parallel with the post-1945 shifts within the domestic economy and technological advances in merchant shipping, there were also major developments in commercial land-based transport after 1945. While the long-distance communications of many ports in Britain had been the domain of the waterways and railways since the nineteenth century, the 1920s witnessed the growth in use of the motor vehicle. It was from the 1950s, however, when the use of road transport experienced explosive

[139] Ibid., 102.

[140] Bird, *The Major Seaports of the United Kingdom*, pp. 90-93.

[141] *Ibid.*

[142] *Ibid*., p. 212.

[143] *Ibid*., p. 154.

[144] *Ibid*, p. 165.

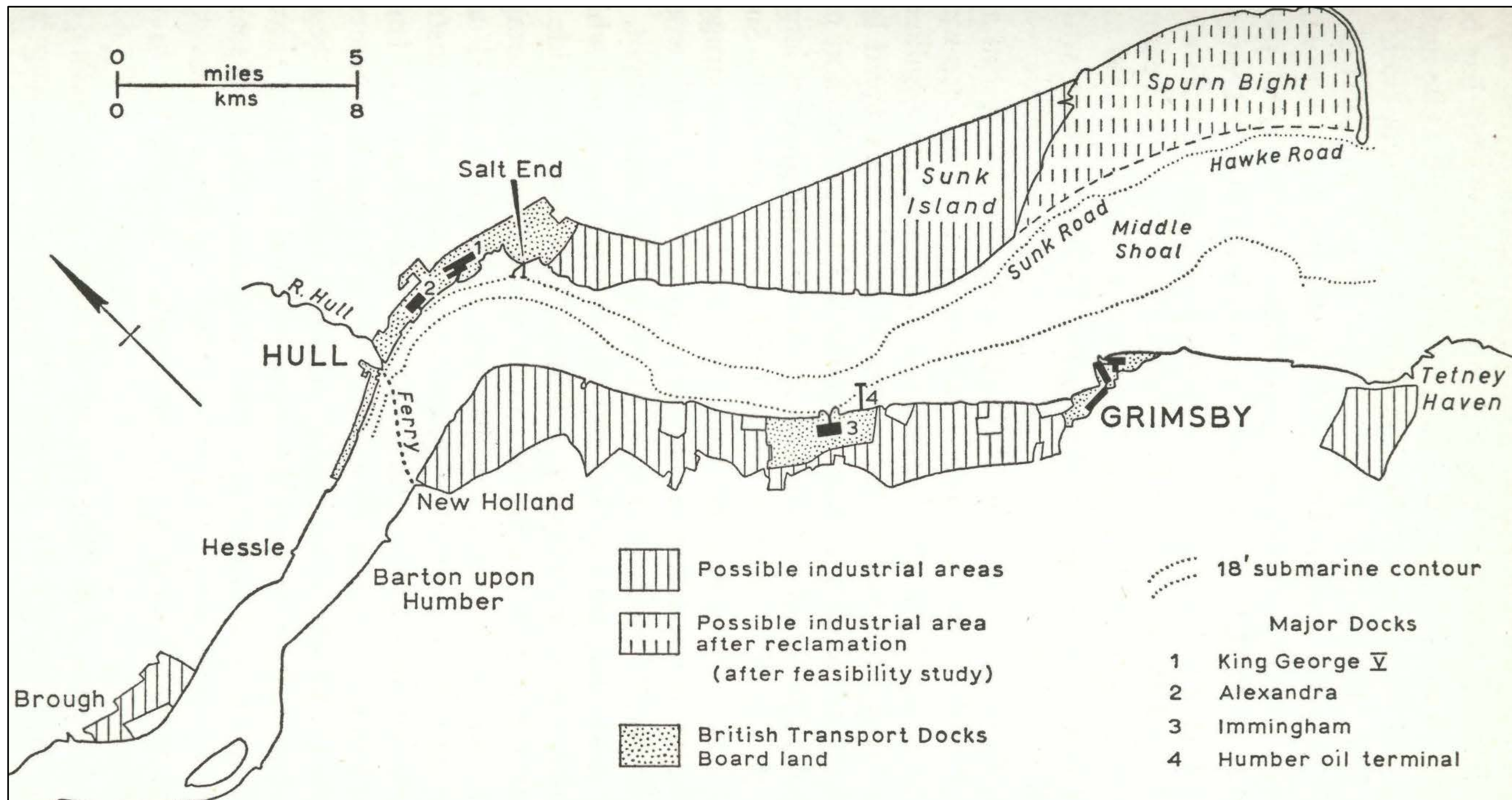

Figure 3: Hull's position on the inland extremity of the Humber Estuary's deep water channel was hugely unfavourable particularly when compared to the neighbouring port of Immingham. Chart taken from Lewis and Jones' Industrial Britain: The Humberside Region (1970).

growth. In 1952 the volume of ton-miles of freight carried by road was 19 billion, a figure that had increased to 83.3 billion by 1990.[145]In parallel, Government planning and funding encouraged the development and expansion of the country's national road system. Although British advances in road infrastructure lagged behind those of other European countries into the 1960s, these years witnessed the construction of a number of new dual carriage ways across the country and the opening of the Preston By-Pass in Lancashire during 1958 heralded the motorway-age in Britain.[146] The local and regional road infrastructure of many port and industrial areas also underwent a degree of development during this period. Together, the motor vehicle and the nationwide expansion of road infrastructure increasingly offered improved speed and versatility for the inland carriage of freight to an extent with which neither the country's railways nor waterways could compete by the mid-1960s.[147] Consequently, these modes of transport (both of which suffered from a comparative lack of investment after 1945) entered a period of sharp decline from the 1960s.[148] Not only were British ports obliged to respond to the rapid post-1945 advancements in shipping technology, their successful adaptation to the revolution in road transport was also of paramount importance. Similar to its struggle to adjust to the former, the Port of Hull also encountered serious difficulties with regards to its integration of the latter. Again, this was largely a symptom of the port's difficult geographical location, this time to landward.

The issues that Hull faced in this regard were both local and regional in nature. This made the port's problems two-fold. In terms of its regional location, Hull was comparatively remote from the commercial and industrial hinterland. Historically, the port had been successful in overcoming its isolated position largely due to its far-reaching inland waterway communications. The Humber Estuary connected to the Rivers Hull, Aire, Calder, Trent, Don and Ouse and linked the docks at Hull to the manufacturing districts of South and West Yorkshire, Lancashire and the Midlands.[149] From the middle of the nineteenth century these inland water communications were supplemented by an extensive rail network that provided the port with further access to the main industrial regions.[150] However, it was the quality of these existing transport systems (coupled with the Humber region's exclusion from

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[145] Theodore C. Barker and Dorian Gerhold, *The Rise and Rise of Road Transport, 1700-1990* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1993), p. 94

[146] *Roads for the Future*: *A New Inter-Urban Plan* (London: HMSO, 1969); *Roads and Industry: British Road Federation/British Industry Roads Campaign Report* (London: British Road Federation, 1972).

[147] Barker and Gerhold, *The Rise and Rise of Road Transport (*1993), p. 4.

[148] *Ibid.*

[149] Owen, *The Origin and Development of The Ports*, pp. 89-94; Bird, *The Major Seaports of the United Kingdom*, pp. 119-127.

[150] *Ibid.*

the Government's UK regional policy initiatives both before and after the Second World War) that caused the regional road infrastructure surrounding the port to remain largely undeveloped into the late 1960s.

Recognising its detrimental effect upon trade, there were repeated attempts by both local authorities and the mercantile community at Hull to improve the port's road links after 1945. Indeed, in 1960 members of the Hull Chamber of Trade and Commerce remained steadfast in their campaign for the acquisition of a motorway for the Humber region:

> Through the Chamber of Trade local traders have supported Hull Corporation in their endeavour to obtain for the city of Hull a motorway connecting the East and West Ridings of Yorkshire through to Liverpool. It is felt that a city and port the size of Hull must have connecting roads if the importance of the docks and industries within the city shall be maintained. The completion of a motorway from Leeds to Liverpool would seriously attack the exports from the city and would put Hull at a great disadvantage when competing with Liverpool for cargoes. The east-west motorway would not only give direct access to the City but would speed deliveries and would encourage trade representatives and shoppers from other parts of Yorkshire to visit Hull. As traders we are of the opinion that the abandonment of this project is a great disservice to the City, which has its problems from a location standpoint.[151]

Despite this plea, which also highlighted the infrastructural advancements within other regions that threatened to expose Hull's traditional hinterland to its competitors, the port's regional road system remained largely undeveloped into the late 1960s. Indeed, the serious deficiencies of Hull's long-distance road links during this time were highlighted in a contemporary assessment of industry on Humberside:

> The seriousness of the position may be illustrated from the vital A18 between Doncaster and Thorne, which carries traffic bound for both North and South Humberside. This is a two-way single carriage way with a design capacity in parts of 6,000 passenger car units per day; it carries almost 20,000 vehicles at peak times, over a third of them heavy lorries. Trunk roads out of the region to the national motorway system are constricted; the A63 from Hull to the A1 and Leeds crosses the Ouse at Selby by an eighteenth-century wooden toll bridge; the A614 from Howden on the A63 to Bawtry and the Midlands crossed the Stainforth and Keadby Canal at Thorne until recently by a single-lane swing bridge.

This damning critique further outlined that:

> The region contains no motorway and only a few efficient dual carriageway roads adequate for heavy traffic, such as the A63 between Hessle and Elloughton. Road communications between North and South Humberside are arduous, the New Holland ferry is expensive and limited in capacity, and the hovercraft service

[151] HHC, L. 360. 5, *Trade of Hull and Humber Ports*, 1961, p.47.

> between Grimsby and Hull has not yet been operating long enough for its usefulness to be evaluated.[152]

This overview highlighted that not only were regional routes heavily overburdened by the late 1960s, but bottlenecks hampered the efficient flow of goods between the port and its hinterland. It further indicated that, by this time, the region had also failed to acquire a crossing over the Humber Estuary. Therefore the river continued to present a major physical obstacle in terms of Hull's road access to the south bank of the Humber where, as has been noted, major industrial development had taken place after 1945. Local authorities in Hull had pursued a crossing over the Humber since the 1830s and designs for a road bridge (together with the promise of a 75 per cent grant from the Ministry of Transport) had been secured as part of the Hull Corporation's 1931 Humber Bridge Bill, but the mounting national crisis of that year forced the withdrawal of the loan, and the abandonment of this scheme.[153] In contrast, the Queensway, a road route under the Mersey Estuary connecting Liverpool and Birkenhead, was opened in 1934 at a cost of £7,123,000 and proved to be of great benefit to the ports and industry of Merseyside.[154] During the 1950s further attempts were made to secure consent for the erection of a bridge the success of which appeared a distinct possibility when Alderman Frederick Holmes of Hull Corporation announced:

> My most gratifying experience during the year has been the passing of the Humber Bridge Act which gives the all clear for further progress to be made on this long awaited scheme which could do so much to improve communications and offer encouragement to new enterprise of all kinds.[155]

Although few in the locality doubted how valuable a Humber bridge would have been to the prosperity of Hull, the optimism of the Corporation and those in the port was crushed as the Government withheld consent based on the belief that a bridge would serve regional rather than national needs.[156] With such a poor regional road system few, if any, other UK ports were rendered so remote from the areas of commerce and industry upon which their trade relied.

In addition to contemporary assessments, several of my interviewees, who had been employed in dock-based road haulage at this time, provided detailed recollections of what it was like to use these primitive local and regional roads on a daily basis. Dennis Saxby, for example, explained:

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[152] Peter Lewis and Philip N. Jones, *Industrial Britain The Humberside Region* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1970), pp. 36-37.

[153] John North, 'The History of the Humber Crossing' in S. Ellis and D.R. Crowther (eds) *Humber Perspectives: A Region through the Ages* (Hull: Hull University Press, 1990), pp. 406-421.

[154] Owen, *The Origin and Development of the Ports of the United Kingdom* (1948), p. 74.

[155] HHC, *Trade of Hull and Humber Ports*, 1960, p.3.

[156] North, The History of the Humber Crossing (1990), pp. 414-415.

> I mean there was no A63 like we 'ave now, no Clive Sullivan, no motorways.[157] So when you left Hull in a morning you had to go through the town - through Brough and all them places – no motorways. I mean you could go from 'ull - say you was going to Liverpool - you could go Monday morning when everybody's on the road, you could leave 'ull at five o'clock in a morning and it could be 11 o'clock/dinner time before you got there. So no way with the limited driving hours you could you get back in the same day.[158]

In a further interview, Saxby elaborated:

> A lot of the wagons used to set off about 5 or 6 in a morning to go where you was going. Of course you got a bit of a queue if you like and the roads was such that if your wagon was a bit faster than the one in front you couldn't overtake cos there want the room till the motorway come along.[159]

Another haulage driver, Brain Cook, also detailed the huge amount of time it took for freight vehicles travelling from Hull docks to reach the traditional industrial areas:

> Well before the motorways you would say you could more or less do Manchester there and back in a day or 11 hours. If you were going wi' a load o' timber – depending on what side of Manchester you went but they'd all be sort of three and half/four and 'alf hours and [then] you'd get unloaded.[160]

Here, Saxby and Cook, then both young men keen to earn a living in the rapidly expanding road haulage industry, recalled the sense of frustration and helplessness which marked their work during this era. For Saxby, memories of the congestion of vehicles as they battled for position along the tortuous route from the docks through the city and outlying villages stood out. Similarly, Cook remembered the arduous and time-consuming journeys between the docks and the industrial hinterland. At a time when the motor vehicle was revolutionising the transportation of goods, it is clear from these recollections that the grossly inadequate road infrastructure surrounding the port was a huge impediment to both efficiency and prosperity well into the post-1945 period.

While the port encountered problems with regards to the development of efficient communications at a regional level, it was also forced to contend with equal difficulties within the immediate vicinity of its dock facilities. This was due to the historic development of the dock system, the nature of which rendered road access to the port hugely problematic. The older Town Docks were located in the city centre, however, the main port area lay to the east of the River Hull. Consequently, the former were hemmed in by congested urban development, and the latter were only accessible

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[157] Clive A. Sullivan was a Great Britain and Welsh International rugby league player who played for both Hull F.C. and Hull Kingston Rovers R.L.F.C.. The section of the A63 between Hull and Hessle laid out in 1980 and originally known as South Docks Road was renamed Clive Sullivan Way in his honour following his death in 1985.

[158] Dennis Saxby, Interview, 25 April 2013.

[159] Dennis Saxby, Interview, 27 April 2013.

[160] Brian Cook, Interview, 4 April 2013.

from the western hinterland via routes across the river Hull directly through the city centre. Furthermore, a lack of investment within the locality after 1945 caused the internal road infrastructure of the city to remain grossly underdeveloped. The destruction of the city's internal transport Infrastructure during the Second World War had provided an ideal opportunity for remodelling. Indeed, on this basis, an elaborate 1945 plan for development in the city had envisaged an ambitious new design involving the abolition of level crossings, high level bridges to carry through traffic over the River Hull and express and semi-express roads connected to dual carriageways.[161] This proved to be an opportunity missed as no major redevelopment of the city's internal road system leading to the docks had been made by the late 1960s (See Figure 4). By this time, internal routes serving the docks (which were initially designed for horse drawn vehicles and intended for the local distribution of goods) remained severely obstructed by level crossings and agricultural drains.[162] The general lack of improvement in the city's roads during this period was such that it created a sense of anxiety amongst the port's traders, many of whom persistently voiced their concerns. For example, in 1957, P. D. Priestman, President of the Hull Chamber of Commerce, declared:

> The Boothferry Road to Bawtry cries out loud for attention. It is after all one of our main arteries to all parts of the country and is quite inadequate for the volume of traffic that night and day passes along it to and from our great port.[163]

It is clear from this exclamation that the city's road system was not only outdated, but that existing roads connected to the docks were heavily overburdened.

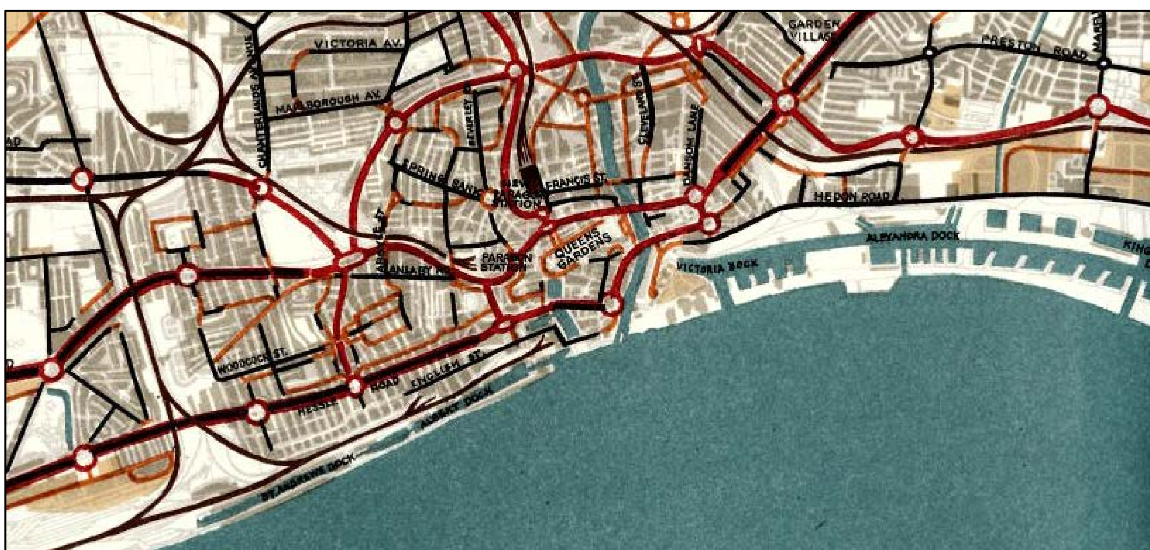

Figure 4: Map from 1945 showing the complex and underdeveloped system of roads that surrounded the Hull docks. This infrastructure had altered little by the late 1960s. Image taken from Lutyens and Abercrombies' Plan for Kingston upon Hull (1945).

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[161] Lutyens and Abercrombie, *A Plan for the City and County of Kingston upon Hull*, p. 17.

[162] 'Communications' in K. J. Allison (ed.), *A History of the County of York East Riding*, Vol. 1 (London: Published for the Institute of Historical Research by Oxford University Press and Boydell & Brewer, 1969), pp. 387-397.

[163] HHC, *Trade of Hull and Humber Ports*, 1957, p.34.

Following the Government's recognition in the late 1960s of the Humber area as a site for potential for urban and industrial growth, Hull's local and regional road infrastructure finally experienced major investment and development (see Figure 5). As a result, the port gradually overcame some of its locational disadvantages to landward. Sustained investment and development ensured that, by the late 1980s, the port was connected to a strategic network of motorway and dual carriageway roads. This included the M62/A63 east-west route on the north bank of the Humber and the M180/A180 on the south bank with the M18 to the west as a connecting link between the two.[164] Linked to the M6, M1 and A1 motorways, the M62 connected Hull to the national motorway network and provided the port with country-wide road access (see Figure 5). Equally as important, the region had also acquired a long-awaited road connection over the Humber Estuary following the acquisition of funding in 1966, a feat achieved against a back drop of favourable economic conditions, population growth and rigorous regional planning in the Humber area.[165] Construction of the Humber Bridge began in July 1972 between Hessle (5 miles to the west of Hull) on the north bank and Barton on the south bank and, once completed, it was then the largest suspension bridge in the world (see Figure 6). More important for the port than this accolade was that the divisive effect of the estuary had finally been overcome and access enabled between the port and the industrial areas to south of the Humber (from which it had long been excluded).

Immediate road access to the docks was also provided following the completion of the South Docks Road and South Orbital road in the city during 1980. Costing some £26m, this route, which included a high level lift bridge over the River Hull, connected the main port area to the east of the River directly to both the Humber Bridge and M62/A63.[166] The chief benefit of this scheme was that road traffic travelling to and from the docks from the west was no longer required to take the congested and tortuous path through the city centre. The significant improvement this particular route afforded to port operations was recalled by Gary Marks, an employee of a large road haulage company based at King George Dock:

> The work that was done on Hedon Road to make it into a dual carriage way that was a positive thing. It was a nightmare before it was just a two sided road and it was an old road – a very dangerous road to have very big lorries driving down it.[167]

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[164] J. North, 'Transport' in D. Symes (ed) *Humberside in the Eighties: A Spatial view of the Economy* (Hull: Department of Geography, University of Hull, 1987), p. 80

[165] North, A History of the Humber Crossing, pp. 415-416.

[166] *Hull Dockers' Essays on Freight Transport Systems in Yorkshire and Humberside, and Other Matters*, Paper No.8 (Hull: Hull University, 1980), p. 5.

[167] Gary Marks, Interview, 8 April 2013.

On the back of all of these developments in regional road infrastructure, the port authority proudly announced in its official literature the huge improvements which had been brought to the port:

> Hull is now more than ever adequately served by first class road communications which have opened a new era in the history of the port. The M62 linking two of the major ports of the United Kingdom – Liverpool and Hull – has already brought benefits which were hitherto not within its grasp. A "land bridge" has been created over which transatlantic cargo can move onward through a European orientated port. Today a more ready access to the industrial areas of Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire has given an added impetus to its trading potential.

Furthermore, the advantages to existing and potential customers was also emphasised:

> These completed and foreshadowed road constructions have brought benefit to shippers and manufacturers alike, who rely on fast delivery from factory to consumer. Further, it is of paramount importance that the Port of Hull with its modern facilities is seen to be providing all that is required for the many needs of the industry. [168]

This statement indicates the improvement of local and regional road infrastructure encouraged a new sense of self confidence and prosperity amongst many in the port. However, it concealed the fact that Hull still possessed considerable weaknesses' in terms of its inland communications by the late 1980s.

Although capital had been invested in road links to the west of the port, infrastructure north of the docks remained largely undeveloped. There had also been a distinct lack of progress in the improvement of trunk routes which led north and south.[169] With regards to the latter roads, piecemeal improvements including dualling, straightening and new roundabout construction were made to the A1079 Hull-York road, however, several bottlenecks still remained on this route that carried much heavy goods traffic from the Hull docks.[170] In addition, the impact of the Humber crossing upon the port's trade was not as great as had initially been predicted by the local authorities and mercantile community in the city. Although construction had commenced during the early 1970s a combination of bad weather, labour disputes and technical problems with the South Pier delayed completion until 1981, almost 5 years behind schedule.[171] Furthermore, by the time of its opening in June of that year, the favourable economic conditions of the late 1960s that had encouraged its building had abated and, with the onset of high inflation and interest rates which considerably increased capital costs and loan charges for the bridge, toll charges were set very high.[172] Despite major expenditure and development, the port's road communications, still required further

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[168] HHC, Associated British Ports, *Official Handbook* (1989). p. 31

[169] North, 'Transport' (1987), p. 80

[170] *Ibid*.

[171] North, 'A History of the Humber Crossing' (1990), pp. 416-417.

[172] *Ibid.*

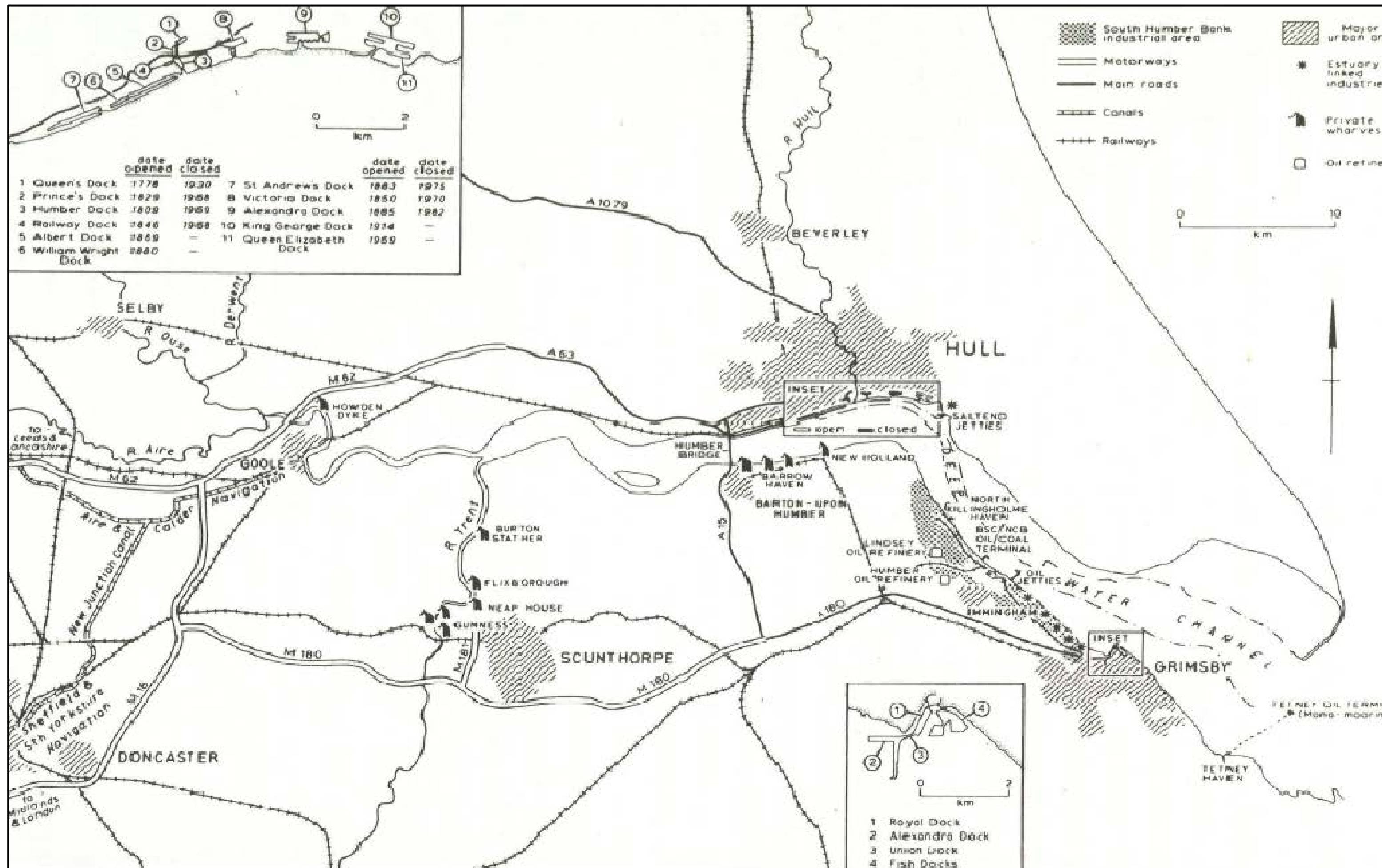

Figure 5: A map showing the extent of transport infrastructure in the Humber region during the late 1980s. Map taken from North 'Transport' in Humberside in the Eighties: A Spatial view of the Economy (1987).

substantial investment. Consequently, by this time, the port had still not fully overcome its geographical remoteness. Therefore, potential trade to and from the surrounding hinterland was still being lost as a result of poor transport infrastructure to landward.

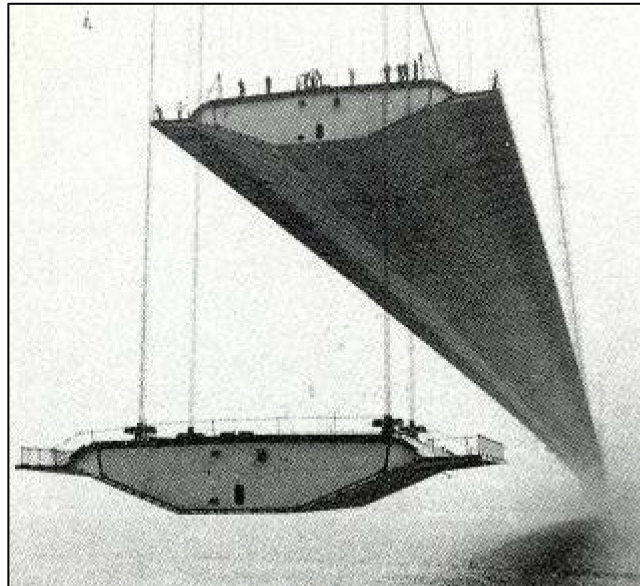

Figure 6: Under construction during the 1970s, the Humber Bridge enabled valuable access to industrial areas south of the estuary. (Image from 'The Humberside Connection: The Humber Bridge, A Commemorative Handbook (1981)'

2.5 **Conclusion**

The large-scale economic shifts and technological advances of the post-1945 period had a major impact upon the trade and function of Britain's ports. Due to the nature of its long-established cargo-handling profile and unfavourable geographical position, these developments were felt particularly keenly at the port of Hull. While the collapse of the country's coal industry and rising domestic demand for oil products forced the port to adapt its operations after 1945, the severe decline of local and regional industry had greatly affected both exports and imports handled at the docks by the 1980s. In parallel, the port was also required to respond to the widespread changes in merchant ship design. Although some of Hull's deeper-water facilities could handle the larger classes of bulk carrying and general cargo vessels up to the mid-1960s, its unfavourable geographical position on the inland extremity of the tidal Humber's deep-water channel rendered the port unable to cope with the continued and rapid increase in ship size thereafter. In contrast, other ports situated at deep-water sites developed facilities to handle the largest classes of vessel and, as a result were able to expand their share of traffic. Hull's difficult position to landward also proved problematic to the port's post-1945 development. The evolution of the port's dock system and its historic orientation with water and rail transport inland communications having been strongly orientated to the railways and waterways prior to 1945, and a dearth of investment thereafter, Hull struggled to adapt to the explosive growth of motor transport from the 1950s.

3 Conservatism and Partial Recovery, 1945-1964

3.1 **Introduction**

For Britain, the 1945 to 1964 period may be loosely divided into two eras of social, political and economic change. The years between 1945 and 1951 were marked by the widespread nationalisation of industry and far reaching social reform under Clement Attlee's Labour government. Intended to create a 'New Jerusalem' following the sacrifices of the Second World War, these developments were hindered by economic dislocation and austerity. Some have criticised this policy of 'welfare- capitalist consensus', by claiming it involved unsustainable levels of welfare provision when what the country desperately needed was a programme of reinvestment in, and modernisation of, its antiquated industrial infrastructure.[173] During the successive period from late 1951 into the mid-1960s, the general tone changed. The return of the Conservatives under Winston Churchill marked a political shift and, with the main adjustments to post-war conditions having been made, Britain entered an era of sustained economic growth. These years saw production running above pre-war levels and persistently low unemployment.[174] In line with economic growth there was a marked improvement in the standard of living. Ration books were discarded, the number of motor cars increased from around 2.3 to 3.3 million between 1951 and 1955, while the same period saw television ownership quadruple to over four million.[175]

Unlike the economic and social shifts of these years, the change in politics was less marked. Following their election in October 1951, the Conservatives did little to dismantle Labour's post-war legacy. Indeed, it has been argued that the continuation of solid support for Labour encouraged the Tories to adapt a moderate conservatism which continued the practice of their predecessor government that had placed far greater emphasis on social welfare than on industrial development.[176] Consequently, British industry (which had undergone little change and development during the interwar years) was in great need of extensive reorganisation by the early 1960s. This requirement was particularly pressing due to the post-war economic recovery and expansion of other nations including the United States of America, Germany and Japan. In contrast to the industrial growth of these nations, key industries in Britain had remained fragmented into sub-optimal units, each competing vigorously in price but unable, because of competitive pressures, to generate sufficient

[173] Correlli Barnett, *The Audit of War: The Iillusion and Reality of Britain as a Great Nation* (London: MacMillan, 1986), pp. 11-37.

[174] Alec Cairncross, *The British Economy since 1945: Economic Policy and Performance, 1945 -1990* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 90.

[175] Kevin Jefferys, *Retreat from Jerusalem: British Politics, 1951-64* (London: Macmillan Press), p. 9.

[176] *Ibid*., pp. 9-34.

profits to fund the modernisation of equipment and adaptation of processes.[177] As a result, economic growth in the United Kingdom lagged behind that of many other countries between 1951 and 1964.

Nowhere was this lack of industrial spirit more apparent than in the British port industry. Indeed, it has been suggested that by the 1960s, the operation, distribution and facilities of the country's ports had altered little between the late Victorian era.[178] Although these generic issues appear to have been widespread across the industry, some ports fared better than others. Although retaining its position as Britain's third port in terms of the value of its trade, Hull's percentage share of the total national value of trade decreased during the period. The port had handled 6 per cent of the total value of U.K. trade in 1938 compared with 5.4 per cent in 1955, and the margin between Hull and Manchester narrowed from 1.6 per cent to only 1.0 in the same years.[179] Furthermore, the volume of shipping traffic handled by Hull was also lower than during the pre-war years. Between 1936 and 1938 an average of 6,178,000 Net Registered Tons (NRT) of foreign and coastwise shipping arrived in cargo and ballast at the port compared with a reduced total of 5,919,000 NRT between 1958 and 1960.[180] By comparison, several other large British ports performed much more favourably - with London, Liverpool, Southampton, Glasgow (including Greenock), Manchester, Bristol, Swansea, Middlesbrough and Grimsby (including Immingham) all successfully increasing their volume of NRT handled during these years.[181]

In an attempt to understand why Hull performed so poorly during this period, this part of the thesis explores the organisation and operations of the port of Hull as well as the memories of those who lived and worked on the waterfront at this time. I argue that the lack of progress at the port in these years was due to the particularly heavy burden of past developments as well as a distinct inertia that endured into the 1960s. I also suggest that whilst these features existed at an organisational and operational level, they were also apparent in the attitudes of many who lived and worked on the waterfront.

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[177] Cairncross, *The British Economy since 1945,* pp. 26-31

[178] Alan G. Jamieson, *Ebb Tide in the British Maritime Industries: Change and Adaptation, 1918-1990* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2003), pp. 95-98.

[179] Joyce M. Bellamy, 'The Trends in the Foreign Trade of United Kingdom Ports' in *The Port of Hull Journal*, April, 1957, Vol. XLV, No. 4, p. 7.

[180] James Bird, *The Major Seaports of the United Kingdom* (London: Hutchinson, 1963), pp. 22-26.

[181] *Ibid.*

3.2 **Institutional Fragmentation and Outdated Operations**

For British ports, the only organisational change of note during the 1945 to 1964 period came under the Labour Government's Transport Acts of 1947 and 1962. In a bid to create an integrated transport system, the ports owned by railway and canal companies (around a third of Britain's port provision) were transferred to public ownership and placed under the control of the British Transport Commission's (BTC) Docks and Inland Waterways Executive (DIWE).[182]Although the Act empowered the BTC to create a national plan for port development (including non-nationalised ports), this feature was removed by the Conservative Government's Transport Act, 1953.[183] The Act also abolished the DIWE and placed the BTC in direct control of the nationalised ports. Following financial difficulties and the failure to successfully develop and integrate transport, the Conservatives' Transport Act, 1962, abolished the BTC and transferred control of the largest ports to the newly created independent British Transport Docks Board on 1 January 1963.[184]

There was also a degree of re-organisation in relation to dock labour during this period, however, this issue and its implications for the port industry will be discussed in the following chapter. Aside from these limited administrative developments, the ports generally remained free from external government intervention between 1945 and 1964. With little attempt to modernise internally, the industry remained largely unaltered in terms of its organisation and operation. Functionally weak and inefficient, the country's ports struggled to serve the increasing volume of shipping that had been encouraged by the huge expansion of seaborne trade of the post-1945 period. Indeed, the problems within the industry remained so damaging to the economy that in December 1960 the Minister of Transport told the Cabinet's Economic Policy Committee that domestic ports "are neither adequate nor efficient" and that "both management and equipment of United Kingdom ports is old fashioned and labour relations bad."[185] At this juncture, the government was compelled to act. Despite having engaged a series of investigations into port inefficiency and the slow turnaround of shipping since the late 1940s, the Ministry of Transport saw little evidence of improvement by the early 1960s and was

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[182] *Ibid.*

[183] *Ibid.*

[184] Michael R. Bonavia, *The Nationalisation of British Transport: The Early History of the British Transport Commission, 1948-53* (London: MacMillan, 1987), p. 166.

[185] Alan G. Jamieson, "Not More Ports, But Better Ports" the Development of the British Port Industry since 1945 in *The Northern Mariner,* Vol. 1, No. 1, January 1996, p. 29.

encouraged to launch a major new inquiry into the port industry.[186] Chaired by Lord Rochdale, this committee of inquiry was charged with investigating the extent to which the major docks and harbours of Great Britain were adequate to meet future and national needs.[187] It was also asked to assess whether the methods of working could be improved, to and make recommendations for development.[188]

In this chapter, I argue that the Port of Hull suffered from a particular lack of organisational and operational development in comparison to the other major ports between 1945 and 1964. Consequently, it was one of the most outdated and least efficient ports in the country. This limited progress, I argue, was the legacy of past development and particularly slow-paced and misdirected capital investment by the port's authority after 1945. I also assert that, despite the port's functional and organisational weakness, many who laboured on and around the Hull docks during these years were unaware of the port's comparatively poor performance or the major changes in the global trading environment. For them, these years were recalled as something of a golden age when trade boomed and the port prospered.

3.2.1 The Legacy of the Past

Having been under either partial or full railway ownership since 1885, Hull was amongst those ports that were nationalised by the *Transport Act* 1947 Act. On 1 January 1949 its ownership was transferred from the London and North Eastern Railway Company (LNER) to the DIWE of the BTC.[189] Like other port authorities, Hull's new owners were faced with the tough task of adapting operations to the post-1945 developments in trade and transport. This challenge, however, was particularly problematic for the DIWE and BTC at Hull as the administrative organisation they inherited from the LNER was fragmented and poorly coordinated. At Hull, berthing, docking and crane facilities were provided by the port authority, with other functions the responsibility of a number of different bodies.[190] Towage on the Humber had long been the domain of private enterprise, and services including lighting, buoying, pilotage and conservancy were the jurisdiction of the Humber Conservancy Board, a body

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[186] *Report of The Working Party on Turnaround of Shipping in U.K. Ports* (1948); *First and Second Reports of the Ports Efficiency Committee* (1952); *Third Report of the Ports Efficiency Committee* (1955)

[187] *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Major Ports of Great Britain,* Cmnd. 1824 (London: HMSO, 1962), p. 1.

[188] *Ibid.*

[189] TNA, AN 11/2, British Transport Commission, Statutory *Annual Reports and Accounts* (1949), p.132.

[190] *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Major Ports of Great Britain,* Cmnd. 1824 (London: HMSO, 1962), p.254

that was formed in 1908 and comprised representatives from the Ministry of Transport and several local commercial organisations.[191] In addition, cargo handling was performed by four different types of employer. The port authority provided quayside crane operators, but dock labour was employed on a largely casual basis by ship owners, stevedores and forwarding warehouse-keepers.[192] By comparison the administrative coherence of many other authorities at large ports was superior. For example, the Manchester Ship Canal Company directly controlled every aspect of port operation, while the port authorities at London and Bristol, alongside those on the Clyde and Tees, undertook all but a few services.[193] These ports, all of which had expanded their share of traffic by 1960, had been in far better position to recover and develop facilities after 1945.

Alongside a fragmented administration, the DIWE also acquired dock facilities at Hull that were severely rundown, damaged and largely outdated. Consequently, the port's authority was faced with the challenge of re-establishing and adapting peace time operations with large arrears of maintenance of equipment that was generally outmoded. The docks at Hull generally reflected the investments of previous owners, a group that had struggled more than most port authorities to provide suitable docking facilities. A difficult geographical site and the reluctance of previous authorities to invest meant that most facilities at Hull, unlike those in many other ports, were largely outdated long before 1949.[194] 'The Town Docks', which included Humber Dock (1809), Princes Dock (1829) and Railway Dock (1846), had been constructed by the Hull Dock Company, the port's first owners. Having been conceived in the age of sail, they were small and shallow in depth, and Railway Dock (merely an extension to Humber Dock) was, as its name suggests, initially designed for rail work, a mode of transport that was in a state of decline.[195] Situated in a cramped and awkward position in the city centre on land originally donated by the Crown during the eighteenth century, access by motor vehicles was already problematic. The adjacent Albert Dock (1869) was hemmed in by urban development. Built on a long and narrow site, its unconventional design had long been unpopular with shipping companies as vessels could not enter and leave easily and ships often took a whole day to

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[191] *Ibid.*

[192] Sam Davies, 'The History of the Hull Dockers, c. 1870-1960' in Sam Davies (Ed) *Dock Workers: International Explorations in Comparative Labour History, 1790-1970, Vol I* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 181-182.

[193] *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Major Ports of Great Britain,* Cmnd. 1824 (London: HMSO, 1962), p.254

[194] Gordon Jackson, 'Shipowners and Private Dock Companies: The Case of Hull, 1770-1970' in Akveld L.M. and J. R. Bruijn, *Shipping Companies and Authorities in the 19th and 20th centuries: Their Common Interest in the Development of Port Facilities* (Den Haag, 1989), pp. 47-61.

[195] Gordon, Jackson, *The History and Archaeology of Ports* (Tadworth, Surrey: The Windmill Press, 1983), p.76.

pass along the dock when it was full of liners and barges.[196] Similarly, Victoria Dock (1850) to the east of the River Hull was surrounded by urban build up and its limited depth also restricted the size of vessel it could accept. The two larger, deeper docks located in an almost rural setting to the east of Victoria Dock had much greater potential for development during the 1950s. Alexandra Dock (1885) was suited to serving the growing short-sea trade with Europe and King George Dock (1914) could accommodate some of the larger classes of ocean going vessels due to its depth and the size of its lock entrance.[197] Nevertheless, these two docks were recognised as possessing severe shortcomings in terms of road access. Indeed, the President of the Hull Chamber of Commerce warned in 1956:

> Our two larger docks, Alexandra dating from 1885 and King George dating from 1914 were both conceived and built by railway companies for the express purpose of providing traffic to rail both inward and outward and consequently efficient access by road vehicle is difficult to arrange. At the time they were built they were well up to date dock facilities but when they became the responsibility of the British Transport Commission one of them was more than 60 years old.[198]

With the most modern part of the dock estate already aged and long outmoded by the 1945, the BTC began its tenure with facilities that were ill-equipped to handle increasing volumes of peace-time trade and the new developments within transport technology (See figures 7 and 8).

Not only were the facilities acquired by the BTC largely outdated, they had also sustained heavy bomb damage during the Second World War. Without doubt the most severe destruction during the conflict had occurred at the Port of London, where a third of all facilities had been either damaged or destroyed.[199] The Port of Hull, however, had also suffered particularly badly during the War. In 1947, one trader speculated:

> As yet pre-War prosperity is still a far distant horizon. This is, of course, only natural. Certain other ports were able to regain their prestige more quickly because they did not suffer so heavily from the blows of aerial attack.[200]

Indeed, a set of maps used to record unrepaired bomb damage in 1948 provide some indication regarding the extent of destruction across the dock estate. The maps show that the sheds at William Wright, Albert Dock and the Town Docks had suffered severely, while the Riverside Quay along with the south side of Albert Dock had been completely obliterated by incendiaries in May 1941 (see Figure

[196] *Ibid*. p. 126.

[197] BJL, National Ports Council, *Port Development: An Interim Plan* (1965), pp. 101-102.

[198] HHC, L. 380. 5, *The Trade of Hull and Humber Ports*, 1956, p. 7.

[199] Sarah Palmer, 'From London to Tilbury: The Port of London since 1945' in Poul Holm and John Edwards (eds.) *North Sea Ports and Harbours – Adaptations to change* (Esbjerg, Denmark: Fiskeri og Sofartsmuseets, 1991), p. 189.

[200] HHC, *The Hull and Humber Ports Journal,* 1947, p. 10.

9).[201] At Victoria Dock, there was much damage to timber yards, warehousing and quays, and the coal conveyors to the east of the dock were also destroyed.[202] At Alexandra Dock, all but two warehouses

[201] HHC, CCXL.2, (CTSY/2/3/21); T. Geraghty, *"A North-East Coast Town", Ordeal and Triumph: The Story of Kingston-upon-Hull in the 1939-1945 Great War* (Hull: A. Brown & Sons Ltd, 1978), p. 15.

[202] HHC, CCXXVI.15 (CTSY/2/3/12).

Figure 7: Map of the Hull docks from the 1950s showing the congested location of the small and aged docks to the west of the city and the awkward

were either destroyed or damaged and large areas of rail tracks across the timber yards to the south of the dock were badly affected.[203] Rail tracks to the west of King George Dock were out of action and a large wool shed nearby was completely destroyed.[204] In contrast, the authorities at other ports, particularly on the west coast of Britain, had incurred comparatively little during the conflict, they could, therefore, resume peace-time operations far more quickly.

Figure 8: Still images taken from the British Transport Film's 'Berth 24' (1950) of road transport at the Hull docks. It is possible to see the narrow, cobbled roadways across the dock estate that were also obstructed by rail tracks.

3.2.2 Capital Investment

Heavily burdened with a fragmented institutional organisation and the legacy of past development, the Port of Hull struggled to achieve the necessary redevelopment and modernisation of facilities under the BTC. For instance, both DIWE and BTC had been very slow to make good the heavy and widespread damage sustained by the port's dock facilities during the War. A key factor underpinning this unfavourable pattern of investment related to the lack of effective communication between the port's authority and its customers with regards to the deployment of new facilities. Traders, therefore, commonly reverted to venting their frustrations in local trade journals. For instance, in 1955, the Green Fruit Section of the Hull Chamber of Commerce declared that:

> [The BTC] should realise that the businessmen of Hull do know what they are talking about, and do resent being treated as though they did not know what would best serve their interests and interest of the port at best.[205]

In the following year S. B. Hainsworth, President of the Hull Chamber of Commerce and Shipping, showed similar dissatisfaction:

[203] HHC, CCXXVI.16 (CTSY/2/3/13).

[204] HHC, CCXXVII.13 (CTSY/2/3/16).

[205] HHC, L. 380. 5, *The Hull and Humber Ports Journal*, 1955, p. 29.

When the Chamber of Commerce submitted a report to the then dock owners in 1944, they urged that the projected additional arm of the King George Dock should not be delayed because of the increasing size of ships and the congestion which had been experienced from time to time so that in this field of port activity it was recognised 11 years ago that our facilities were, to an increasing extent, becoming out of date.[206]

With apparently no formal method of communication between the port's owners and traders, the planning and development of new facilities, practices and procedures was problematic as coordination and consensus between various parties was often difficult to secure.

Figure 9: Photographs of bomb damage at Albert Dock (left) and the charred remains of Riverside Quay (right) in 1941. These images depict a small fraction of the wartime destruction wrought across the Hull docks. (Photographs courtesy of Associated British Ports).

The port had already incurred delays to the redevelopment of cargo handling capacity during the late 1940s due to the transferal of ownership from the LNER to the British Transport Commission. Between 1945 and 1947 extensive negotiations had taken place between representatives of the LNER and the port's customers regarding the replacement and modernisation of facilities, however, these plans were scrapped following the BTC's take-over in 1949.[207] The situation was made worse by continued slow pace of recovery under the BTC. For example, the reconstruction of King George Dock's bomb damaged no. 12 Quay was not completed until 1954, while the Riverside Quay and south side of Albert Dock were not replaced until 1959 (see Figure 10).[208] There is also evidence which indicates that the slow pace of recovery at Hull was having a direct impact on trade and the port's ability to compete for traffic,

[206] HHC, *The Hull and Humber Ports Journal*, 1956, p.7

[207] HHC, *Trade of Hull and Humber Ports*, 1945, p. 21; *Trade of Hull and Humber Ports*, 1947, p. 10.

[208] TNA, AN 11/7, British Transport Commission, *Annual Reports and Accounts* (1954), p. 39; AN 11/15 British Transport Commission, *Annual Reports and Accounts*, Vol. I (1959), p. 42; HHC, *Trade of Hull and Humber Ports*, 1959, p. 5.

particularly in light of developments elsewhere. For example, the President of the Hull Chamber of Commerce bemoaned the port's particular lack of progress in 1956:

> When it is born in mind what tremendous almost unbelievable strides on the continent of Europe in the rebuilding and re-equipping of War damaged port and industrial properties and the building and equipping of new plant it is incredible that the port of Hull is not even yet - 14 years after the destruction of many of its facilities – possessed of anything like its pre-War ability to handle ships and their cargoes – and it must be remembered the havoc wrought on the Hull docks by enemy action was not in any way comparable to the complete obliteration of certain continental ports which today are efficiently working to capacity.[209]

Although progress was slow £13m had been invested in all the port's main docks and at the Salt End jetties by the early 1960s.[210] Much of this capital investment at Hull responded to the advances in transport technology. For example, new deep-water berths for large oil tankers were provided by a £1m scheme for the replacement of No. 1 Jetty and provision of a new branch jetty at Salt End, each capable of being dredged to 36ft Mean Low Water Spring Tide (MLWST).[211] There was also investment in road improvements at each of the docks, including the widening of roadways, the introduction of vehicle parks and greater access for motor vehicles at a number of quays.[212]

Figure 10: Photographs showing the new Riverside Quay under construction in 1957, some 16 years after the destruction of the old quay. (Photographs courtesy of Associated British Ports).

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[209] HHC, *Trade of Hull and Humber Ports* (1956) p. 21.

[210] *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Major Ports of Great Britain,* Cmnd. 1824 (London: HMSO, 1962), pp. 173-212.

[211] TNA, AN 11/13, British Transport Commission, *Annual Reports and Accounts Vol. I* (1958), p. 45.

[212] TNA, AN 11/3, British Transport Commission, *Annual Reports and Accounts Vol. I*, 1950, p. 173; AN 11/4, British Transport Commission, *Annual Reports and Accounts*, 1951, p. 153.

During these years, however, much capital expenditure continued to be directed towards the patching up and replacement of old facilities rather than the implementation of new ones in line with post-1945 developments in cargo handling. For example, £21,000 was spent on the repair of piers and jetties, £8,600 on the replacement of steam cranes, and £31,500 on 800 railway bogies for the movement of timber.[213] In addition, a major development project at King George Dock, costing some £4.75m, involved the construction of six large transit sheds, 3,000 ft. of additional quays for general and bulk cargoes and improved berthing facilities for the repair of ships afloat.[214] With the BTC's capital investment in new facilities at Hull slow-paced and often misdirected the port's cargo handling capacity and efficiency remained poor into the early 1960s. As a result, customers and other traders were no doubt encouraged to depart for alternative sites where shipping could be turned around more quickly and cheaply.

3.2.3 Memories of a Working Port

During my research interviews with those who had laboured in and around the Port of Hull, I asked my respondents to discuss their recollections of the port and their work. More specifically, I asked them to describe their experiences of what the port was like as a functioning place during these years, particularly their memories of operations, trading activity and the landscape of the docks. Significantly, their recollections differed markedly with the documentary evidence presented above. In contrast to the criticism and complaints contained in government reports and trade journals, many of my interviewees (who worked in various locations across the docks in a wide variety of roles integral to the port's operation) recalled these years as a period when traditional port functions continued efficiently and trade visibly prospered.

Rather than discussing the landscape or facilities and buildings across the dock estate, virtually all of these interviewees spoke about the daily routines and movement of a great variety of goods that they witnessed on the docks at this time. When relating this to theories regarding the human experience of place, this is perhaps not surprising. Some geographers have suggested that place is too often thought of (by some) as frozen scenes for human activity and that, instead, we should conceive place in terms of change and process.[215] Furthermore, others have suggested that places need to be understood as sites that are connected to others around

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[213] TNA, AN 11/2, British Transport Commission, *Annual Reports and Accounts*, 1949, p. 134; AN 11/3, British Transport Commission, *Annual Reports and Accounts*, 1950, p. 173

[214] BJL, British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts*, 1963, p. 21.

[215] Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 35.

the world in constantly evolving networks that are social, cultural, natural and environmental.[216] For many of my interviewees, the port was remembered in both of these ways. Road haulage worker George 'Keith' Reader, for example, recalled trading activity at Alexandra Dock:

> What came in [Alexandra Dock Jetty] a lot I can remember boats coming in from Spain and also Poland – onions – Polish onions and bilberries – they were like blueberries a bit like them they were a fairly wild berry, grown on the floor. They were very popular in this country mainly in West Riding [and] Lancashire they used to love them to make their bilberry pies... with custard. And the Spanish boats used to come in with the Spanish onions in boxes... crates – wooden boxes and Spanish potatoes were in woven baskets with two handles on them. And oranges and lemons of course- anything they grow in Spain and they were discharged in there straight away and taken to more or less all the markets in England cos this was big port was Hull for that sort of thing.

Despite being an aged Edwardian facility that still received goods in woven baskets, Alexandra Dock's Jetty was recalled by Reader as a place of energy, movement and bustling trade. For him, there was no sense of frustration regarding the function of the jetty or the methods or working, rather he recollected the great variety of goods that arrived from overseas and were destined to nourish the communities of the industrial hinterland. Furthermore, Reader spoke about his memories of trade at King George Dock:

> See on this dock [King George] it was more general cargo – steel stuff like that and King George Dock I can remember Sheds 1, 2, 3 and 4, 5, 6, which have been demolished, these are where the Australian boats used to come [in]... […] Also what they did at the tips of them, they had where they landed the bails of wool and they rolled 'em inside on the top deck on the sheds and that was coming from Australia and New Zealand – wool. Then mainly taken straight to the factories in West Riding Bradford, [?] maybe a bit further on nearly into Lancashire to the mills were they made, obviously, cloth.

In contrast, to the anxiety displayed in 1956 by the President of the Hull Chamber of Commerce regarding the age and outmoded nature of King George Dock, Reader simply remembers the flow of trade as it arrived from the Commonwealth. Indeed, he spent much time musing over the abundance and variety of trade that was regularly handled at this dock. For instance, he described how cargoes of meat were discharged and distributed:

> 7 and 8 Shed we used them when they came in – the Australian and New Zealand. Early on all these things were packed in loose on decks inside the ships such as pears and sheep... lamb carcases you-know – stripped right down with little legs out the end – back legs and they didn't have the heads on but they were wrapped in like a white hessian but they were in the freezer... cooler lockers in the sides them in the vessel […] and then overnight

[216] *Ibid.,* p. 43.

> they may be went somewhere and then the next morning they were tipped in or onto the different markets or butchers things like that. Course there wasn't such things as supermarkets them days.

He also discussed the wide array of imported fruit products from across Australia:

> Pears were also stored – pears in boxes using before they got using cardboard cartons they were in wooden boxes – apples and pears... Australia - Victoria all sorts of places. They had all different growers with their own label, came out and then they had to sort them out into different varieties of apples it was very interesting, it was good.[217]

For Reader, it was memories of the large volume and variety of imported fruit, vegetables, meat and wool that were most prominent. Furthermore, by highlighting the port's links with Europe, the Commonwealth and the industrial hinterland, he also emphasised the strength and scope of Hull's traditional trading connections at this time. In reality, the port's trading profile was, as established earlier in this thesis, in a state of flux during these years.

Some of my other interviewees discussed other areas of the dock estate and aspects of the cargo-handling operations that took place there. For example, Brian Barker, a dock worker who worked in the port's pit-prop yards, recalled the movement of vast amounts of timber through the port during these years:

> When you went down Hedon Road all down one side there was all timber stacked up it was all stacked because the deal carriers - all individually all stacked and then they would have permanent gangs on if it was sent out they would deal with all the orders and they would load it on to lorries they was permanently employed there like the prop yards. The prop yards there was yards down there and they was all acres and acres of pit props all stacked there and when the pit wanted them they was loaded into railway wagons and they went into the pits.[218]

Here, Barker's overriding memory of the dock's landscape during these years is one of clear prosperity. The scene he recalls is one of full employment, ready supply and insatiable demand. This is a far cry from the reports of crisis and struggle which were apparent in the government papers and local trade journals of this time. There was a similar theme of energy and movement in some of my other interviewees' memories. For example, Dennis Saxby worked as a 'crane lad' at Albert Dock from 1952 and remembered:

> One thing I can remember is what they call Stanton pipes – pipes what would go underground for whatever – power - what you see plastic pipe now? and Stanton they used to be loaded. I used to drive these ware'ouse cranes and the dockers were in the railway wagons and they used to go into the ship and when the ship unloaded obviously - especially in Albert Dock - there was a

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[217] George 'Keith' Reader, Interview, 14 May 2014.

[218] Brian Barker, Interview, 1 May 2013.

> ship called the *Borodino*, it was a 10 day boat and I think Friday was like a sailing day and the bustle when it come to that! There were lorries all over unloading stuff. But don't forget then there was no mechanical means everything was done by hand.

Furthermore, in contrast to the anxiety and grave concern shown by many traders at Hull regarding the port's operational problems and lack of development, Saxby simply remembered a busy and almost carefree attitude that characterised his work on the docks during this time:

> A wagon used to come from Birmingham BSC with motorbikes which we used to unload with a crane off the top tier of the van and then the bottom tier they put a ramp down and our crane job was finished. We used to jump on the bikes and freewheel 'em down [Laughs] - a perk of the job. It was just a non-ending thing of transport, railways, stuff.[219]

Rather than reduced capacity and inefficiency on the docks, Saxby recalls a scene of endless activity and energy. In many ways, the volume and bustle of trade arriving on the Hull docks from near and far masked problems of inefficiency created, in part, by outdated facilities.

A similar sense of contentment was apparent amongst some of my other interviewees, including those who laboured in the transport industries connected to the port. Despite the declining use of the port's railway and waterway communications in light of the increasing use of road transport, many of my rail and barge worker interviewees spoke little of the technological transport or the pattern of decline within their respective industries. In fact, all recalled this period as a time of prosperity and affluence and related little knowledge or awareness of the increasingly perilous situation which their work and livelihoods were in as a result of the rapid growth in the road haulage industry. For example, I asked George 'Mac' McNally, a Humber-based barge worker, about the nature of his work during these years, he responded:

> We went to Nottingham, to Leeds and do a lot of bunkering on the Humber going to St. Andrews Dock and Fish Dock bunkering all the sidewinding trawlers with… well in them days it was heavy fuel oil and they started converting to diesel so the heavy fuel oil finished. We loaded at the back of the jetty [at Salt End], the main front of the jetty was for the big ships but we could load at the back [...] you'd never get out on the same tide because there was too many loading so you just stayed and loaded and waited for the next tide. I mean we'd go away and wouldn't go home for two weeks! You'd just be away you'd load, go to Nottingham, come back, load, go back to Nottingham just day after day.

[219] Dennis Saxby, Interview, 25 April 2013.

Rather than the growth of motor transport, here McNally's memories relate to the thriving oil trade carried by barge between Hull and the industrial East Midlands during these years. Furthermore, he recalled the numerous barge owning concerns which existed at this time:

> As I say, we used to go to Nottingham with petrol or diesel but in that obviously there was British Waterways there was Lincoln & Hull, there was…. I can't even remember their names half of them but they used to be going up and it would be just barges, barges all the time.[220]

As far as McNally was concerned, clearly all was well in the waterways industry. Similarly, barge worker Dennis Briggs, perceived the river distribution of coal as booming during these years:

> Oh thousands! 'undreds of lighters went out of 'ull. They used to go to Flixborough Stather - take coal to Scunthorpe – the steel works at Scunthorpe. I mean you could get 'undred ton in one of them lighters and this crane used to come down and take five ton at a time and they used to go to another place the other side of Flixborough Stather for sand and gravel and they used to get 'undred ton of sand and gravel and they used to come up to Scott Street Bridge [in Hull] under the bridge and then to a wharf and they used to take the gravel off the barge with a big crane – steam crane – all steam crane in them days – steam! Not electric and petrol – steam!

To Briggs the scene of coal leaving the docks in fully laden barges en route to local industrial installations was a common sight. He also emphasised the vast barge operation in the carriage of general goods to the densely populated industrial hinterland:

> Cocoa beans we used to take but not oil seed. Cocoa beans we used to take them to Wakefield and we used to take wool to Leeds and cheese to Boston. I remember taking two or three loads of cheese – big boxes of cheese.[221]

Like their competitors on the waterways, those of my interviewees who had been involved in railway work at this time also remembered this era as one defined by booming and bustling rail traffic at the docks. Although, I have established that the operations of the region's railways were, like the coal trade, in a state of contraction, several of my interviewees do not remember rail traffic this way. David Hartley, an employee in the port's Humber Street fruit distribution centre close to Town docks during the 1950s recalled the constant arrival of trains and wagons at the port:

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[220] George 'Mac' McNally, Interview, 25 June 2013.

[221] Dennis Briggs, Interview, 27 March 2013.

> A lot of the wagons came in full of coal they were shunted down there with coal from the Barnsley coal fields and they had 'em on Alex dock as well but it was a bigger concern there. On the side of Humber Dock and Railway Dock they had these big coal hoists and they used to push these railway wagons full of God knows how many tons of coal and they could be hoisted up and tipped into the ship's hold and that's what they did primarily in that Railway Dock and also in Humber Dock on the west side, all the air was full of coal dust![222]

Similar to those involved in water transport, Hartley remembers the railway industry connected to the port as thriving and relentless during these years. To him, in no way was it associated with decline.

Many working on and around the docks appear not to have been unaware with the economic and technological developments that were adversely impacting several of the port's main trades. All emphasised the sense of vibrancy and prosperity that epitomised the port during these years, yet most did not discuss the adverse economic shifts nor the effect which these were having upon a number of Hull's long-established trades. Consequently, it appears that many who worked on the docks were generally unconscious or unconcerned that important areas of the port's business were being adversely affected by significant economic change.

The preservation of the port's traditional organisation and operation during these years appears to have created a distinct inertia in the port. There appeared to be little consciousness of the forces of change that were gathering pace during these years such as the shifting patterns of trade or the rapid development of motor transport. For many, it appears that the port was configured and functioning as it always had: thus, all was well.

3.2.4 Conclusion

Although many British ports suffered from operational inefficiency during the 1945-1964 period, the situation was worse in Hull than most. Heavily burdened with the legacy of past development, the capital investment of the BTC and BTDB was limited, slow and often misdirected, and consequently the port was particularly ill-equipped to deal with the post-1945 trading environment. This feature infuriated many of the port's regular traders and traffic was doubtless diverted to more efficient ports. Consequently, a process of contraction began much earlier at Hull than in other large, long-established ports. These developments and their impact upon trade were a source of great anxiety amongst the ports, merchants, traders and industrialists but were not recalled by many of those involved in port transport work. Instead,

[222] David Hartley, Interview, 10 July 2013.

the port, through which vast quantities of goods passed, was remembered as a place of vibrancy, variety, life and bustle. Within this, there was also a strong feeling of continuity, a sense that the port and the country was back on its feet following the depression of the 1930s, the strain of War and the struggles of the late 1940s; Hull's global trade links appeared as strong as ever and the traditional industrial heartlands, particularly Yorkshire, Lancashire and the Midlands, once again consumed vast quantities of foodstuffs and raw materials and produced manufactured goods for sale abroad. Indeed, many involved in Hull's distribution sector recalled the 1950s and 1960s as something of a golden age. In contrast, to the common contemporary perception that Hull, in geographical terms, is 'at the end of line', their memories indicate that, during these years, there was a collective sense of the port and city as a gateway to global seaborne trade.

3.3 **The Hull Dockers and the National Dock Labour Scheme**

During the post-1945 period the industrial productivity of Britain's labour was generally poor, particularly when compared to that of the United States and Japan but also in contrast to her European neighbours France, Germany and Italy. It has been argued that British workers commonly lacked motivation, were poorly trained, were often opposed to changes in organisation, equipment and productive methods, and suffered from ineffective management.[223] Although these characteristics were perceived across many industries, they were arguably most typical of the country's dock labourers, a group which developed a particularly notable reputation for militancy after 1945. Significantly, this development occurred despite, and in some ways as a result of, innovative government reform that had aimed to improve the efficiency and terms of employment of the dockers after 1945.

Since the nineteenth century, dock workers had experienced financial insecurity, unrest and poverty due to being predominantly employed on a casual basis by a variety of employers; this was a system designed to respond to the fluctuating nature of seaborne trade.[224] Based on localised inter-war schemes and the wartime National Dock Labour Corporation (both of which registered dock workers and their employers) the Labour Government's *Dock Workers (Regulation of Employment) Scheme* 1947 created the statutory National Dock Labour Scheme. The main aims of the scheme were to ensure greater regularity of employment, and an adequate supply of labour to facilitate the rapid turn-round of ships and the speedy transit of goods through ports.[225] Initially covering 78,500 dock workers across 84 ports, the scheme was administered by the National Dock Labour Board, a body that was funded by a levy upon the registered employers of dock labour and that was controlled by an equal number of representatives from both sides of the industry.[226] A series of similarly constituted local boards, however, were responsible for recruitment to the port registers, the issuing of pay, discipline and the overseeing of welfare at port level. Ultimately, the aim of the scheme was to gradually decasualise the industry by making it more economical for cargo-handling firms to employ labour on a permanent rather than a casual basis; something that the dockers' Transport and

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[223] Peter Payne, 'Entrepreneurship and British Economic Decline' in Bruce Collins and Keith Robbins (eds) *British Culture and Economic Decline* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1990), pp. 37-38.

[224] David F. Wilson, *Dockers: The Impact of Industrial Change* (Bungay, Suffolk: Fontana Press, 1972), pp. 17-28

[225] HHC, DPN/19/2, The National Dock Labour Board, *Abstract of Dock Workers (Regulation of Employment) Scheme, 1947,* p. 3.

[226] *Ibid.*

General Workers Union had long-desired. By the middle of the 1960s, however, the vast majority of dockers not only remained in casual employment, but the docks had become one of the most strike–prone industries in the country. As this was highly unconducive to the implementation and efficient operation of the new cargo-handling methods that were rapidly emerging at this time, the British Government decided to act by creating a committee of inquiry chaired by former high court judge, Lord Devlin. The findings and recommendations of the 'Devlin Inquiry' will form the basis of discussion in chapter 4.4.

Academics have commonly focussed on post-1945 dock labour issues across the industry in general (often with a keen focus on London and Liverpool), and far less attention has been paid towards dock labour at individual ports during these years.[227] This chapter examines the organisation of dock labour at Hull, a port that, including the neighbouring port of Goole, employed some 4,795 dock workers by 1964; the third largest dock labour force in the country.[228] Using archive materials from the years 1945 to 1964 and oral history evidence that largely relates to the early 1960s I will argue that labour relations at Hull were poor during this period as numerous, longstanding grievances remained unresolved, and even worsened following the introduction of the National Dock Labour Scheme in 1947. This situation, I suggest, was integral to the serious operational inefficiency that afflicted the port during these years.

3.3.1 The Allocation of Work

For a large section of the dock labour force at Hull, one serious source of discontent was the way in which work was allocated at 'the call': the process by which dockers were hired for work. Unlike Liverpool, the ports of Hull and London operated a piece-work method of payment. Essentially 'a carrot' in the absence of effective management, this system involved workers being paid out by the tonnage of goods loaded or discharged, the rates of which varied greatly depending on the type of cargo and the method of handling.[229] In most piece-ports, unrest stemmed from the belief held by many dockers that certain favourites amongst their number (commonly known at other ports as 'blue-eyed boys') were given preference by the employers' foremen when it came to the best paying jobs.[230] Those dockers whose lack of connection or

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[227] Bill Hunter, *They Knew Why They Fought: Unofficial Struggles & Leadership on the Docks 1945-1989* (London: Index Books, 1994); Stephen Hill, *The Dockers: Class and Tradition in London* (London: Heinemann, 1976);

[228] BJL, National Dock Labour Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts*, 1964., p. 26

[229] National Joint Council, *Port of Hull Piece-Work Arrangements*, 1947.

[230] Wilson, *Dockers*, p. 113.

physique often left them with the poorest paid jobs commonly felt demoralised at being made to fight their fellow dockers at the call in order to acquire the better paid work.[231] Several of my docker interviewees indicated that these grievances were long-standing and deeply entrenched amongst sections of the workforce at Hull. Indeed, many related stories from the pre-scheme era of the 'tin-pot system', a variation of the 'free call' unique to Hull, through which dock workers were hired at the ships' side or gangway-end.[232] Dockers Dennis Mayhew, Barry Cheney and Clive Shields, for example, explained:

> **Barry**: This is where the gangway-enders came in… sometimes they got the job the night before in the boozer.
> **Dennis**: Yeah, the blue-eyes did, it's true yeah.
> **Barry**: The foreman…
> **Dennis**: I can tell you the foreman's name - [?]
> **Clive**: Yeah.
> **Barry**: And the foreman was in there, get all his beer free and "yeah, you'll be on in morning and you'll be alright" and what'd 'appen the following morning they all went to go to what they called the gangway end and… well the side of the ship anyhow - the gangway....
> **Dennis**: 'e used to stand on the gangway - the foreman - so he could look round.
> **Barry**: 'e used to stand on the gangway and he could pick his men who he wanted.
> **Dennis**: Them was the blue-eyes - the relations and "I saw your wife last night – you can have a job" and that you-know [Laughs] well these are the stories that went on…

As the discussion went on, Dennis and Barry increasingly stressed the blatant and extensive nature of favouritism amongst the Hull men during these years:

> **Barry**: Oh yeah… it was all booze and God-knows.
> **Dennis**: Well I lived down a street where they 'ad these local boozers and the foreman used to sit there, well you won't know him...
> **Barry**: Don't mention 'is name! [Laughs]
> **Dennis**: ...and one of 'is relations was a walking foreman and 'e'd just sit in the snug there on his own and from there to there and there was a counter there, and there was all 'is beer lined up there! He used to sit there and sup, 'e never used to buy one. People hoped they'd get a job in the morning - it was rife![233]

These memories indicate that resentment of the privileged position of the blue-eyes and the employer's foremen within the hiring process was a well-entrenched part of the dockers' lore

[231] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

[232] Sam Davies, 'The History of the Hull Dockers, c. 1870-1960' in Sam Davies (Ed) *Dock Workers: International Explorations in Comparative Labour History, 1790-1970, Vol I* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), p. 182.

[233] Dennis Mayhew, Barry Cheney and Clive Shields, Interview, 2 April 2013.

prior by 1947. The testimonies of some of my other docker interviewees suggest that such sentiments were exacerbated following the introduction of the National Dock Labour Scheme. One source of grievance related to the Dock Labour Board's 'controls'; a series of hiring halls located at each of the docks: A, B and C controls where at King George, Alexandra and Victoria Docks respectively, while D control at Albert Dock also covered William Wright and the Town Docks (see Figure 11). Each registered docker was allocated to one of these controls by the local Hull and Goole Dock Labour Board and expected to attend a twice-daily call. Those who were not hired were 'shanghaied' (reallocated) by the Board to another control, or they were paid a retainer known locally as 'dint money'.[234] Many of my interviewees recalled the controls and the process that took place within them with distain. Docker Trevor Green, for instance, recollected:

> Oh it was horrendous – it really was – you used to go in you got there early in a morning - you had your [National Dock Labour Board] book and the foreman used to come out and he'd pick all his pals first and you'd maybe be a good worker and sometimes you got a job if he remembered you and other times you didn't and another time if there was a lot of work – you all went to work but you got some of the rubbish jobs and all the jobs were picked over. So there was a lot of dissatisfaction at that time.[235]

Others often referred to the Labour Board's controls as 'the pen', primarily due to the nature of these buildings and the activity which took place there. Dennis, Barry, and Clive explained:

> **Barry**: Yeah it was the pen, what they called 'the pen'.
> **Clive**: Like a cattle pen!
> **Barry**: It was like a cattle pen.
> **Dennis**: That's why they called them pens.
> **Barry**: There was a wall and behind that wall was a stand and the Foreman used to come up out the office and onto the stand so they were above you. Way down below in the hall were the dockers fighting for bloody jobs and you'd all have your dockers' book in your hand and the foreman comes up. If it's a good job everyone one puts their hand up with a book and he picks who he wants, such as that, and takes the books.
> **Dennis**: Funnily enough I had a right barney with 'em one time cos they come on the you-know and it was a bad job cos all the blue-eyes they never used to put their books in.[236]

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[234] Docker Clive Shields explained that this term derived from a 'dent' or 'dint' in ones wages. An oral history study of the dock workers of Leith indicate that, in that port, it was known as a 'duck egg' due to the colour of the stamp that was received in one's National Dock Labour Board book when work fall-back pay was due.

[235] Trevor Green, Interview, 20 May 2013.

[236] Dennis Mayhew, Barry Cheney and Clive Shields interview, 2 April 2013.

This recollection shows how the controls were strongly associated with a sense of resentment and degradation, sentiments were echoed countless times amongst many of my other docker interviewees, including Dennis Saxby:

> The pen – it was a big room and a raised thing at the end and the foreman was on that raised platform and he'd say "I want 20 men for this" and we all knew from that foreman which was the best job – a fruit ship – more money or wool ship and you all went rushing forward and you was all literally climbing over each other to get that foreman to take your book - it was degrading and after about nearly a year I couldn't stand it. [237]

To these dockers this system had clearly been a strong source of dissatisfaction amongst many. Both the fight for work which was seemingly at the whim of the foremen on the call stand elevated above them, left many feeling dehumanised and degraded. Furthermore, they also encountered favouritism on a daily basis which caused continued resentment of the privileged position and earnings of the blue-eyes.

Figure 11: Images showing the scramble for work at Alexandra Dock's B control at Hull. (Stills taken from British Transport Film's 'Berth 24', 1950)

By contrast, several of my other interviewees recalled the allocation of work rather differently. Some believed that this system was unique and innovative as it enabled the employment of the best and most deserving workers based on reputation or merit. For example, Andrew Brett a management employee at one of the port's Stevedores explained:

> The blue eyes - they were prepared to work! The other buggers didn't wanna know, to be honest! The foremen went in and he picked his men and he didn't pick people that didn't bloody work! He had to get the ship finished. Stevedoring is quite simple – you pay everything out by the hour or by time and you get paid by the ton – so you only make a profit if you turn it around quick enough. If you don't turn the bugger round you don't make a profit! [238]

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[237] Dennis Saxby, Interview, 25 April, 2013.

[238] Andrew Brett, Interview, 22 May 2014.

Similar views of this mutually beneficial 'patron-clientage' were espoused by a number of foremen in a study conducted in the port of London during the late 1960s.[239] Although many employers (and no doubt the blue-eyed stratum amongst the labour force) found the casual-piece system to be lucrative, the recollections of those dockers whose position in the system was weaker indicate the heightening of a deep-rooted resentment towards the former parties following the National Dock Labour Scheme's formalisation of the hiring practices process.

3.3.2 Decasualisation

Into the early 1960s, the scheme's policy of decasualisation proceeded very slowly at Hull and became an increasing source of unrest amongst many dockworkers. Amongst many of the country's dock workers, those who struggled to acquire work or the best paying jobs at the call desired the security which came with permanent employment. In contrast others who found the casual system more lucrative were openly opposed to decasualisation as it restricted their much cherished freedom to pick and choose their work.[240] Such elements of division appeared to prevail at Hull. Docker Mike Galloway, for example, explained:

> Amongst the men in the pen in the control there's always been this antagonism towards the regular men. I had two cousins who were brothers – never spoke to each other cos one was regular one was in the control [...] there was probably a little bit of allsorts involved - a little bit of jealousy there was the men who thought that's how the dock should be… traditionally how it had been… that you should go in with your book and get a job. That way there was a little bit of allsorts like… there was family frictions like I say I gave an example of me two cousins – two brothers.[241]

The extent to which some dockers were prepared to defend the casual system was evidenced in early 1961 when, following the increase of 'regulars' to 40 per cent of the workforce, a series of one-day stoppages against decasualisation occurred in the port, a situation that forced employers to cap their permanent staffs to 35 per cent thereafter.[242] Decasualisation not only increased tensions within the workforce to the point of dividing families, it also divided opinion amongst the port's employers. Unlike employers in Liverpool and Glasgow, many Hull employers supported permanency in a bid to offset inter-union troubles in the port, a feature that will be

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[239] Hill, *The Dockers*, p. 23-24.

[240] Wilson, *Dockers*, p. 113.

[241] Mike Galloway, Interview, 13 May 2014.

[242] *Final Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Certain Matters Concerning the Port Transport Industry,* Cmnd. 2734 (London: HMSO, 1965), pp. 83-84.

discussed later in this section.[243] For some employers, like many dockers, casual attitudes were deeply entrenched. For instance, stevedore management employee George Robinson explained:

> Employers hired them [dockers] in as they needed them by the day so it suited the employers from the point of view of being able to take labour casually still but it got round the old pre-war problem of the dockers being in purely casual employment and not knowing whether they were going to have a job or not and, of course, they had a fall-back rate of pay, paid by the NDLB that cost was spread back to the employer by a levy to pay for them so the costs could never disappear but at least it gave the individual employer the flexibility.[244]

This view does much to explain how, despite the scheme's encouragement, less than half of the workforce in Hull was in permanent employment by 1961, a year in which many dock workers also opposed decasualisation by repeatedly bringing the port to a standstill.

3.3.3 Piece-Work Rates

Besides fuelling jealousy against the blue-eyed boys, payment of wages by the piece also created other problems for employers at Hull. Stoppages at piece ports would commonly occur in relation to 'stand-by payments'. These were a series of awards over and above agreed rates of pay that compensated dock workers for loss of earnings due to poor weather, traffic delays or badly stowed cargo.[245] Some of my interviewees who were involved in the employment of dock labour at Hull, explained that stoppages relating to rates of pay were commonly used by dock workers as a type of bargaining counter to increase earnings. George Robinson, an employee of a stevedore at Hull, described how the regularity of these stoppages at Hull led to gross inefficiency and inflated manning costs:

> I can't remember any ship working on the piecework rates and I got involved in literally ship to ship negotiations with every ship to settle the wage rate. It was just a complete game you-know because you were at the beckon-call of the shop steward on the ship and there were certain sort of norms – there was a base rate on deep sea ships I never knew where it came from but I knew it was 9 shillings and eight pence ha'penny an hour so they'd always be guaranteed that and they were always looking for awards on top 3 shillings/4 shillings whatever for dirt for dust or because they'd found… or whatever, often trumped up reasons. I was doing King George Dock and the deep sea ships that we had of the day, they were typically to look at getting say 15 shillings an hour they were looking at a five shilling made up or whatever...

Robinson also explained how seriously shipside negotiations could impair efficiency:

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[243] Wilson, *Dockers*, p. 112.

[244] George Robinson, Interview, 28 May 2013.

[245] Wilson, *Dockers*, p. 229.

> There was a little form to make out a 'Ship Board Assessment' for each ship and you went along and they said "we want 7 shillings" and you said "I'll give you 3 shillings" and basically you either ended up agreeing in the middle or doing writing 'failed to agree' on the bottom at which case it went to the next Joint Port Working Committee some time later which they never liked because they had to wait and they didn't know what they were going to get or not… if you were lucky they'd continue working, if not they wouldn't so no it was game.

Like Robinson, Andrew Brett similarly related:

> I was going down with my little book and forms which I can't find at the moment saying "we'll give you another tuppence an hour or 5 pence and hour for that, we'll give you a shilling/10 bob lump sum to cover that" and then I was having to try and get that back off the ship cause we quoted a rate for discharging based on these rates [points to yellow piece rate book] and the ship owners and then we'd have a strike perhaps we'd say "well we're not giving you that 10 bob" - something small like that which for over 20 men was £10. So the ship stops, next thing the phone rings it's the owner of the ship "my ship's costing £500 a day and your stopping 'em for 10 fucking quid! Fuck 'em! Pay the bastards!" And you'd never see the ship again, but he's now created a rate higher in that book which you've got to now pass on – it was an absolute nightmare![246]

Although standby payments aimed to cover a genuine loss of earnings, it is clear from these recollections that this system was regularly exploited by some workers. The result not only irritated employers, but it also had the much more serious effects of inflated operational costs and stoppages that, as Robinson and Brett claimed, angered shipping customers, many of whom did not return to Hull.

3.3.4 Wasteful Practices

Alongside persistent stoppages over piece-work rates, my employer interviewees explained that the port's dock labour was also responsible for a variety of wasteful practices that were equally detrimental to operational efficiency. Common in many large ports, such practices had initially developed during the purely casual pre-scheme days to protect against the underemployment inherent in the casual system. They included inflated manning scales that aimed to increase employment across the labour force, while bad time-keeping and extended tea-breaks aimed to slow down the pace of work to increase pay or secure overtime.[247] Like stoppages relating to the negotiation of pay-rates, these features also reduced productivity and increased the costs of stevedoring. The report that followed a four month investigation into restrictive practices

[246] Andrew Brett, Interview, 22 May 2013.

[247] Wilson, *Dockers*, pp. 212-224.

across the ports indicated that, alongside London, Glasgow and Liverpool, such features were particular prevalent in Hull:

> A "couldn't care less" attitude on the part of the dockers in this port is also a big factor that is contributing to the turn-around of shipping. Delays are often so bad, that one shipping firm found recently that its dockers were working an average of only four hours a day, as a result of "waiting time" and other restrictions. Among the dockers who were interviewed one man admitted that he was only working two-and-a-half hours a day while being paid for eight hours.[248]

Not surprisingly, the employers I interviewed recalled such practices and their restrictive nature with distain. For example, Andrew Brett explained that bad time-keeping was a common problem at Hull:

> You'd go to the ship and our men would be allocated, right? But the crane driver was having his tea, so our men would come and say "right, no crane driver? We're off then!" and they'd go off. 10 minutes later the tallymen they'd come from the tallying company and they'd say "well we're here, nobody about? Well we'll go and have our coffee break" so then they'd bugger off! And then the crane drivers would turn up and say "well we'll wait for 'em to come". Then our men would come back but you still couldn't start until you got the tallymen there. So by 9 o'clock… from an 8 o'clock start… you'd not even got the crane in position! [249]

Alongside Brett, Mike Fell, another of my interviewees who had been involved in stevedoring at Hull, also testified to the prevalence and consequence of practice that was the by-product of excessive manning on the docks:

> **Mike:** They had a system called 'the welt' – completely unorthodox - people went home when they should have been at work but the job still got done because there were so many men in the gang you didn't really miss them up to a point. But, of course, that gradually got worse and worse. I mean they were on pay at home, driving taxis or digging allotments when they should have been at work. That was one of the worst features of it. That was known in Hull as 'the welt'. It had other terminology up and down the country but it was a common practice in the larger ports.
> **AO:** Did these practices seem worse in Hull or anywhere else or were they common across…?
> **Mike:** Hull was bad - akin to London and Liverpool - perhaps those three ports in particular had a lot of industrial unrest.[250]

Others, such as George Robinson, also stressed the prevalence of this practice at Hull:

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[248] TNA, MT 63/496, Ports Efficiency Committee: Effect of Inland Transport Difficulties on Turnaround of ships, 1952.

[249] Andrew Brett, Interview, 22 May 2014.

[250] Mike Fell, Interview, 5 June 2013.

> I mean the welt was the proof of over manning every day they proved to us they over-manned because half of them weren't there! It was blatant! You could allocate 15 men to ship and go along two hours later and try and count them and you-know if you got to 10 you might be lucky and this, of course, was why the productivity wasn't good and it was just well-known that they got down to the ship and "well it's your turn to be off this morning Fred" and off they'd go to do the gardening or the window-cleaning round or whatever else….[251]

Although those involved in the employment of dock labour were clearly aggrieved at the widespread nature of these practices, my docker interviewees simply recalled them as a traditional or daily part of work on the docks. For instance, Dennis Saxby recounted:

> We used to start at 8 o'clock in a morning when I first got me dockers' book. We started at 8 in a morning, then at quarter to nine you'd go to mugger - what they called coffee shop till about half past nine, worked till half 11 then you'd all stop for dinner. There was what they called a lot of "restrictive practices". See you get a ship and they'd say "right, we want 6 men for that part of the ship and six men for that part of the ship" and we'd start the cargo. But the construction of the ships and the type of cargo you couldn't get six men in that working space to start with till you got what they called a "break down". And we used to say "well us two'll start the ship and you to have a couple of hours whatever you like"…on pay…and then they'd come back. Obviously the owners didn't like that. They'd rather have had the four men – paid four men they called it "restrictive practices" so there was a lot of that went on.[252]

Saxby's recollection provides a contrasting perspective to the findings of the government's report and memories of my employer interviewees. To him, such features were an innocent and long-established privilege or tradition that simply protected against underemployment and low pay. This provides another example of the deep rift between labour and employers at Hull.

3.3.5 Discipline

The aforementioned report of 1952 into restrictive practices in the ports also cited the ineffective nature of discipline under the National Dock Labour Scheme as one of the primary reasons why such features abounded amongst dock workers:

> Discipline as it exists in other industries is practically unknown today in the docks. The employer in the docks has little authority over the men. He hasn't the power of dismissal. The only action he can take is to report bad workers

[251] George Robinson, Interview, 28 May 2013.

[252] Dennis Saxby, Interview, 25 April 2013.

> to the local Dock Labour Board. The result is that bad workers often go unpunished.[253]

Clearly a problem when it came to stamping out restrictive practices, the ineffective nature of discipline under the scheme had much wider implications. Fair punishment was difficult to implement within casual system. For example, if a man was blacklisted for an offence by one employer, he could simply find work with another. [254] If a man was dismissed, however, he paid for his transgression against one employer by forfeiting his right to work for any employer in the industry.[255] Prior to the Second World War, the threat of not being hired at the call had generally ensured good industrial conduct, however, fuller employment during the 1950s and early 1960s made the scheme's guarantee of fall-back pay or reallocation to another dock, made non-selection less serious after 1945. Furthermore, under the scheme, all decisions regarding discipline could be referred to the local Hull and Goole Dock Labour Board for adjudication. The employers I interviewed explained how this too was a great source of dissatisfaction amongst their number, as the joint control of the local board by labour and employer representatives often made effective discipline impossible to implement. George Robinson elaborated:

> The thing that got me was that there was no effective disciplinary system because although I might employ you as a Registered Dock Worker - if I'd thought you'd done something enough I could give you a warning or a two day suspension or something that couldn't be enforced until… well the man automatically appealed to the Local Dock Labour Board against it – automatically. So whatever the employer decided you could go through the motions but that would go back to the local Dock labour Board office for a disciplinary committee which surprise, surprise! Was like everything else 50/50 so five dockers sat that side of the table, five employers sat this side how are you going to get anything passed…[…] they would never split ranks and we would never split ranks so to do anything positive you've got to have a majority haven't you. So they just wouldn't uphold any disciplinary proceedings at all.

Robinson provided one particular example of just how difficult it could be to implement disciplinary action against dock workers under the scheme:

> The one I remember one was, because it covered Hull and Goole and there was a Goole docker who'd actually gone off! He hadn't been seen for months – he'd clearly abandoned the job and gone off to some new career or something and the employer came along and said "it's silly me having him on can I just take him off the books? In other words we want to de-register him

[253] TNA, MT 63/496, Ports Efficiency Committee - Effect of Inland Transport Difficulties on Turnaround of ships, 1952.

[254] Wilson, *Dockers,* p. 106.

[255] *Ibid.*

> as a docker and they wouldn't have that and they…. actually I remember on that occasion instead of voting against they actually abstained so it was just a matter of conscience for them. I think they couldn't bring themselves to recognise that yes we agree with you. So they abstained to keep their own honour, as it were, so it was passed 5-0 because they abstained.[256]

Andrew Brett concurred with Robinson:

> If anybody was disciplined they went back to the National Dock Labour Board. We couldn't sack a man - he was our employee all we could do is send him back to the National Dock Labour Board. The real problem was that the Chairmen did not have a casting vote – so they could never agree anything to get a man sacked. The dockers would have to sack their own man – so a man could go to prison for theft - I know one guy who went to prison for 6 months, came out, went to the National Dock Labour Board to be sacked - "Oh no, it's his first offence – he needs another go" and we know he'd been thieving all his bloody life! But he was reinstated and sent back by the National Dock Labour Board – basically because a docker would have to sack a docker and they wouldn't do it![257]

Based on this evidence, it is clear that an ineffective system of discipline operated under the scheme during these years. Furthermore, Robinson and Brett's recollections indicate a sense of the frustration and resentment they felt towards the labour force, who, they believed, felt safe in the knowledge that any transgressions would go unpunished.

3.3.6 Methods of Working

Between 1845 and 1945 there had been partial progress in the way goods were handled at British ports. Nineteenth century advancements in cargo handling included the introduction of cranes, hoists, conveyors, grabs, elevators and mechanical slings, however this equipment related to (and enabled the expansion of) specific bulk trades.[258] In contrast, there was virtually no mechanised development in the handling of general goods. In 1945, most miscellaneous goods and commodities came or went in 'man-sized' boxes, boxes barrels and packages that were stacked loose in sheds, on quays and in holds.[259] In order to move seaborne goods more efficiently a variety of new technological advances in mechanised cargo handling emerged during the Second World War and were developed further in the following years. These new

[256] George Robinson, Interview, 28 May 2014.

[257] Andrew Brett, Interview, 22 May 2014.

[258] Gordon, Jackson, *The History and Archaeology of Ports* (Tadworth, Surrey: The Windmill Press, 1983), pp. 151-152.

[259] *Ibid.*

unitised methods primarily involved the seaborne carriage of goods on pallets, in containers or within commercial vehicles.[260]

The introduction of these innovative new methods in many British ports proceeded slowly generally into the 1960s. However, it has been suggested that the development of modern mechanised methods on the Hull docks was particularly limited.[261] Indeed, the recollections of many of my dock worker interviewees support this claim. For example, Trevor Green, a docker who began work in 1960, indicated that the handling of palletised goods at Hull remained rare into the early 1960s:

> Well one time when I first went on the dock the gang I was working with we had one forklift between a ship to help and when we got more fork lifts that was a big help and then [later] everything started coming on pallets.[262]

Clive Shields also relayed his memories of the first fork trucks at the Hull docks:

> Well it all came gradually dint it you-know they started off with about three forklifts on the dock in the sheds dint they - for the wool and that. But we never had none down below [in the hold of the ships] for ages.[263]

These recollections clearly highlight the slow pace of mechanisation at Hull. The extent of the comparatively poor working methods at the port is best highlighted by the events surrounding the 'Filling Strike' of August 1954. During that summer, a shortage of registered dock labour in Hull had caused the National Dock Labour Board to transfer a number of dockers from the port of Cardiff, a move that (unintentionally) highlighted the superior conditions in that port.[264] Twelve Cardiff men had been allocated to the vessel *Seaboard Enterprise* at King George Dock to discharge a cargo of grain via a poorly paid, dangerous and antiquated method known as 'bag-filling' or 'hand-scuttling', a practice that had been abolished in Cardiff some years previous (see Figure 12).[265] Dennis and Barry recalled this unpopular process that involved dock workers standing up to their waists in loose grain and filling bags with a metal scoop:

> **Dennis**: Now this is what you wanna get down in there! When I first come on the dock you 'ad to do filling and they'd give you a five bushel bag which

[260] *Ibid*, pp. 152-156.

[261] Davies, 'The History of the Hull Dockers, c. 1870-1960', pp. 186-188.

[262] Trevor Green, Interview, 20 April 2013.

[263] Dennis Mayhew, Barry Cheney and Clive Shields interview, 2 April 2013.

[264] Keith Sinclair, *How the Blue Union came to the Hull Docks: The 1954 Filling Strike and its Aftermath* (Hull, 1995), p. 6.

[265] *Ibid.* pp. 6-7.

stood about this height and they'd give you a big fryin'….. we used to call 'em fryin' pans…..
Barry: Like a big dish.
Dennis: You see that dart board? [points to standard sized dart board] maybe a little bit bigger than that and it was a dish like that….
Barry: A scoop wannit.
Dennis: And one bloke – 'e used to 'old the bag down there and 'e used to go "one, two…." and as you put more in and 'e used to come up with it like that there and you could get - if you did it right - about nine and half scoops in a bag and that was your 12 bushels[266]

Clearly unpleasant and arduous work, the Welshmen refused to work the cargo during the incident in 1954 and, following the further refusal of a gang of young Hull dockers, a port-wide strike ensued until it was agreed that hand-scuttling be replaced by suction pumps and grain elevators.[267]

Figure 12: Still images taken from the British Transport Film's 'Berth 24' (1950) of Hull dockers manually discharging to of the port's main imported cargoes; timber and grain.

Despite the successful mechanisation of grain discharge during these years, the handling methods of most other cargoes altered little into the 1960s. Many of my docker interviewees described a wide variety of these practices, which often remained highly unpopular amongst the workforce. Pete Neal described a practice unique to Hull known as 'ripping and tipping', a method used to discharge bagged goods:

> With the lighters what they used to do as well was bagged cargos, they used to weigh it on the deck and they used to rip it and send it down a shoot so they know how much tonnage was in the lighter – 'ripping and tipping', they had a tallyman on the scale and they used to come over in sets of five or seven or whatever, they used to drop it on the scale and they used to have the big weights and they used to weigh it off and then mark it up in the book and then over. And when you got x number of tons – say they wanted 250 tons you'd be totting up as you went along – page by page – carry it forward

[266] Dennis Mayhew, Barry Cheney and Clive Shields interview, 2 April 2013.

[267] *Ibid,* pp. 8-9.

> – then you'd say "250 ton that's it!", cover up bring in the next one but of course you had the number of the craft and the name of the craft so you could tell 'em how much was in that craft and then next one would come in and you'd call the next one in and that's how it went.[268]

Here, Neal provides a sense of just how laborious and time-consuming typical cargo handling-methods at Hull were at this time. Trevor Green discussed the appalling condition in which a cargo called 'copra' was handled:

> Particularly bad was copra ships and copra is the dry husks of coconut and it was just one heap of crawling cockroaches and things like that and there were all sorts of flies – Richard Attenborough could have done a good programme in a copra ship [Laughs] and it used to be stinking hot inside and the method of discharge was – we'd go into the hold with shovels and picks, loosen all the copra up and a grab would come and grab the coconut out and at the end when we'd took the majority of the cargo out we had to shovel out all the corners, wings and lockers you had to shovel all this out – well by then it'd gone to a slimy oily mess it was and that wasn't a very nice job at all.[269]

Alternatively, Mick Beecroft explained the physical exertion involved with the handling of food produce at Albert Dock's Riverside Quay:

> With the Copenhagen ship I worked with a team mostly - called 'the hungry eight' - all six feet tall. In them days with the bacon we used to stack it five high. I could lift it – between sixteen and eighteen stone I could lift 'em up like that meself! And your butter, what you did wi' your butter - your eight stone barrels of butter – you rolled 'em out and then you put another tier on the top and just chucked the you-know and that was for eight, ten hours a day![270]

Clearly protracted and labour intensive, working practices at Hull could also be dangerous, as Dennis, Barry and Clive related when discussing how timber pit-props were handled:

> **Barry**: They're thick grease and you tek a wire and you'd try to get what they call a 'nose-ender' which is, you work the wire along the pit-props and you've got an 'S' hook - one end in the wire and the other wire going round the other end, and it was supposed to nip tight as the crane takes the weight of it. Well they're as greasy as 'ell and slide all over the bleedin' place, as it's goin' up you've got to be dodgin' as well like….
> **Dennis**: What they used to say is "put a wire in" and that was what we'd call a 'nose-ender' so you 'ad to take the weight of it and at the same time put

[268] Pete Neal, Interview, 23 April 2013.

[269] Trevor Green, Interview, 20 May 2013.

[270] Mick Beecroft, Interview, 3 April 2013.

> the other weight with the 'S' hook on to bring 'em out and I seen 'em do that on a long-end and they did it right centre - hook on the bottom. Everything was right and all and it took the weight and this fella come out and a crane runner came down and it 'ad to go like that to get in the long end. So when 'e got out there and it stopped and they all shot out the fuckin' [end] […] and there was two kids in there pickin' these out, diggin' these out to get those nose-enders and they stopped and all these fuckin' props shot out..…
> **Clive**: I'll tell you what...
> **Dennis**: Let me finish it!
> **Clive**: You've been on for an hour!
> **Dennis**: We 'ave to finish it about the [pit props].... cos we thought they was dead - poor bastards and they was fuckin' stood grinning at us. They was lucky though.[271]

While many of my interviewees provided endless descriptions of the primitive nature of cargo handling which existed at Hull, few alluded as to why safer, more efficient, working practices had not developed by the mid-1960s. Mike Galloway, however, provided some insight into this issue when discussing the traditional work of the deal carriers - a specific category of registered docker that specialised in the handling and movement of timber deals (sawn fir or pine lengths between seven and nine inches broad and six feet long), most commonly at Victoria Dock:

> It all had to be carried off, the timber 'ad to be slung onto the ship then landed onto these stages and carried off. I've worked down there a few times. I want a deal carrier but you 'ad to go down and do the job and you used to look down and I used to think to meself… cos it was a really busy dock when all the timber used to come in and I used to look down and think they'd 'ave been doin' this job 200 years ago. In fact, they wunt let you alter cos you was on piece work and I know one particular ship we could have landed lofty derricks… what they call lofty derricks – long derricks and we could have landed… made the sets on the ship and landed it in the wagons or on the bogies and we did it a couple of times and "whoa stop the job, stop the job - you can't do that, they've got to be lifted and carried" cos we'd have gone through the roof with our wages being on piece work. So they wouldn't let us do that.[272]

Not only did Galloway highlight the laborious method of discharging timber at Hull, he also suggests that, despite the ready availability of other more efficient methods, it was the employer's cost-consciousness that preserved the use of antiquated methods. Consequently, it may be concluded that archaic working practices were a symptom of piece work which, in turn,

[271] Dennis Mayhew, Clive Shields and Barry Cheney, Interview, 2 April 2013.

[272] Mike Galloway, Interview, 13 May 2014.

was a product of the casual employment, the prevalence of which the National Dock Labour Scheme failed to reduce during these years.

3.3.7 Working Conditions

Related to casual employment was an almost complete absence of Health and Safety as it existed in other industries. As the employers of dock labour had little obligation to those to whom they hired casually, basic safety procedure was almost completely absent in most large ports and, consequently, accident rates in the industry at this time were exceeded only by mining.[273] Indeed, this was certainly the case at Hull where conditions were seemingly very harsh. Many of my docker interviewees stressed that, despite a number of dangerous or toxic cargoes being regularly handled at Hull, employers provided no protective equipment to dock workers during this period. Dennis, Barry Clive, for instance, recalled the extent of safety equipment with which they were provided at this time:

> **Dennis**: You got overalls and that's all. We got masks one time - fuckin' gas masks! You couldn't breathe, you couldn't breathe could yer?! They give us them old fuckin' gas masks what they 'ad in the war dint they?!
> **Clive**: You couldn't wear 'em… you couldn't work in 'em.
> **Barry**: Well the first ten years I was on the dock - hides which were animal skins and such as that - no gloves or anything and in the end after years they used to bring buckets of disinfectant for you to wash after handling hides [...] cos these hides you never used to get gloves or bugger all for 'em at one time.

They also went on to describe the ill health amongst the labour force that resulted from a lack of basic safety equipment:

> **Dennis:** Mick Bowering they called 'im and 'e got anthrax - 'e dint die, 'e dint die though!
> **Clive:** 'e got that off wet hides dint 'e?
> **Dennis**: No, 'e got it off fuckin' dry ones!.... No! bone meal - that's where 'e got it from - bone meal.
> **Clive**: Yeah.
> **Barry:** [Dockers were] Always catching diseases at one time, you never got, gloves, goggles or anything![274]

The absence of protective clothing amidst insanitary conditions was clearly recalled as being a major grievance amongst the workforce and, as Dennis went on to explain, often caused a great deal of unrest on the docks:

> We was on sulphur one day and I sent for the delegate and I said "we want summat for this" and 'e said "why?". I said "because of your eyes, you can't fuckin' see". So we'd just started the job then and we ant got no stuff in our

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[273] Turnbull, *Dock Strike*, pp. 38.

[274] Dennis Mayhew, Barry Cheney and Clive Shields interview, 2 April 2013.

> eyes and 'e said "there's fuck all wrong wi' yer eyes" and I said "come back at mugger". We went in the coffee shop for mugger and the sulphur - when you sweated it run in your eyes - you were literally fuckin' blind! You couldn't see! We said "we're goin' to 'ave this fuckin' stopped cos they're gonna finish up blinded permanent". It used to burn your eyes! 'e says "what's wrong with the fuckin' job?" I said "once we started sweating it's all in your eyes", I said "I can't fuckin' see you now hardly". I said "if you don't give us ought were gonna chuck it" and we chucked it that many times... how did they get rid of it? Oh they got grabs didn't they?![275]

Here, Dennis claims that health and safety issues led directly to stoppages and strikes. Furthermore, he recalled bitter memories of the employer's apathy, which, no doubt, seeped into wider anti-employer sentiments amongst the port's dockers.

Considering the particularly limited mechanisation and continuation of antiquated working practices at Hull by the early 1960s, it is perhaps not surprising that injuries and fatalities were commonplace at the port. Indeed, virtually all of my docker interviewees recalled witnessing serious accidents on a regular basis. For instance, Mike Galloway remembered:

> There was a big accident rate, the first week I was on the dock there was a bloke killed on Alex Dock […]. [A] becket 'ad gone – 'ad broken and 'ad swung right at this bloke…… I'm trying to think of 'is name now… straight at 'im and caved 'is ribs in… no sorry I've got that wrong now, I've got that wrong! The becket… that's right… it'd been shackled, so a thin wire becket and you'd put it through the shackle and the shackle would be attached to the line that would pull the grab in and the wire becket had broken and the shackle 'ad flew across the hold and 'it this bloke in the chest and caved his ribs in. 'e died and that was me first week… errr second week on the dock that you-know… there was always accidents on the dock.[276]

Likewise, Ray Simms, recalled seeing and even experiencing many serious injuries in the port:

> I've seen 'em killed with winches falling and hitting 'em, I've seen kids fall down the hold, I've fell down twice… me back… in the end I had to have an operation on my back but yes there's been some accidents and a lot of kids fell down the hold. Harry Bowering he fell down the hold and he dint fall very far and he was completely wheelchair bound… I don't know how he did it but it was only on a very small ship and all he didn't fall far but people can go a long way.

He went on, however, to vividly describe one incident in particular:

> Tommy Le Brun [?] 'e used to love night fishing, 'e used to come straight to work from night fishing and 'e was on the same ship [as me] - *Debrovsky* and we was down in the hold - two holds deep it was and they was working above and we'd emptied the hold and we was waiting for stuff to start loading and one of the crew members leant against what you call a railing you-know like

[275] Dennis Mayhew, Barry Cheney and Clive Shields interview, 2 April 2013.

[276] Mike Galloway, Interview, 13 May 2014.

> a guard and the ship was that rusty and it just collapsed and went down and they shouted "RUN!!" and everybody down below run one way barring Tommy Le Brun, 'e ran the other way and straight on his 'ead and that kid was never the same kid [it] 'it him right on the 'ead. [There was also] a lot of leg injuries trapped with timber and steel. Yes it was, it was hazardous to think back how many accidents. It was.[277]

The experience of witnessing their work mates and friends being maimed and killed had, not surprisingly, a deeply profound effect upon the dockers I interviewed - particularly as many incidents could have been avoided if employers have introduced basic Health and safety measures, further training and increased mechanisation. No doubt this fuelled an already deep-rooted anti-employer sentiment amongst the Hull men, many of whom likely resented the fact that the employers' profits clearly came before the safety of the men they hired.

In a bid to deal with accidents involving dock workers, the National Dock Labour Board gradually implemented some measures to deal with accident and injury on the docks. At Hull, the local dock labour board had erected new medical centres staffed by state-registered nurses at each of the docks by 1953.[278] In addition, several 'First Aid' boxes were also deployed around the dock estate and a number of dockers trained as First Aiders by the mid-1960s.[279] Such measures were, however, seemingly negligible between 1945 and 1964, particularly when considering the size of the workforce and the seriousness and regularity of accidents on the docks. Indeed, Beryl Whipp, a nurse assigned to the Board's medical centre at Victoria Dock, and later King George Dock, recounted memories of her work at this time:

> We just had a great big bag and I used to go around on a little scooter, no helmets or anything like that. What we used to do, we dealt with bandaging and all that sort of thing you know whatever they came in. […] I had a thousand in one month – just me! You see we didn't have all the paramedics and things like that, that was our job really you-know. […] It was shocking they used to come in say "sister can we have one of your magic lotions" so I said "yes alright just leave me for 10 minutes" and I boiled the kettle up and made tea, with no milk or sugar or anything and I cooled it down in a big Winchester bottle and I used to take it back and they didn't know and they couldn't realise that it was just tea but it's wonderful for your eyes, just packs on them just the little tea

Whipp's recollections here, reveal how basic medical measures were on the docks at this time, an issue that she repeatedly stressed throughout the course of the interview:

> We didn't have much [equipment] except that in the days before Morphia came in […] When I first went on we didn't have any [medical] place, I just

[277] Ray Simms, Interview, 24 June 2013.

[278] BJL, National Dock Labour Board, *The Annual Reports and Accounts,* 1953*,* p. 11

[279] National Dock Labour Board, *Amenities Report*, 1966, pp. 24-46.

> used to have to run, with me big pack on me back […] we did get some injuries – terrible ones – we used to go down the holds and everything you-know. […] Sometimes when I first went on we didn't have any [medical] place - I just used to have to run, with me big pack on me back […] and we dealed with people, I had to go with them and deal with them. We had two barges, three ships abreast and two barges and the accident was in the… [Motions climbing across several vessels] and climb into the barge and there were two people injured so we got the first one out and we were on a piece of wood as big as that twice… and just the chains and this little man had crushed his ribs and so I got behind him and had him like this [holding up torso] cos he didn't want to lay down obviously so we were in the middle and the crane brought us out…and this little voice at the front said to me "Sister, I'm bloody frightened to death" and I said "you're perfectly alright don't worry".[280]

Here, Whipp highlights that not only did a lack of safety measures result in numerous injuries and deaths, but also that medical facilities were limited and basic, even by the standards of the day. It is clear from her recollections that she was regularly called out across the dock estate to tend to all manner of accident.

3.3.8 Amenities

The maintenance of casualism in the industry after 1945, also placed little, if any, obligation on employers to provide washing, changing, rest room and canteen facilities for the labour they hired. This caused amenities in most ports remained of an incredibly poor standard into the 1960s, an issue that was a substantial factor in producing the sour relation between workers and employers.[281] This is not so say that there were no improvements in the provision of facilities during these years. Once responsible for providing welfare and medical services to dockers, the National Dock Labour Board implemented a number of measures to improve welfare by the early 1960s. It was reported during 1951 by the Port Authority at Hull that, following the Board's *Amenities Report*, over the previous two years a sum of £20,000 had been authorised for the replacement of old type sanitary conveniences and a number of new drinking fountains across the dock estate.[282] The official training and education of dock workers was also initiated under the scheme, with some instruction offered to deal carriers in 1955 and 1959, and a new purpose-built training school being opened at Victoria Dock in 1963 (See Figure 13).[283] In

[280] Beryl Whipp, Interview, 15 April 2013.

[281] *Final Report of the Committee of Inquiry into certain matters concerning the port transport Industry,* Cmnd. 2734 (London: HMSO, 1965), pp. 30-33.

[282] *The Trade of Hull and Humber Ports,* 1951, p.7.

[283] BJL, National Dock Labour Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts,* 1955 p. 9; HHC, DPN 19/9, National Dock Labour Board, *Training of Dock Workers Great Britain*, 1966, p. 1.

a bid to boost productivity, the Board also attempted to establish a better standard of health and welfare outside of the docks by providing encouragement and financial support for the establishment of a social club venues for dock workers. At Hull, the Willows Sports and Social Club had opened in the east of the city by 1951 and hosted a wide range of sports teams, social events and recreational activities.[284] Although these measures certainly improved some aspects of welfare in the port, the memories of virtually all of my docker interviewees indicate that not nearly enough was done during the period. Barry Freeman, for instance, recalled:

> There was these two little brick places with the toilets in and they was always… and I don't know if they ever got cleaned… I mean it was frozen solid [in the winter]… I mean the toilets was atrocious and the coffee shops like the Black 'ole of Calcutta it was terrible - filthy, mucky places you-know. They had a little fire in the middle and what-the-call-it the auld dockers used to stand gerrin' warm round it [285]

Likewise, Trevor Green remembered the insanitary conditions:

> Well at first when we came on the dock the amenities was atrocious - absolutely atrocious – one or two filthy toilets - nobody really looked after 'em. The coffee shops was very, very run down and they weren't very good, weren't very well looked after I suppose.[…] You got tea in cracked cups and cracked mugs with chips out and all that sort of thing and at first you thought good heavens![286]

Despite the attempts under the scheme to improve the welfare of dock workers in Hull and elsewhere, conditions on the docks, as these accounts indicate, remained insanitary with vermin infestations and poor maintenance. Even today, those who recalled them did so with a visible resentment as, in many ways, they symbolised the distain of the employers for their casual employees who were hired, paid and discarded once a job was completed.

[284] HHC, DPN/11, National Dock Labour Board, *The Annual Reports and Accounts,* 1951, p. 13.

[285] Barry Freeman, Interview, 2 April 2014.

[286] Trevor Green, Interview, 20 May 2013.

Figure 13: Hull dockers attending the port's new training school located at Victoria Dock. The vast majority of other facilities remained of an appalling low standard. Images from British Transport Docks Board Annual Report of 1964.

3.3.9 Trade Unionism

The high level of unrest at Hull during these years can also be linked to the increasing lack of control that the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) or 'White' union had over the actions of its membership. The strength of the TGWU's leadership had declined in general across many ports by the early 1960s, not least because of its support for decasualisation under the scheme. However, the union's authority was particularly weak at Hull, Liverpool and London where it had almost lost complete control and where industrial action was largely 'unofficial'.[287] The root of the problem at these ports was the rank and file's distrust and lack of respect towards the TGWU's officials, a collective feeling that was long established and deeply engrained.[288] Indeed, a number of the dockers whom I interviewed recounted stories of union corruption during the 1930s that had been passed on from the older men. Mike Galloway, for instance, relayed an anecdote involving union corruption that he had been told:

> Before I come on the dock I had a cousin who was quite a bit older than me called Jimmy Murphy and I think he was one of the instigators of bringing the Blue Union into Hull and eventually he got kicked off the dock I think that was one of the reason but another reason I was told…cos pre-war they had what they call a wreckers gang on the dock and this was a gang of men who was employed - this is only hearsay and they used to work for the employers and if anyone used try and break into the employers ring and you'd find the gear kicked in the dock the next day and I think it even went as far as men

[287] Wilson, *Dockers*, pp. 192-193.

[288] Hunter, *They Knew Why They Fought*, pp. 10-20

> being threatened but I know there was an old bloke that I used to have drink with and had been a pre-war foreman and he worked for this particular firm who wasn't in the ring and he was the foreman for 'em and he said "we had all our - we got to work the following morning and all our gear was kicked in the dock" and I think Jim, me cousin, was naming people who'd been in this ring and one or two was quite high officials in the White Union and I think it got to where he got something or other cos I was quite young then, I was still at school. But he got kicked off the dock but when I mentioned his name when I went on the dock I mentioned it to a few of the older dockers, he was quite well liked. So I think there was a little bit of skulduggery gone on there over that incident yeah.[289]

These depression era tales involving the 'wreckers' and TGWU corruption are supported by contemporary newspaper accounts. A segment in a September 1931 edition of the *Hull Daily Mail*, details a court case in which Jim Parnell, District Secretary of the TGWU, along with four others were found guilty of assaulting another docker called James Brady. [290] This followed his attempt to work for the stevedore 'British Empire & Essential Services', a firm that paid the union rate but was outside of the ring that Parnell operated on behalf of the employers[291]. Such scenes, reminiscent of the 1954 film *On the Waterfront*, indicate that union corruption was a feature of the Hull docks before the Second World War, as was anti-union feeling amongst the rank and file.

Although the Hull dockers' suspicion of union officials appeared to be well established by 1945, those dockers who I interviewed indicated that this sentiment, along with unrest, was heightened during the post-1945 years. Following the establishment of the National Dock Labour Scheme in 1947 it was the officials of the TGWU who sat on the national and local boards alongside the employers, and who were supposed to represent the rank and files' interests. [292] Many Hull men resented the fact that disciplinary hearings involved the union reaching agreement with the employers to punish a docker, they also saw the officials as being the 'employers' police'.[293] Indeed, many of my interviewees claimed that when the union was called in to deal with employers regarding rates of pay, they were frequently short-changed. For example, Dennis, Barry and Clive, stressed their distrust of the TGWU by relating an incident

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[289] Mike Galloway, Interview, 13 May 2014.

[290] Sinclair, *How the Blue Union came to the Hull Docks,* pp.4-6.

[291] *Ibid.*

[292] Gordon Phillips and Noel Whiteside, *Casual Labour: The Unemployment Question in the Port Transport Industry 1880-1970* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 257.

[293] Sinclair, *How the Blue Union came to the Hull Docks*, pp.4-6.

involving a well-known union official named Pottage whose nickname 'Penny Pottage' was derived from the minimal pay increases he secured for the men:

> **Dennis**: You've got to realise though, when we was talkin' about, when we was on Albert Dock - the union were against you - they weren't for you! I got walled off with the union. They said "your name's going up to London" they told me, cos I'd been causin' a bit of you-know.....
> **Clive**: Mind you, you was a…
> **Barry**: You was a bit of a rogue.
> **Clive**: Yeah, you was a nuisance.
> **Dennis**: That Penny Pottage 'e come down one day and 'e said "I've got you [an extra] tu'pence an hour lads!" and we said "well you can stick it up yer fuckin' arse cos we don't want it!" And that's the kind of thing... but 'e thought 'e was doing really well dint he?! [294]

It was incidents such as this that directly paved the way for the arrival of the rival the London-based National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers Union (NASDU) or 'Blue' Union in several large northern ports including Hull in 1954, a development that further weakened the TGWU's authority.

Following the failure of the TGWU to back the aforementioned 'Filling Strike' of August 1954 some 3,500 Hull dockers, alongside their counterparts at Manchester and on Merseyside, engaged in a mass defection to NASDU.[295] In contrast with the TGWU, the Blue Union embodied both militant and democratic traditions because it referred all major decisions back to the rank and file and controlled its leadership via mass meetings of its members.[296] Another important factor of the Blues' success in Hull was their establishment of a second dockers' social club which was opened in a converted warehouse in Posterngate near Princess' Dock, a venue that offered billiards, fruit machines and evening entertainment.[297] In short, many in Hull believed that NASDU better represented the needs of the rank and file dockers than the Whites. One defector, Tom Sutton, spoke plainly about this issue:

> **Tom**: Oh I was Blue Union […] the White Union was a load of rubbish! They went to the gaffers before they come to us you see? They [many Hull dockers] went from the White Union to Blue Union – NASDU – National Stevedores and Dockers.
> **AO**: Did you join in '54 then?
> **Tom**: Possibly.
> **AO**: I think that's when they came here after the filling strike?

[294] Dennis Mayhew, Barry Cheney and Clive Shields, Interview, 2 April 2013.

[295] Sinclair, *How the Blue Union came to the Hull Docks*; Hunter, *They Knew Why They Fought*, pp. 31-38.

[296] *Ibid.*

[297] Wilson, *Dockers*, pp. 192-193.

> **Tom**: When they came 'ere I joined. We were Blue from the off me and me father and all our family, yeah.
> **AO**: Right. Did you always stay with the Blue Union?
> **Tom**: Yes.
> **AO**: And in your mind they were a lot better?
> **Tom**: Oh a lot better, yes!
> **AO**: In what way where they better?
> **Tom**: Well they was for the working man versus the employer!
> **AO:** Right OK – whereas the other union wasn't?
> **Tom**: They was for the employer.[298]

Ray Simms also explained that he and others believed that NASDU were more representative of the dockers' interests:

> There was three out of us in it [NASDU] - three of the brothers me, Ron and Syd and the reason I was in it was because the White Union or the Transport and General Workers Union – we used to call it the White union - if you was 'avin' any disputes you were 'avin' disputes with your own members like the lorry drivers or anything like that. We 'ad a lot of trouble with lorry drivers at one time and all of them… most of them was in the Transport and General Workers Union and I thought 'ow could you be fighting for something when you're fighting your own Union? […] the Blue Union was a different thing altogether.[299]

These accounts indicate that many dockers who defected to the Blues in 1954 felt that they had now found the representation they had long desired: a militant, democratic union that prioritised the interests of the rank and file dockers.

Despite its initial success, however, the arrival of NASDU did not herald the start of successful union control and leadership in Hull and the other Northern ports. Indeed, after 1954 union relations became more fractured and unrest greatly heightened. Following the Merseyside employer's refusal to grant the NASDU recognition on the local Dock Labour Board, a six week strike involving some 18,000 to 20,000 men in Hull, Liverpool, London and Manchester ensued between May and July 1955, an action that accounted for some of 650,000 striker days lost.[300] The strikers were eventually defeated and as a result NASDU was not recognised in any of the Northern ports, something that made it incredibly difficult for the Blue's officials to successfully resolve disputes thereafter. Brian Barker, a TGWU official at Hull, recalled this problematic feature:

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[298] Tom Sutton, Interview, 1 May 2013.

[299] Ray Simms, Interview, 24 June 2013.

[300] Sinclair, *How the Blue Union came to the Hull Docks*; Hunter, *They Knew Why They Fought*, pp. 31-38; Wilson, *Dockers*, pp. 315-316.

NASDU that came up from London who tried to get started but the employers never recognised ‘em. So they ‘ad a few members, not a lot, but there was enough to cause a problem you-know - a bit of trouble but they never got recognised. So they ‘ad an official but ‘e could never settle anything [...] but ‘e did have a go and it always amazed me ‘e could never settle a dispute cos the employers would never recognise him.[301]

Ray Simms, a NASDU shop steward, too recalled how the Blues struggled to resolve disputes and often remained in the shadow of the Whites:

> **Ray**: We didn’t have much recognition for a long while you-know. Any troubles they wouldn’t let us go and meet the management, you had to go to the Transport and General Workers shop steward… I was a shop steward.
> **AO**: For the Blue Union?
> **Ray**: Yes and me other two brothers were shop stewards and me eldest brother was a shop steward but for the Transport and… Workers Union and that’s how it was and that’s how we went into the Blue because it was dockers’ union and nothing else just a dockers’ union – didn’t work really because as I say the employers wouldn’t accept it. The men accepted it because when you used to negotiate ship-side we could put a bit more pressure on because the blokes, the head blokes who come down they was all Transport and General Workers Union people so we could do a little bit of blackmailing.[302]

While the defeat of the recognition strike saw the expansion of an unofficial strike movement in Hull over the following years, it also created an ongoing inter-union rivalry between the TGWU and NASDU. Differences were so fierce that the officials of the former refused to handle any grievances in they believed the latter was involved.[303] Furthermore, Mike Galloway explained that a degree of union related conflict was also apparent amongst the rank and file in Hull:

> **Mike**: Some of the lads who came on with me their Dads had been in the Blue Union. I know a mate of mine, he joined both of them - he joined both! [Laughs] - There was little bit of rivalry I suppose you could say between the two unions it was a London union really….. before I came on the dock it came in the 50s and so there was always that little bit of rivalry between the two unions but mostly the men got on OK.
> **AO:** It was maybe more the officials?
> **Mike:** Yeah it was mainly… and you’d work alongside of each other no problem and I mean you’d agree with some of the things of the aspect of the Blue union but I just stuck the White union. But I had one Uncle who was in the Blue Union and one who was in the White and the White Union man was a really staunch union man and there was a little bit of friction between those two like.[304]

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[301] Brian Barker, Interview, 1 May 2013.

[302] Ray Simms, Interview, 24 June 2013.

[303] Wilson, *Dockers*, pp. 192-193.

[304] Mike Galloway, Interview, 13 May 2014.

Like Galloway, Trevor Green, a TGWU member, also explained that union division amongst some Hull dockers was so pronounced, that it transcended the dock wall:

> **AO**: And did you ever go over to East Hull to socialise? Cos they had the dockers' club on Holderness Road?
> **Trevor**: Yes we did and the one [NASDU Dockers' Club] in Posterngate.
> **AO**: Yes the Blue Union?… So you went in there as well?
> **Trevor**: Yes.
> **AO**: So even if you were in the Transport and General Workers Union you still went in the NASDU [Social Club]?
> **Trevor**: Some didn't, some didn't and some weren't welcome. I think it was just attitude. I went to 'em both that never got me any bother.
> **AO**: Would you say that the divisions with the union was maybe more between the officials rather than the dockers?
> **Trevor**: Probably, probably - more the officials. There were some dockers which were very… took a militant stand about who they belonged to.[305]

Olga Prince, the daughter of a White union dock worker, also remembered being aware of the divisive nature of trade unionism as a child in the neighbourhoods close to the docks:

> I know there was White and Blue. Well I just remember there was this… there was always this feeling around – "don't talk to…" cos the Dobson family lived opposite […] but there was this feeling and I suppose when he went into the pubs which he was a drinker… at the weekends… he didn't drink during work... there would be people who wouldn't speak to him but he wouldn't tell us about it and we'd probably hear me Mum and Dad saying something and me Mother wouldn't get involved....[306]

The TGWU's control over its Hull members was already poor in 1945 and its grip appeared to have weakened further following the introduction of the National Dock Labour Scheme, a development that further heightened the distrust of union officials and unofficial militancy amongst the rank and file. The TGWU's authority weakened further in 1954 following the arrival of the rival NASDU and, following the mass defection of many dockers from White to Blue, an increased level of industrial unrest and division characterised the port.

3.3.10 Conclusion

This chapter shows that, despite the Government's endeavours to create a settled and productive dock labour force via the National Dock Labour Scheme, industrial relations in the port of Hull were often very poor during these years. Although the scheme achieved some success by improving welfare, issuing fall-back pay, and developing the co-ordination and deployment of dock labour, it unwittingly exacerbated deep-rooted and volatile grievances. The continuation of casualism, which placed the burden of underemployment on the workforce and

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[305] Trevor Green, Interview, 20 May 2014.

[306] Olga Prince, Interview, 15 July 2013.

discouraged loyalty to employers, was a source of discontent for many dock workers and employers, yet, the scheme's attempt to erode this system was rigidly opposed by those who benefitted from the system. The Board largely failed to improve working conditions and amenities on the docks, the standard of which remained insanitary and dangerous. This grievance not only caused stoppages but also fuelled the dockers' resentment towards employers. Other sources of disquiet which were outside of the board's control were also apparent during this period. The port's piece-work payment system, for example, was intrinsically linked to discord with many dockers believing it to be open to favouritism and becoming envious of the privileged status and earnings of the blue-eyed boys. The loss of control of the Transport and General Workers encouraged further unrest and division, particularly following the mass defection of many dock workers to the rival National Amalgamate Stevedores and Dockers Union in 1954.

My interviewees highlighted the extent and seriousness of the conflict during these years for which, even today, neither party is willing to accept responsibility. Regardless of who was to blame for the poor labour relations on the docks, the result was gross inefficiency. The events at Hull and a comparable situation at the other larger, older ports such as London, Liverpool, Glasgow and Manchester, were unconducive to the cargo-handling revolution that was rapidly gaining pace by the early 1960s. Consequently, preparations for the largest inquiry into dock labour in British history were made in late 1964, the report of which was to irrevocably transform the long-established organisation, customs and culture of dock labour in Hull.

3.4 **Culture and Community on Hull's Waterfront**

In the previous chapter my docker interviewees spoke about their recollections of the harsh working conditions and the industrial conflict that characterised life on the Hull docks between 1945 and 1964. Despite the extent and detail of these memories, all placed a far greater emphasis on their unique way of life and the sense of community that prevailed on the docks during these years. Rather than details of productivity, government reforms, capital investment and industrial conflict (subjects that dominated the vast quantity of documentary materials of the period) many of my respondents spent their time relating memories and anecdotes of the loyalty, humour and comradeship that existed amongst the work force. Docker Ray Simms, for example, summed up:

> It was very tight-knit, it was very friendly I would say. I would honestly say that 99 per cent of them were absolutely gentlemen. They was very good if they could 'elp yer they 'elp yer. They showed you what to do. You always get a bad egg 'ere and there but 99 per cent was absolutely what you'd call gentlemen. They was good - very good.[307]

From Simms's testimony it is clear that, for him, there clearly existed a strong sense of tradition and camaraderie at this time. The nature and extent of these traditions amongst British dock labour forces have been explored by academics. The issues raised, and conclusion made, in this body of work will now be discussed.

Stephen Hill suggested that the structural position of docking which, like mining, was carried out in a small number of locations and frequently in geographical isolation, fostered the growth of distinctive occupational communities on and around the docks.[308] He further claimed that such tight-knit and inward-looking groups traditionally tended to be more proletarian than other sorts of communities and, being insulated from dominant social orthodoxy, often generated their own sub-cultural values in opposition.[309] Building upon Hill's work, Sarah Palmer argued that distinctive traits were apparent amongst the dock labour forces of many large, long-established ports during the late nineteenth century, and that differences between waterfront and other types of labour during the twentieth century tended to be enhanced by the survival of casual employment, strengthening unionisation, the continuing importance of kinship ties

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[307] Ray Simms, Interview, 24 June 2013.

[308] Stephen Hill, *The Dockers: Class and Tradition in London* (London: Heinemann, 1976), pp. 163-164.

[309] *Ibid.*

and the registration of the work force.[310] Furthermore, she cited evidence which suggested that aspects of residential segregation survived amongst some docking communities into the 1950s.[311] In contrast, Whiteside and Phillips warned against seeing the dockers as a 'race apart' and suggested that they were no more segregated from society than other types of worker with whom they shared similar traits.[312] More recent work has shown, however, that a distinctive culture existed, and that this contributed towards group solidarity and resistance to change, amongst dock labour forces in British ports including London, Liverpool and London and in other ports across the globe.[313] This collection of essays included a chapter by Sam Davies on the Hull dockers between c.1870 and 1960 that contained a discussion of the origins and culture of the work force. Davies' concluded that 'at the very least the case of Hull should prevent us from too easily presenting a picture of the 'typical' British dockers, who usually speaks with a cockney or scouse accent'.[314] Although it was insightful, poor evidencing made parts of Davies' study slightly weak. For example, his section on 'the culture of dock work' is limited to a paragraph and due to 'a lack of evidence' is largely based on assumption.[315] Furthermore, the part that deals with the social composition of Hull dockside areas is based on 'a limited survey'.[316] In light of these deficiencies it is necessary here to re-examine the case of Hull and explore aspects of culture and community amongst the port's dockers by primarily using the rich and detailed body of oral testimony gathered for this study.

In this chapter I argue that a strong and distinctive occupational culture and community that was similar, but not identical to other ports endured on the Hull docks well into the post-1945 period. Furthermore, it likely underpinned the collective strength of the dockers and

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[310] Sarah Palmer, 'Ports 1840-1970' in M. J. Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Vol. III* (Cambridge: University Press, 2000), pp. 149-150.

[311] *Ibid.*

[312] Gordon Phillips and Noel Whiteside, *Casual Labour: The Unemployment Question in the Port Transport Industry 1880-1970* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 275.

[313] Sam Davies, Colin J. Davis, David de Vries, Lex Heerna Van Voss, Lidewij Hesselink and Klaus Weinhauer (eds.) *Dock Workers International Explorations in Comparative Labour History, 1790-1970* (Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 2000).

[314] Sam Davies, 'The History of the Hull Dockers, c. 1870-1960' in Sam Davies, Colin J. Davis, David de Vries, Lex Heerna Van Voss, Lidewij Hesselink and Klaus Weinhauer (eds.) *Dock Workers International Explorations in Comparative Labour History, 1790-1970* (Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 2000), p. 205.

[315] *Ibid.*, pp. 188-189.

[316] *Ibid.*, p. 191.

contributed to their aversion and resistance towards externally imposed change during these years.

3.4.1 Registration

During the interwar years numerous locally-conceived labour registration schemes were established across many large British ports. At Hull a 'Joint four-a-side' arrangement was in place by 1931 that registered the port's 7,804 dockers and 252 employers.[317] Furthermore, the Scheme's rules of recruitment to the dock workers register gave preference to 'dockers' sons and ex-servicemen'.[318] A tradition of occupational inheritance had long existed unofficially on the docks and was largely related to the causal system. The creation of family or kin links aimed to offset the lottery of the call and a father would 'speak' for his son, introduce him to the gang and teach him the tricks of the trade. [319] The son would later carry his father through heavy work.[320] The overall objective of the local registration schemes was primarily to protect dock work for regular or professional dockers by excluding the floating population of unskilled casual quayside labour. However it has been suggested that these schemes also encouraged exclusivity by defining the workforce.[321] It appears that this feature continued, and was even reinforced under the National Dock Labour Scheme - essentially a state administrated version of the local schemes. Indeed, many of my docker interviewees, including Dennis, Barry and Clive, placed a strong emphasis on the acquisition and possession of a National Dock Labour Board's 'black docker's book', the item that denoted registration:

> **AO:** But what did it mean if you "get a book"?
> **Dennis:** You were a docker!
> **AO:** You were *officially* a docker?
> **Dennis:** Oh yeah, you was a registered docker then!
> **Clive:** Well only the National Dock Labour Board could really sack you.
> **AO:** Right. And it was the National Dock Labour Board which issued those did they?
> **Clive:** Oh yeah, that's what I mean.

Later in the discussion, Dennis and Barry elaborated on which particular waterfront workers were and were not classed as dockers based on the possession of a book:

> **Dennis:** Oh yeah… they were dockers were deal carriers.

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[317] *Report on Port Labour* (London: HMSO, 1931), p. 77.

[318] *Ibid.*

[319] David F. Wilson, *Dockers: The Impact of Industrial Change* (Bungay, Suffolk: Fontana Press, 1972), p. 51.

[320] *Ibid.*

[321] Palmer, 'Ports 1840-1970', p. 150.

> **Barry:** They worked on Victoria dock.
> **AO:** Just Victoria dock?
> **Barry:** Mostly Victoria dock. Well the timber ships used to go to Victoria dock. It was all loose timber at the time and they used to 'ave a stage - men on the ship making sets - bring 'em over, men on the land would carry 'em, place 'em in railway wagons and things like that.
> **AO:** And coal trimmers?
> **Dennis:** Oh yeah coal trimmers - they never 'ad a dockers book we asked 'em if they wanted to get a book and they said "no" cos they were on good money – better than what we was and also they 'ad these shifts were they could have a split shift where they could go… cos what happened was they had these coal ships and they used to trim it to the wings cos otherwise it'd be all one big heap and they had to make it sea-worthy. It was a fairly skilled job like.[322]

Here it is clear that membership of the dock labour force was not necessarily based on the nature and location of one's work, rather this was acquired purely by registration. An unregistered coal trimmer may have handled sea borne goods at a berth adjacent to a docker, yet the former, which lacked registration, could not class himself as a docker nor was considered as such by the latter. The continuation of strict registration under the National Dock Labour Scheme therefore appears to have maintained a strong occupational distinction; the possession of a docker's book acted as proof of membership of the group, while those who were not registered were seen as outsiders.

Like the local interwar scheme, the post-1945 national scheme also ensured that dock work remained exclusive. The vast majority of my docker interviewees stated that they, and most of their co-workers, had acquired their docker's book (and thus registration) from their father. This, many explained, had occurred following the entry of their names on the docker's son's list that was lodged at the Hull and Goole Dock Labour Board office at Victoria dock. Brian Barker, for instance, told me:

> **Brian**: Because me father was a docker, there was a 'Dockers' Sons List' you see. The Dock Labour Board what run the docks they had a list of people – dockers' sons and you got priority if you was a docker's son.
> **AO**: Was it always like that even after the 50s?
> **Brian**: Yes yeah yes it was still like and while the Scheme was on.[323]

This was also recalled by some of my other interviewees, including George Robinson, a management employee at a Hull stevedore:

[322] Dennis Mayhew, Barry Cheney and Clive Shields, Interview, 2 April 2013.

[323] Brian Barker, Interview, 1 May 2013.

> There was a waiting list lodged at the local Dock Labour Board of people wanting to be dockers and it was really only open to docker's sons and somebody said there was a dockers daughter listed somewhere [Laughs].[324]

Although it was clearly a source of irony to Robinson and his co-workers, the rigidity of occupational inheritance on the docks (which effectively remained a closed shop into the 1960s) was highly unusual. There is some evidence to suggest, however, that, like the Port of Leith, the net of recruitment was cast more widely by the early 1960s when growing trade stimulated demand for more dock workers than the docker's sons list could supply.[325] Several of my docker interviewees explained that other routes into dock work were increasingly available by this time. Mike Galloway, for example, stated that he acquired work on the docks in 1962 via the patronage of wider kin:

> I 'ad family connections on the dock. I 'ad Uncles on and when they found out that I wanted to go on the dock and there was a couple of 'em sorta said "we'll put a word in for you" and eventually that pushed me on a bit further really cos there was always a lot of family connections.[326]

Dennis and Barry explained that, by this time, work could even be acquired without any family connections:

> **Dennis**: Well you 'ad to 'ave a father on the dock or a close relative at one time before they'd let you on the dock. There was some green carders come on…
> **Barry:** They came from Labour Office in town. If you were short of men or something like that they'd send men from… Labour Exchange… on to the docks…that's green carders.
> **Dennis**: If they was good lads and "you see you don't get yourself in trouble. We'll see you get a pink book" cos a pink book is the next step up – they'd give you six months to see what you was like….
> **Barry**: In actual fact they was semi-permanent want they…semi-permanent……you got your green carders, then the pink bookers and they said "if you do this and you do that right" you'd finish up with a book…
> **Dennis**: You were guaranteed a book as long as you kept your nose clean.[327]

These testimonies indicate that, dock work was increasingly open to outsiders by the early 1960s, the acquisition of dock work via this route was still limited and rigorously controlled. This view was further supported by former 'pink book man', Len Scott:

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[324] George Robinson, Interview, 28 May 2013.

[325] Ian MacDougall, *Voices of Leith Dockers: Personal Recollections of Working Lives* (Edinburgh: Mercat, 2001), p. 178.

[326] Mike Galloway, Interview, 13 May 2013.

[327] Dennis Mayhew, Barry Cheney and Clive Shields, Interview, 2 April 2013.

> Well with going to sea and all that kind of thing and being on the deck I was splicing and driving a winch and all these kind of things and when they got short of deckmen, as they called it in them days, and then being casual they give me a permanent job which was what we called a black book then. See when you were causal you 'ad a pink book and then you got a black book because of the covers and it was the best thing you could ever get! Well you see that gave you full employment and on dock then to get on dock in the majority of cases you had to be in-laws, outlaws and blood brothers.[328]

Although, the demand for labour ensured that the rigours of occupational inheritance had clearly weakened by the early 1960s, the increasingly rapid implementation of mechanised methods swiftly halted recruitment. As a result, dock work generally remained a closed shop after 1945 and the dilution of the labour force by non-relatives was limited.

The continuing long term effect of the closed shop at Hull was also apparent in my docker interviewee's testimonies. Like the accounts of the London, Leith and Manchester dockers, several of the dock workers who I interviewed spoke at length about their family ties on the docks.[329] Barry Freeman, for instance, outlined:

> **Barry**: [I started in] 1964 me twin started a few months before me. Me elder brother was already on [the docks], me brother-in-law Billy Baker 'e was already on and me cousin who married Terry 'utchy – 'e was already on. My uncle Bill was a docker, me uncle John was a docker, me cousin John was a docker and then I had other relations on there – stacks of relations but I didn't know 'alf of 'em cos there was that many men on there you can't remember names.
> **AO**: So was that quite a common thing then did a lot of people have family connections on [the docks]?
> **Barry**: Oh Yes, Yes, Yeah.[330]

Freeman's testimony exemplifies just how common extensive kin networks could be on the docks. The recollections of others, support this. Ray Simms similarly described the extent of his family on the docks:

> **Ray:** There was five of us, we all did the same four brothers and we were all on the dock. We was the largest family on the dock counting uncles and cousins all with the same names as us. Me father was the eldest one and then his two brothers and then a couple of sons.
> **AO**: So you had cousins on there?
> **Ray**: Oh yeah cousins… all with the same name – all Simms – same name. Most people knew us.

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[328] Len Scott, Interview, 4 July 2013.

[329] T. S. Simey (ed), *The Dock Worker: An Analysis of Conditions of Employment in the Port of Manchester* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1956), pp. 49-50; Stephen Hill, *The Dockers: Class and Tradition in London* (London: Heinemann, 1976), pp. 174-175; Ian MacDougall, *Voices of Leith Dockers: Personal Recollections of Working Lives* (Edinburgh: Mercat, 2001), p. 15,

[330] Barry Freeman, Interview, 2 April 2014.

Simms also elaborated on the function and importance of these kin ties.

> When I went on there as soon as they found out… "oh are you Arthur's lad?!" well they always thought that I was me eldest brothers lad cos they called him Arthur and me dad Arthur and I said "no, I'm Arthur's brother" and they said "come on you're alright we'll show yer" and they showed me everything what to do, how to make things easy for me that's what they did, they was very, very good when I went on there as soon as they found out… "oh are you Arthur's lad?!" well they always thought that I was me eldest brothers lad cos they called him Arthur and me dad Arthur and I said "no, I'm Arthur's brother" and they said "come on you're alright we'll show yer" and they showed me everything what to do, how to make things easy for me that's what they did, they was very, very good.[331]

This highlights that the labour force at Hull was not just united by a common occupation, they were bound by extended blood ties that could often be traced back generations. For Simms, this encouraged the passing down of skills and knowledge from the older dockers to the younger men. It has also been argued that younger dockers often inherited the values, grievances and knowledge of past events too.[332]This collective 'historical memory' was evidenced in sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.9 by my interviewees' awareness of the interwar transgressions of employers and trade union officials, knowledge that they had acquired via stories from the older men.

3.4.2 Racial Composition

It has been suggested that the dockers not only formed an occupational community, but they also continued to define themselves as a cultural community. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries scores of Irish Catholics had settled in British ports such as London, Liverpool and Glasgow, and, residing close to the docks they had helped to build, they formed the traditional core of the dock labour force.[333] Separated from other locals by their religion and clannishness, they acquired a reputation for looking after their own - characteristics that survived after 1945.[334] It was suggested by Sam Davies that the influence of the Irish amongst the Hull dock labour force was less marked than at the other large ports. He conceded that some Irish navvies were involved in the digging out of Albert Dock (1869) and Alexandra Dock (1885)

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[331] Ray Simms, Interview, 24 June 2013.

[332] Hill, *The Dockers*, pp. 174-175

[333] John Lovell, *Stevedores and Dockers: A Study of Trade Unionism in the Port of London, 1870-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 57-58; William Kenefick, *'Rebellious and Contrary': The Glasgow Dockers, 1853 -1932* (East Lothian: Tuckwell Press, 2000) pp, 109-125

[334] Wilson, *Dockers*, p. 29

and a settlement in Dansom Lane known as 'Little Ireland' was apparent in the 1880s, although the port's east coast position had limited the influx of immigrants, particularly when compared to Liverpool.[335] The memories of my docker interviewees, however, clearly indicated that there was a strong and enduring Irish-Catholic tradition on the Hull docks, and the ethnic and religious traits of which survived well into the post-1945 period. For instance, docker Paul Freeman, explained:

> It [the kinship] went on from when they dug the docks out bloody centuries ago like but my grandparents were Irish they came from Ireland and they were part of the you-know that dug the docks out kind of thing – navvies and that's 'ow it all stemmed – the Catholics and they all stuck together… me brother-in-law when 'e married me sister 'e said that his father said "those bloody Catholics" 'e said "we can't ger a job on the dock" cos they used to go in the pubs – the local pubs that's were they got the jobs from when it first started that's years that's centuries ago eighteen 'undred and odd. The Catholic church they built St. Mary's in East Hull that when all the immigrants were coming over from Ireland… this what I got told you see - they built the Cath… they built St. Mary's and that's where me father went and me father went to that school St. Mary's and they built that for the Catholics and they knew that they were looking for work there and the Catholic church looked after them you see in the old town and east Hull.

Here Paul succinctly describes how, like other large ports, migrant Irish labour stayed on to work and reside near the Hull docks which they had helped to build. Not only was he keenly aware of this tradition, he went on to explain that the cultural characteristics of this group were still clearly visible when he started work on the docks during the early 1960s:

> But you'd go on the dock and there was like Eggherty, Geraghty… you-know Geraghty the shop steward, I mean 'is family were Irish, 'e was a docker was Geraghty and then there was Tony Phee – Phee – another one, all Irish families all come from Irish people like, you know what I mean? Probably from centuries ago like eighteen 'undred and odd like my family. A lot of the foremen you could see like all Irish names - there was Eggherty and Flannery – that kind of thing - them old Irish names or O'Leary.[336]

Paul's twin brother Barry, also elaborated on their family's migrant ancestry in a separate interview:

> A little bit before we went on you know when we talk about fighting for a job [in the controls] there was a quite a few Catholics – foreman who'd maybe give a Catholic a job my Great Grandfather was part of 'em who dug East Park out – that boating lake and the vast majority of people who worked on the dock had come across from Ireland – they landed at Liverpool and they came across when it was the famine you-know – potatoes and then they settled in Liverpool and all across and in Hull cos there was no work in Ireland and

[335] Davies 'The History of the Hull Dockers, c. 1870-1960', p. 185.

[336] Paul Freeman, Interview 7 April 2014.

Barry also suggested that the cultural and religious distinctiveness of the Irish dockers had encouraged elements of residential segregation which survived well into the twentieth century:

> Where me Mother lived it was a rank Catholic Irish area in the Groves near North Bridge well they called it N'oth Bridge then and she grew up with and she met me father there and me sister met Uncle Bill and like I say they became dockers.[337]

Similar to the Freeman brothers, Mike Galloway also recalled a strong sense of the ethno-religious heritage of the dock labour force:

> When I went on the docks there was blokes whose Fathers and Grandfathers who'd helped build… dig the docks out and stopped on cos there was quite a lot of Irish Catholic connections on the dock like.[338]

Some of my interviewees who had been involved in the employment of dock labour, such as Andrew Brett, were also aware of the origin, ubiquity and implications of this culture amongst their employees:

> **Andrew**: That was big thing in Hull docks as well was religion.
> **AO**: In Hull docks?
> **Andrew**: Yeah.
> **AO**: In what way?
> **Andrew**: Well this is my theory – you probably don't want to put this in as fact but a lot of Irish came over to dig the docks, a lot of navvies were Irish and they stayed on to become dockers and a large number of our guys were Roman Catholic and one or two of the managers as well… Catholic priests had a big influence over what was going on [on the docks].[339]

Some of my docker interviewees spoke about the one time presence of migrant Irish neighbourhoods close to the docks, and others even claimed that elements of residential segregation along sectarian lines was still apparent into the 1960s. For example, Shirley and June Cooke (the wife and daughter of dock worker George Cooke respectively) lived in a neighbourhood near Hedon Road close to Alexandra Dock:

> **Shirley**: There were a lot of Catholics round Lee Smith Street cos I remember them… when [my daughter] Janet was walking to School to Southcoates Lane and getting mixed up with the kids from Scared Heart…
> **June**: Oh yeah course there was Sacred Heart want they.
> **AO**: So there was a decent size Catholic community was there?
> **Shirley**: Yeah.
> **June**: Yeah.
> **Shirley:** Not so much down there but the lads used to get involved in little skirmishes…
> **June**: So there was a Protestant and Catholic thing was there?

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[337] Barry Freeman, Interview, 2 April 2014.

[338] Mike Galloway, Interview, 13 May 2014.

[339] Andrew Brett, Interview, 22 April, 2013.

Shirley: Yeah.

The Cookes' recollections indicate that elements of sectarianism appears to have continued in the dockside neighbourhoods well into the post-1945 period. Indeed, June's memories of the children's squabbles based on religious differences and her use of the word 'mixed' suggests that a degree of separation was still apparent on the waterfront. Likewise, docker Ray Simms too acknowledged that Hedon Road remained a predominantly Catholic area well into the post-1945 period:

> **Ray:** Only the Catholics stayed up there – 'edon Road and that area yes they all seemed to stop up that way.
> **AO:** Why…?
> **Ray:** I don't know… because the churches was there for 'em […] Not their father but 'is father come to dig out the docks and stayed in 'ull and they always used to talk "you're only here cos my great Granddad dug it out" [Laughs].
> **AO:** Were a lot of the Catholics were they involved in dock work as well?
> **Ray:** Oh yeah, I've a lot of friends whose Catholics and off the dock.
> **AO**: So they were a distinctive kind of community
> **Ray**: Yeah.[340]

The recollections of my docker interviewees highlight that Irish-Catholic culture was intrinsic to waterfront life both on and off the docks. Furthermore, evidence also suggests that those outside the dockers community viewed dock workers as being different. For instance, Richard Akester, a Hull-based barge worker, recalled his experience of the dockers at this time:

> When you saw in those days the amount of men that worked on the docks was terrific you could get on a bus in Saville Street and all the dockers used to jump on these buses to the docks and if you went upstairs you couldn't see that far for smoke oh it was horrific! But they were a good crowd - very clannish you know? Oh you couldn't say anything to one without another jumping on your back like! You'd to be very careful [Laughs] but the bargemen were a different class to the dockers - we couldn't get involved with them in anyway. If they had a meeting in Bevin House and I went they wouldn't let me through the door cos they knew me and they knew I wasn't a docker and they wouldn't let any outsider in - they were a class of their own.[341]

Although, he did not discuss the ethno-religious origins of the dockers' community, Akester clearly recalled them as being a tight-knit, separate and distinctive unit amongst the wider port community. Others on the docks may not have considered the dockers to be racially different, however, some may have considered them to be culturally divergent.

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[340] Ray Simms, Interview,

[341] Richard Akester, Interview, 12 April 2013.

3.4.3 Waterfront Culture

As established in Chapter 3.3 dock workers remained largely employed on a casual basis and continued to engage in manual work until 1964. It has been suggested that this deep-rooted and unorthodox working arrangement (that had existed since the mid-nineteenth century) was less coercive than that of other industries and gave the work force more 'real' power than in the case of most working-class occupations at this time.[342] It appears that not only did the continued casual-manual organisation of work also preserved a distinctive and much cherished way of life and docking culture. As noted, some dock workers desired the stability and routine of permanent employment. However, other Hull dockers, like their counterparts in London, claimed to have enjoyed the freedom of movement and opportunities for social interaction offered by dock work.[343] As noted in section 3.3.1, most dock workers were not attached to any one employer or single workspace, a characteristic which several of my interviewees explained was a valued aspect of the job. Mike Galloway, described:

> At the time I was single and that kind of life kind of suited me and you got to work with different men. That was the beauty about it. If you was a regular a regular man working for Wilson's or Dickinson's or Hollands or one of the other companies – Crossland's, you was a regular man and you'd probably work with that gang day in day out you-know. When we was in the Control - in the pen - you got to know everybody, you went to other docks as well, I mean sometimes we'd go to Goole as well like.[344]

Galloway describes how dock work afforded the opportunity to work on a wide variety of goods alongside many different men. Barry Freeman also explained how this work was a largely autonomous occupation:

> We went to a ship and you did your work, if you dint do your work you dint get paid! You 'ad a foreman he would basically put you off pay if you weren't there… but as long as 'e saw that crane moving and money was being earned you could do what you liked. So say we got there at eight o'clock and we was working 'ard all morning and it got to dinner time and there was always queues and that and some kids wanted to go 'ome so it got to about quarter to twelve and we'd say right lads 'alf of yer go 'ome 15 minutes early and go for a flyer - they called it a "flyer" and us 'alf'd come back 15 minutes later but in that 15 minutes you still 'ad to work twice as bloody 'ard to keep that crane going.

Freeman also explained that by having this unusually high level of control over the work process, there was a unique flexibility in the organisation and distribution of work within the gang:

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[342] Hill, *The Dockers*, p. 200.

[343] *Ibid.*

[344] Mike Galloway, Interview, 13 May 2014.

> When I was down below [in the ship's hold] in a gang and I had an old man with me I had a freedom to look after him I could do more work for him. I mentioned Dave - I knew he liked a pint and he liked his pint on a dinner and I knew that he could work damned hard when he was there, so we'd let him come back an hour after you-know and I said "alright Dave, I've done your work for yer - don't worry".[345]

Ray Simms, similarly recalled how gang-work allowed men to take time off the job:

> Oh they used to go to the pubs pretty regularly [Laughs]. Not me. There was a clan that used to go at 11 O'clock - "are you alright lad?... are you alright? Can you manage there? – just going to have a quick drink" and they used to go and they used to come back at 3 o'clock.[346]

Here it is exemplified how dock workers, free from the conventional constraints that regulated the majority of industries, enjoyed being able to move between gangs and jobs. Furthermore, men we free to socialise on and off the job and to reserve lighter duties or less work for less able-bodied men, an indicant of how a seemingly large number of elderly and infirm men were retained within an industry where strength and physical fitness was paramount.

With the employers of dock labour having never been obligated to provide any clothing or equipment to their workers, dockers traditionally provided their own. In contrast to other labourers of other industries which were issued with tools, hard hats, gloves and overalls, dock workers adapted their own attire and instruments (see Figure 14). For instance, Brian Barker related:

> You went to work in an old suit, you went in to work in what you could and you took your own hand-hook and your own tommyhawk for handling timber.[347]

Rays Simms too recalled the distinctive dress of the dockers:

> When I went on everybody looked old – flat-cap, muffler like that and them old jackets they had… and they want they were only… like my brother he was only like 10 years older than me and all like that.

Later in the interview Simms also recounted the simplicity of docking equipment that commonly consisted of hand-held tools:

> All we needed was a hand hook and a knife and that was it… especially if you ended up on a ripping and tipping – bag job were you was out the hold and onto the stage and you used to have your knife and rip the top open, you're supposed to cut the string and not the bag and tip it into a barge and go

[345] Barry Freeman, Interview, 2 April 2014.

[346] Ray Simms, Interview, 24 June 2013.

[347] Brian Barker, Interview, 1 May 2013.

> where it was going but there wasn't many more things that you needed actually.[348]

For others such as Barry Freeman, the uniform and identity of the docker was not only distinctive, but one which symbolised a culture or way of life:

> The men I knew on the estate they had a flat hat on, docker's knot scarves and their coats on and they was *men*! And I loved 'em - the pubs where they went… and when I went on the dock it was like going in the old days! All the old sheds all the old ships… they still 'ad ships gear, it was fantastic you-know! And I wanted that! And I loved that life! You just went on in a morning in what you 'ad on yer and you stood there in the rain, sleet and blow - whatever you got there in you wore all day. You always had to have a pair o' them steel toe-cap boots cos it was a dangerous place and some days you'd get there and "I ant gor a hook wi' me!" or if I got sent on a timber ship I dint have me tommyhawk with me, or if I got sent carrying I dint have me apron or saddle with me - you needed them things with you really and you got some real good old fashioned dockers so they'd lend you one. The old dockers taught me everything![349]

Here, Freeman described the docker's and their place of work as being from 'a different time', he also explained later in the interview that an old fashioned set of codes and values pervaded the docks:

> It was a way of life - you could have a fight one day on the docks and the next day you was all 'appy go lucky and I've seen men with black eyes cuts allsorts but nobody ever stabbed each other and you'd never get two against one and once one man was getting beat it was stopped and that was a way… and I loved that way of life and I'm not saying you should 'ave 'ad that way of life but maybe that's how you settled your problems. [350]

Several other dockers who I interviewed explained that fights were incredibly common on the docks, however, like Freeman, they too confirmed that, for them, violence was often an acceptable way of resolving grievances or disputes. Although the 1950s and 1960s were a time of great social and cultural change particularly for British youth, Freeman indicates that both the docks and its workers appeared to be cut off from these developments. [351] Furthermore, alongside the manual and physical nature of work, he valued the old-fashioned habits and attire of the older dockers: trappings that symbolised an overtly autonomous, masculine, working-class culture.

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[348] Ray Simms, Interview, 24 June 2013.

[349] Barry Freeman, Interview, 2 April 2014.

[350] Barry Freeman, Interview, 2 April 2014.

[351] Kathleen Burk, *The British Isles since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 136-145.

Figure 14: Still images taken from the British Transport Film's 'Berth 24' (1950) of Hull dock workers in traditional dockers' attire.

As noted in section 3.3.7, the casual system of employment also provided little, if any, incentive for employers to provide basic amenities for their workers. As a result, the dockers needs were served by the small number of squalid, privately owned cafes or 'coffee shops' that were dotted on and around the docks. Although my dockers provided detailed accounts of the insanitary and ramshackle nature of such places, they also recalled them fondly as places that not only served hearty foods and beverages but as theatres of humour, entertainment and sociability. In many ways, my interviewees' memories of such places reflected the character and culture of the dockers' community. For example, Pete Neal explained:

> Some of 'em honestly were unbelievable in the earlier times. [..] I mean there was birds flyin' about all over, there was water dripping through the roof [Laughs] it was a bit rough at the time… for everywhere but everyone got by, everybody 'ad a laugh.[352]

Likewise, Len Scott told me:

> There was laughter on the dock – it was hard, it was dirty, it was bad and you went in the coffee shops there and in the winter time they 'ad a big fire in there and that was dirty. Your boots was dirty and, you see, when you left, the rats went back in again, you see? but the conditions then you just took 'em for granted.[353]

As Neal and Scott suggest, there was very much a sense that conditions were tough, but for dockers it was a life that they all shared. Indeed, Mike Galloway's recollection of one coffee shop-based anecdote suggests that poor conditions were, in fact, often a source of amusement:

> I was with my mate and we went in [to the coffee shop] Anyway we was queuing up and Hilly - Hills - who owned the place and my mate said "Look! There's a bloody rat there!" and I looked and there was a rat on back of the…

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[352] Peter M. Neal, Interview, 23 April, 2013.

[353] Len Scott, Interview, 4 July 2013.

> on one of the tops and 'e said "look at that!" and he said "Oh that's Pinky and Perky" [laughs]. So I said "Oh well, I aren't buying ought in here, I'll just 'ave a cup o' tea".[354]

Although others recalled the clearly appalling conditions in these places, they also emphasised the bustle and congregational aspect of the coffee shops. Trevor Green, for instance, warmly remembered how they hosted interaction and conversations, often regarding traditional working class leisure pursuits:

> Like anywhere else a lot kept racing pigeons and we'd all gather together in the coffee shops and all 'avin' a chat about the best bird [Laughs] and then there was the gardeners you see and I started being interested in gardening through talking to people. On the docks I 'adn't a clue about gardening at the time. Talking to people and got interested and that's one of the things I do now and I've won competitions with me gardening in the past.[355]

Speaking extensively about these places, those who I interviewed described a variety of establishments, but explained that certain coffee shops were more notorious than others. Dennis, Barry and Clive, for example, spent a much time talking about the activities that took place at the Klondyke cafe, a structure that had reputedly been established in 1913 by an immigrant couple of German or Dutch origin (see Figure 15):[356]

> **Dennis:** If they were dinting they'd all stay in there [Klondyke café] and if they 'ad a long way to go 'ome they used to 'ang about there playin' cards and that. That's why they called it Klondyke! With all the fuckin' gamblin' goin' on [Laughs].
> **Barry:** [It was] just as you come off King George Dock at the side entrance.
> **Dennis:** Yeah, as you were goin' off the alley way wan' it.
> **Clive:** It was just at the back of 1 and 2 shed wan' it.
> **Barry:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. [A] lot o' people went in Klondyke if there was nowhere [else to go]… they could get their meals in there, stay for dinner and this and that. But they used to play cards and gamble and that's where the 'old Klondyke' came from. It was like the old Western films or somethin' wan' it.

Dennis, Barry and Clive clearly recall the Klondyke as a popular and notorious place and, like many others, were also keen to discuss their memories of another of their haunts: 'Black Hut':

> **Barry:** Black 'ut! Black 'ut!
> **Clive:** Black 'ut!
> **Barry:** Who was it? Mrs P?
> **Dennis:** Mrs B!
> **Barry:** Mrs B!

[354] Mike Galloway, Interview, 13 May 2014.

[355] Trevor Green, Interview, 20 May 2013.

[356] 'Dock Life' *Hull Daily Mail,* August 1996, p. 11.

Dennis: Well the bloke who was workin' there was shaggin' her want 'e?! Well 'e was knockin' her off anyhow...
Barry: Eh! You'll be up at court by the time... [Laughs]
Dennis:... and 'e was running it for 'er. Now, we used to see the [ships'] mates in there – "'ave you got owt to flog?" - A bottle of rum or a carton of fags. We used to pay a pound for a carton of fags and if you took 'em round to 'im 'e used to give you 30 bob for 'em cos 'e used to flog 'em behind in the coffee shop full price like.
Barry: I'm not kiddin' you when the docks were full of shipping – mugger time 9'oclock or whatever time it was – that queue at Black 'ut was right down - it was always full but the tables were covered in bird shit - there was birds flyin' all over the place!
Clive: They was shittin' on yer while you was eatin'.
Dennis: Remember when they caught that fuckin' rat goin' across the beam!?

Vividly recalling black hut as a popular hive of often deviant activity, Dennis, Barry and Clive also associated this place with humour and unusual characters:

Clive: There used to be a big, fat woman who used to work in there and she used to ger a bacon sandwich and she'd come out….
Barry: She 'ad an hair net on, sweatin' and drippin' on it.
Clive: And you'd say "will you dip it please?" and they said [that] she just got a slice o' bread and went like that [wipes hand across forehead].
Barry: Sweatin' like 'ell want she!?
Clive: Sweatin' like 'ell – big, fat woman she was!
Dennis: Are you talkin' about Harry Ragg's bird? Harry Ragg's bird?
Barry: No, no, no…. Christ!
Dennis: What they call her? The gypsy? Who was that then? What they used to call her? The gypsy?..... and Harry Ragg 'e was a docker like. They used to call him Harry cos 'e was built like a fuckin' horse – he 'ad a prick I don't know how long….. ooohh 'ey….[points at dictaphone] delete that!
Clive: 'e used it a lot.
Dennis: And 'e was the only one what could satisfy her.
Clive: They called her 'the squaw', I'll tell you what they called her – 'the squaw'! 'e was on Longhill [estate]. He died dint 'e? Weight-lifter want 'e? [357]

Similar to Dennis, Barry and Clive, Mick Beccroft, also a docker, too recalled other members of this seemingly atypical, extended community at the dockside coffee shops:

Coffee shops was quite interesting places. There was welcome coffee, that was off the dock, and there was this little chap, about as big as me with a bowler and 'is brief case and he'd open 'is café up and "good morning sir!" and then there was Doug and Rob's Café – they was gay, anyhow, 'e was a friend of mine was Doug, really. They 'ad this other one that was… it's hard to place it cos they've knocked the bloody roads down ant they! Yeah, there was dozens of coffee shops and then there was Stanton's at the other end of Albert Dock and they used to make flat hot cakes [Laughs] and I mean flat![358]

[357] Dennis Mayhew, Barry Cheney and Clive Shields interview, 2 April 2013.

[358] Mick Beecroft, Interview, 3 April 2013.

These interactions highlight the popularity, humour and communal aspects of the coffee shops. It also indicates that, to a certain extent, places such as the Klondyke, Black Hut and, Doug and Rob's cafe tended to fall outside traditional social norms and the sexism and perhaps misogyny, remembered by my respondents, endured over the years to my interviews. Such places were located behind sheds, down alleyways or on the periphery of the dock estate, and appeared to be physically remote or detached from the jurisdiction of the city. They also seemingly operated outside the structures of law, hygiene regulations and, perhaps, the widely accepted contemporary standards of morality. Furthermore, the recollections of other dock-based groups indicated that there was also a territorial or no-go aspect to places such as the Klondyke and Black Hut. For example, docks Nurse Beryl Whipp told me:

> **Beryl**: They had an awful place on Hedon Road, it was just like a great big hut and it was filthy but they used to go in there.
> **AO**: Was it the Klondyke café? That seems to be one of their haunts?
> **Beryl**: Yes, it was [Laughs]
> **AO**: And the Black Hut as well? – do you remember that?
> **Beryl**: Oh yes…we didn't have anything to do with that.
> **AO**: You didn't kind of mix [in there with the dockers] then?
> **Beryl**: No, cos it belonged to somebody else it didn't belong to the dock place, it's just that they went there. It's a wonder we were never called out if somebody fainted or something but we never went there.[359]

Although Whipp was vaguely aware of places like the Klondyke and Black Hut she had never visited them and clearly recalled such places with some trepidation. Indeed, the very nickname 'the Klondyke' is indicative of a kind of outlaw culture. As Barry Cheney suggests, the name was derived from the popular Western films of the era perhaps such as Charlie Chaplin's *The Gold Rush* (1925) and *The Far Country* (1954) starring James Stewart. Such films regularly depicted the Klondyke region of the Yukon in North-Western Canada and the gold rush that attracted some 100,000 prospectors and chancers between 1896 and 1899 looking to earn a quick fortune. In the ad hoc settlement that formed however, due to its remote location and operation beyond US law, inhabitants and visitors saw themselves as free from traditional codes of law and morality. Whilst the casual system on the docks ensured that both the employers of dock labour and the port authority had little responsibility to provide official amenities the dockers were, to a large extent, free from the constraints of traditional codes of conduct at work.

[359] Beryl Whipp, Interview, 15 April 2013.

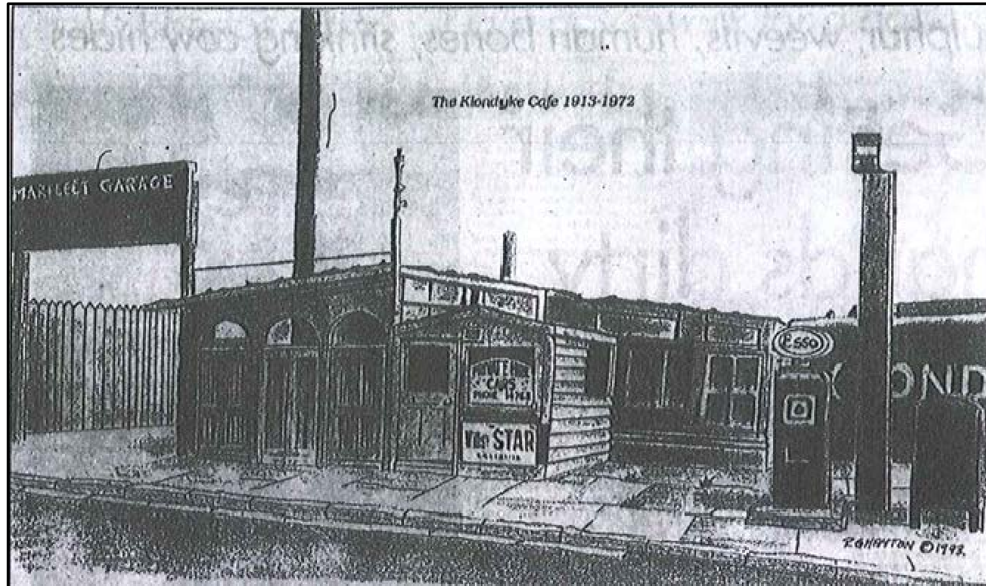

Figure 15: Sketch of the Klondyke Café taken from Hull Daily Mail Supplement 'Dock Life' August, 1996.

Figure 16: Sketch of the Klondyke Café taken from Hull Daily Mail Supplement 'Dock Life' August, 1996.

In contrast to the traditional working arrangements experienced by the manual workers of most other industries, the casual-manual organisation of dock work ensured that dockers enjoyed a rare level of control and freedom within the workplace. The coffee shops where they gathered reflected the distinctive and anachronistic culture of the waterfront: uncomplicated, masculine and free of control.

3.4.4 Residential Segregation

Although a study of the Manchester dock workers revealed elements of residential segregation close to the dock gates during the mid-1950s, Sam Davies' research into the Hull Dockers argued that this feature, which had historically been limited due to the physical extent of the port's dock system, was no longer apparent on the Hull waterfront after 1945.[360] Similarly, Stephen Hill's study of the Dockers of London, a port that also possessed an extensive operational waterfront, also revealed that their highest dockside residential concentration in 1961 was just 11.7 per cent in Bermondsey.[361] Davies contended that, whilst the heavy wartime-bombing of Hull's dockside neighbourhoods and the creation of new housing estates prompted the departure of docking families away from the waterfront, the process of dispersal had actually begun as early as the

[360] Davies 'The History of the Hull Dockers, c. 1870-1960', pp. 190-193; Simey, *The Dock Worker*, p. 43.

[361] Hill, *The Dockers*, pp. 168-171.

1920s with the sustained slum clearance on the dockside and the erection of new council-housing around the city.[362]

Davies erroneously stated that these new estates were at Southcoates, Marfleet, Pickering and Bransholme when, in fact, new inter-war housing estates were created at Preston Road to the east of the city, North Hull Estate to the north and around the thoroughfares of Hessle Road, Anlaby Road and Spring Bank to the west (see Figure 16).[363] Indeed, a number of my docker interviewees argued that, aside from those with Catholic allegiances, it was in these areas that the majority of docker families resided into the 1960s, their parents having moved from the older dockside neighbourhoods during the inter-war years. Ray Simms, for example, vividly recalled this process:

> **I** was born in North 'ull [Estate] in 1936 and I've always lived up this area and I've never moved far like…there was four [Docker] families anyhow besides me and me cousins and then there was Arnolds and…. I forget what they call the other family now… anyhow there was four who worked on the dock…. there was a lot from North 'ull who worked on the docks and what it was you see… and I'm talking older than me blokes, who'll be into their 80s and 90s now and who are not 'ere of course, they'd 'ave lived in the old part of town. What they did… and I'm talking about their fathers not the sons they'll 'ave moved onto North 'ull when the old 'ouses in town… when North 'ull was built as far as I know that's where my mother and father came from – the old part of the town to North 'ull.[364]

Significantly, Barry Freeman offered almost identical testimony to Simms':

> **Barry**: Before the War in 1935 like they all moved up North 'ull when they built North 'ull estate
> **AO**: Were there a lot of Dockers on North Hull then?
> **Barry**: Yes there were they moved up there and there was a few Fisherman who come from Hessle Road… cos they pulled a load of 'ouses down were me mother lived
> **AO**: Near the Old Town?
> **Barry**: Yeah near North Bridge cos a lot of the 'ouses was condemned – 1930s and consequently Mr Keogh – back way 'e was a Docker, Mr Allen 'e was a Docker there was lots of Dockers on North Hull
> **AO**: That's quite a fair distance from the docks though?
> **Barry**: you had to get two buses unless you was on Albert dock and you got one bus like me elder brother and then you had a couple of miles to walk then from town but we'd get the ten to seven bus here on North Hull and

[362] Davies 'The History of the Hull Dockers, c. 1870-1960', pp. 190-193.

[363] Edwin Lutyens and Patrick Abercrombie, *Development Plan for the City and County of Kingston-upon-Hull* (Hull: A Brown & Sons, 1945).

[364] Ray Simms Interview 24 June 2013.

> then we'd get a 47 there was a dozen buses lined up cos everybody went on buses or bikes.[365]

Simms' and Freeman's accounts clearly support Davies' assertion regarding the interwar shift of docking families from the waterfront to the new housing estates. They also suggest that neighbourhoods were largely transplanted rather than dispersed. Furthermore, both men claim that, although they and many others lived a distance from the docks that required transport to work, they remembered that they continued to reside alongside other docking families.

Figure 17: Plan of Hull from 1945 showing the extent of suburban development (in red) during the Interwar period. Image taken from Edwin Lutyens and Patrick Abercrombie's Development Plan for the City and County of Kingston-upon-Hull (1945).

There is other evidence to suggest that, despite not living in residential segregation close to the dock gates, there was a significant level of social cohesion amongst the Hull Dockers outside of work. Stephen Hill argued that a working community of occupational members need not form a physical neighbourhood but a definition might be that people sought out the company of other work associates more often than not.[366] In such instances, he added, it is indicated that 'occupational membership is held to be so significant for the individual that he allows his work to spill over into his leisure: work is thus a central life interest that dictates life

[365] Barry Freeman, Interview, 2 April 2014.

[366] Hill, *The Dockers*, p. 163.

outside of work'.[367] Although, Hill's study found that, for the London Dockers, work-based associations outside of the dock gates were 'relatively unimportant', a large number of my docker interviewees suggested that many routinely congregated in the communities' pubs and working men's clubs. Many concurred that specific public houses such as The Sportsman and the Victoria Hotel were 'Dockers' pubs'. However, the National Dock Labour Board's Willows Sport and Social Club (mentioned in 3.3.8) and the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers Union Club (mentioned in section 3.3.9), were of the greatest communal significance. Former Docker and Union official Brian Barker, for example, described the importance of the Willows to the Dockers:

> **Brian***:* That was a real central place at that particular time yeah… it was a really well run club - run by a committee of Dockers. They employed a steward who ran it and the actual building and the bar staff and all the rest of it and they 'ad all different sections…. so you-know it was a hive of activity.
> **AO***:* So it sounded like outside of work there was a whole social life?
> **Brian***:* Oh yeah. A community. Yeah there was a community outside of that…

Later in the interview Brian outlined the array of sports on offer at the Willows using some old Dock Labour Board documents:

> You see [we had] all the different things [at the club] […] "Bowls, Cricket, Darts, Football, First Aid, Golf, Horticulture, Judo, Pool, Life Saving and Swimming, Rugby" there was all those sections so you-know it was a hive of activity. *[368]*

Mike Galloway too remembered the significance of the Willows as well as the Blue Union Club:

> **Mike**: It was a good social place to meet a lot of your mates, families as well - wives used to go in as well …. Blue union club yeah in town Posterngate…yeah I went in there a little bit…
> **AO**: So you went in there even though you was in the other union?
> **Mike**: Oh yeah…
> **AO**: So it wasn't like off limits or anything?
> **Mike**: Oh no, no a lot of the lads used to go in there like.[369]

Like Barker and Galloway, countless other dockers reiterated the importance of the Willows and Blue Union Clubs as central meeting places for the dockers outside of work. Virtually all claimed that they took part in the sports and pastimes that Barker highlighted, with rugby, rowing, first aid and fishing being by far the most popular. Furthermore, as Galloway alluded, the family-oriented nature of these places encouraged the inclusion of docking families within the dockers'

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[367] *Ibid.*

[368] Brian Barker, Interview, 1 May 2013.

[369] Mike Galloway, Interview, 13 May 2013.

community. In a separate interview, Galloway's wife Judy reiterated the importance of the Willows and Blue Union Club in her social life:

> On one of our first dates 'e took me to – 'e was taking me to the Willows Club - not the Willows Club – the Posterngate Club… […] it was a regular Saturday night and sometimes we used to go to different pubs around the town and then go to the Club, go to the Willows Club we used to go there as well, two nights a Wednesday or a Saturday night it was the Club. So we used to go there quite regularly and we used to go there a big group of friends from there… with 'im being in the rowing club. Well 'e was in quite a few of the different clubs and things. And there was a big social side of it there as well because they used to have their little nights when they did sort of things and "they're having a do tonight" shall we go and that you-know…

Judy recollected being involved in the sports and leisure activities at the club:

> [There was] always something going and the clubs were a really big part of it cos all the social groups all - that was their headquarters virtually – even if you want involved with the chrysanthemum growers you knew all about them cos they'd all be in there talking about the plants and if you didn't know anything about rowing you'd still know something about it because cos you'd be in there with the kids that was doing the rowing and that you-know… we had our engagement in there – our engagement party in the Willows."[370]

Shirley Cooke also recalled how the Willows had been central to her social life from childhood:

> **Shirley:** I met a lot of dockworkers families cos my dad…at the Club obviously…. when it first opened it was just a house at the front… that building at the back wasn't there then it was just a house at the front. As I say Dad he started all that off and he used to sign all the big…who are big stars now like David Whitfield and Norman Collier - lots of people… yeah it's a nice little concert room that, it wasn't as big as the one they've got now but it was nice but I wasn't… at that time kids couldn't go into the concert hall but I used to listen to David Whitfield cos they left the window open and I was outside we were allowed to go upstairs in the snooker room and things like that…..Yeah that's where I met [Husband] George… In the archery club! [Laughs]…. me dad…me and me brother would go as kids and go in the archery club George had the rowing and the rugby…. the Willows it is….was great for the sports because of the social life of the Dockers.
> **Alex**: So a lot of the people your family socialised with were Dockers?
> **Shirley**: Yes they were.[371]

Like her mother, Shirley's daughter June also remembered regularly visiting the dockers' club as a child**:**

> I remember going to…Willows being quite a big part of our life we used to go there as kids a lot…. I can remember dad was often in the bar and you [Shirley]

[370] Judy Galloway, Interview, 30 May 2013.

[371] Shirley and June Cooke, Interview, 7 May 2013.

> were in the bar doing whatever inside and we'd be round the back pond fishing or playing… there was a big lake at the back we used to go tiddling tiddly fishing with a pin a matchstick and a worm and come back with a jar full of tiddlers… or… I can remember going up into the sports room.[372]

As a place of community, recreation and socialising the Willows and the Blue Union Club were of central importance dockers, but also to their families. Shirley and Judy recall how important life events such as courtship and engagement took place at the clubs in the company of other dock workers. In addition, June vividly recalled the Willows as a being a significant part family life during her childhood.

The residential segregation of dock workers during the post-1945 period was apparent in some ports including Manchester, however, at ports, such as Hull and London it was less marked. Although after 1945 more of Hull's docking families lived away from the waterfront and across the city, their recollections suggest that there remained relatively strong levels of residential and social congregation. A number of interviewees stated that whilst they shared neighbourhoods with many other workers in places like North Hull Estate the Dockers sought out the company of their co-workers, particularly at the two dockers' clubs where they spent much of their leisure time drinking, socialising or playing sports. The clubs were often central to the lives of the dockers' wives and children who also socialised alongside the men and engaged with the families of other dock workers. While the Hull dockers certainly formed a tight-knit community on the docks, this evidence suggests that the cohesion of this occupational community also transcended the dock wall.

3.4.5 Conclusion

My Docker interviewees had certainly been aware of some of the shifts that were taking place in the industry between 1945 and 1964. However, for them, the sense of tradition and unity, which appears to have altered little since the nineteenth century, was of far greater importance. Unlike more conventional industries, the location and largely unaltered organisation of dock work fostered the preservation and even enhancement of a distinctive waterfront culture and community in a time of great social and cultural change. By organising the official registration of dock workers, the National Dock Labour Scheme ensured that dock work was not only a clearly defined occupation but that it also remained a closed shop, particularly as the acquisition of a Docker's book continued to be restricted to immediate relatives. In turn this maintained another distinctive trait within the workforce - kinship. Likely derived from the clannish origins of the

[372] Shirley and June Cooke, Interview, 7 May 2013.

labour force, the binding of the workforce by blood ensured an unparalleled sense of loyalty and suspicion of outsiders. The Irish-Catholic roots of the workforce also played a prominent role during these years. It highlighted the dockers' strong sense of identity, heritage and historical memory and distinguished them on an ethno-religious basis from other waterfront groups. Causal employment (itself uncommon in British industry after 1945) placed a uniquely minimal obligation upon the employers of dock labour but it also liberated the Hull dockers from the rules and conventions common in other industries. Given this, the dockers appeared to have preserved their own subcultural values and identity which was rooted in proletarian masculinity. In some ways, casual employment not only distinguished the workforce, but also distinguished the waterfront as a place, particularly in the presence of the notorious dockside coffee shops. My interviewees claimed to have enjoyed the unusual freedom of movement afforded by their work that allowed them to move between gangs, berths and docks, however, they also valued the congregational function of the coffee shops where their community and culture could be performed. This phenomenon was strongly linked to the casual system of work but may also be attributed to other unique features including the location and organisation of dock work and the ethnic roots of the labour force.

3.5 **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have established that there was a lack of industrial spirit and progress at Hull between 1945 and 1964. In the wake of the Second World War the country's ports were faced with great challenges, yet the task at Hull was arguably greater than most. During the late 1940s the port's authority were faced with aged and severely bomb damaged facilities and a change of ownership. Most other ports were other ports were not burdened by these handicaps during these years and therefore were in a far better position to resume peacetime operations and increase their shares of trade and traffic.

Through the 1950s and early 1960s progress at Hull continued to lag behind that of the other major ports. This, I argued, was primarily the result of the port's outdated institutional fragmentation that led to the slow-paced, limited and misdirected nature of capital investment in new facilities and equipment. In addition, I demonstrated that, the efficiency of Hull's operations were also blighted by labour unrest: despite the implementation of innovative labour reform under Atlee's Labour government that aimed to increase productivity by improving their the regulation. Although the National Dock Labour Scheme curbed some of the worst excesses of the port's long-established casual system by introducing fall-back pay and some elements of training for dock workers, it failed to successfully eradicate the system itself. Consequently, deep-rooted grievances between dock workers and their employers, and sometimes amongst the dockers themselves were preserved and even exacerbated following the implementation of the scheme. For some, the grievances primarily included the way that work was allocated under the piece rate system, the archaic and dangerous methods of working, and the conditions on the docks. Others resented the intention of the National Dock Labour Scheme to reduce and remove the casual system - which many found lucrative. A general aversion to the externally imposed scheme was also generated amongst much of the labour force due to its control by union officials, a group which had long been distrusted due to their seemingly pro-employer attitudes. Although there is evidence to suggest that the port's employers made a concerted effort to increase numbers of permanent employees under the scheme, the dissatisfaction of many who employed dock labour also survived and was, in some cases, heightened at this time. This largely related to disciplinary mechanisms under the scheme, whose inadequacies resulted in the continued and widespread use of wasteful practices. In this part I also identified how, despite the frustrations of many in the port regarding the lack of progress during these years, their existed a prevailing sense of contentment, particularly among waterfront workers who appeared to unaware or unconcerned with the port's problems. In contrast to the dark days of

inter-war depression and wartime hardship many recalled this era as a golden age of tradition, growing trade and full employment: the Jerusalem that Atlee's government had envisaged in 1945.

4 Reform, Rationalisation and Decline, 1965-1989

4.1 **Introduction**

Throughout the second half of the 1960s the level of seaborne trade continued to increase in line with the continued growth of the International economy. Consequently, volumes of shipping traffic expanded and the business available to ports remained healthy. The 'white heat' policy of Harold Wilson's Labour government (which promised, amongst other things, industrial modernisation and a commitment to scientific change) encouraged the implementation of a widespread overhaul of the British port industry and its labour. [373] This was imperative considering the industry's dire need of reform and the onset of the cargo handling revolution. Indeed, Wilson's famous speech in October 1963 in which he stated that 'The Britain that is going to be forged in the white heat of this revolution will be no place for restrictive practices or for outdated methods on either side of the industry', was perhaps more relevant to the country's ports than any other industry.[374] On the back of this programme of modernisation, the organisation, operations and labour of the British port industry were transformed. By 1970, the country's port provision was, in general, far better equipped to operate effectively in what was a much altered trading environment.

Over the 1970s and 1980s the pattern of progress and prosperity changed significantly. In 1973 and 1979 there were major oil shocks which led to a dramatic increase in the price of oil: a development that caused major problems in industrialised economies.[375] For Britain, one of the principal problems was industrial unrest. Amidst inflation during the early 1970s, there had been an increasing fear amongst the country's skilled and semi-skilled industrial working classes that their relative status was being seriously devalued.[376] These fears had already heightened trade union militancy and the effects of the first oil crisis led to widespread strikes throughout the decade that culminated in the long drawn out 'winter of discontent' of 1978-79.[377] The decade that followed witnessed a marked political change in response to Britain's continued economic problems. Described by one politician as 'a rescue operation', Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government set about reversing many of the 'socialist' elements

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[373] Dominic Sandbrook, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties* (London: Little Brown, 2006), p. 4.

[374] *Ibid.*

[375] Fiona Venn, *The Oil Crisis* (London: Pearson, 2002), pp. 7-32.

[376] Kathleen Burk, *The British Isles since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 109.

[377] *Ibid.*

implemented by previous Labour governments in a bid to rescue the British economy.[378] By the late 1980s much of the country's industry had been privatised and trade union power had been seriously curbed.

During this period the Port of Hull was characterised by the contradictory forces of modernisation and decline. Similar to many other UK ports, Hull had undergone an intensive process of reform and re-organisation during the late 1960s. Although this resolved a number of organisational and operational issues, the 1970s and 1980s witnessed rapid decline at Hull. In 1967 the Net Register Tonnage of vessels entering and leaving the port was 14,024,000 however, this figure had reduced to 11,642,000 by 1981 (see Appendix VII). Hull's docklands also suffered a huge contraction. Following its adaptation to new transport and cargo-handling technologies and the collapse in shipping, the port was left with just two operational docks Hull's traffic by the mid-1980s. Furthermore, the size of the port's labour force, along with those in associated transport industries, was also greatly reduced.[379] This part explores in detail the process and implications of reform, rationalisation and decline at the port during this period. I suggest that although developments at the port can certainly be linked to the economic shifts and geographical disadvantages outlined in Part 2 of the thesis, they may also be attributed directly to the effects of government policy.

[378] David Dutton, *British Politics since 1945*, Second Edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), pp. 110-111.

[379] Phillip Jones and John North, 'Ports and Wharves' in David Symes (Ed.), *Humberside in the Eighties: A Spatial View of the Economy* (Hull, Department of Geography, University of Hull, 1987), p. 104.

4.2 **The National Ports Council, 1965 to 1979.**

In contrast to the conservatism of the 1945 to 1964 period, the British port industry experienced intensive reform and re-organisation between 1965 and 1979. Keenly aware of the technological advances in transport (and the industry's general failure to adapt to such developments) the Rochdale Committee submitted a number of recommendations that aimed to modernise the port industry and adapt it to the changing economic needs of the United Kingdom. As the country's port provision still constituted a highly fragmented, un-coordinated and diverse range of institutions during the mid-1960s, Rochdale had recommended that a non-operational national body be created to plan and co-ordinate port development.[380] As a result, the National Ports Council (NPC) was established and given statutory authority by the Labour Government's Harbours Act of 1964.[381] Within the NPC's mandate were the tasks of producing 'a national ports plan', improving statistics, research, training and accounting procedures within the industry, and promoting the reorganisation of port trusts and the estuarial merging of port authorities.[382] The latter task involved the administrative grouping of ports that were located in close geographical proximity. Although its authority to produce a national ports plan was removed by the newly elected Conservative Government in 1970, the NPC (retained in an advisory role) had already implemented much of its interim plan for port development.[383] Its job deemed complete, the NPC made its final report in 1980, by which time the British port industry had been transformed.

It has been argued that during its existence the NPC's work was fraught with many difficulties. For example, its relationship with the British Transport Docks Board (BTDB) was often strained and the absence of jurisdiction over the re-organisation of dock labour in line with general port development also proved problematic.[384] Nevertheless, it has been claimed that by 1979 the NPC had generally completed its task of guiding a volatile and conservative industry through a period of immense change.[385] Indeed, within a decade of its creation it had successfully reduced the number of port authorities via estuarial grouping, overhauled the

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[380] *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Major Ports of Great Britain*, Cmnd 1824 (London: HMSO, 1962), pp. 59-53.

[381] BL, National Ports Council, *Annual Report and Statement of Accounts* (1964), p. 2.

[382] Richard Goss, 'British Ports Policies since 1945', *Journal of Transport Economics and Policy*, 32, 1, 1997, p. 59.

[383] *Ibid.*

[384] *Ibid.*

[385] BJL, National Ports Council, *Annual Report and Statement of Accounts* (1979), p. 1.

individual management structures at a number of ports and adjudicated 170 development schemes with a total estimated cost of £125 million.[386] Some argued that the NPC's tenure was successful, and it has also been asserted that its modernising work during these years had a profound impact upon the social and physical landscapes of Britain's ports.[387] Although these widespread developments within the port industry have been studied at a national level, the impact of reform upon the organisation, operation, landscape and labour of individual ports has not been explored. Such a perspective is provided in this chapter where I assert that, despite their difficult relationship, the BTDB's and NPC's individual and collaborative efforts of transformed the Port of Hull into a transport node that was better organised and equipped to deal with the country's contemporary economic needs. I further contend that this process was accompanied by the attendant collapse of Hull's old port system, a development that had a profound impact upon the port's landscape, associated industries and the memories of those labourers involved in port transport.

4.2.1 Institutional Consolidation

Although the other Humber estuary ports of Immingham, Grimsby and Goole had, like Hull, been nationalised by the Transport Act of 1947, there existed minimal cohesion between their authorities under the BTC. The Rochdale Committee had recognised that here, and elsewhere, there was potential for estuarial amalgamation that could curb unnecessary competition for the same traffics and capital wastage by the duplication of facilities on the Humber estuary.[388] In many ways, the Humber was an ideal site for the co-ordination of port operations and administration. For instance, each port was suited to the different emerging categories of shipping traffic: Grimsby and Hull were handily placed to serve vessels in the short-sea unit load sector, Goole's inland position made it suitable for coastal and sea-going barge traffic, while Immingham's location on the estuary's deep-water channel was ideal for the largest classes of bulk-carrying ship. Furthermore, the estuary possessed a single pilotage and conservancy authority. Recognising the potential for growth on the Humber, Rochdale had recognised that

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[386] Alan G. Jamieson, '"Not More Ports, But Better Ports:" The Development of British Ports since 1945', *The Northern Mariner*, 6, No. 1, (1996), pp. 31-33; Alan G. Jamieson, *Ebb Tide in the British Maritime Industries: Change and Adaptation, 1918-1990* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2003), pp. 113-121.

[387] Gordon Jackson, *The History and Archaeology of Ports* (Tadworth Surrey: World's Work, 1983), pp. 158-167; Starkey and Jamieson 'Change on a Scale Unequalled', p. 146.

[388] *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Major Ports of Great Britain, Cmnd 1824* (London: HMSO, 1962), pp. 43-46.

the BTDB should become the estuarial authority and acquire control of the estuary's maintenance and management.[389] Following proposals by the NPC this was achieved within a relatively short space of time. Following the Humber Harbour Reorganisation Scheme 1966 Confirmation Order, the Humber Conservancy Board was dissolved on 1 July 1968 and its property, powers and duties were transferred to the BTDB, which then became the conservancy authority for the Humber estuary and part of the River Trent.[390] Furthermore, the same order also amended the Humber Pilotage Order 1922 and made the BTDB the pilotage authority.[391] Similar to its counterparts at London, Liverpool and Bristol, the BTDB had complete control over important decisions relating to dredging, surveying, maintenance and the regulation of traffic.[392] This was the first time a single port authority had complete control over the estuary, a feature that ensured that the needs of current and future shipping customers could be met more directly and efficiently. While the Port of Hull had thus far operated as an individual entity that had competed intensely with its neighbours for traffic, the external guidance of the NPC ensured that it was integrated successfully into a co-ordinated estuarial port complex.

The BTDB also made positive moves with regards to the Port of Hull's internal re-organisation during these years. As established in section 3.2.1, the port's institutional organisation remained particularly fragmented and localised into the early 1960s. As this configuration had impaired the port's ability to respond to the demands of established and potential shipping customers, Rochdale had recommended that steps be taken to consolidate operational organisation at Hull and several other ports.[393] Although Hull's management structure was not overhauled like it was at the trust ports, the BTDB and NPC did take vital steps to consolidate and centralise the port's wider functions. The BTDB further strengthened its operational control by extending its interests in cargo handling, a move intended to achieve greater efficiency of operation and improve labour relations. As established in chapter 3.3, dock labour was largely hired on a casual basis by a wide variety of employers. However, based upon the recommendations of the Devlin Inquiry, the country's dock labour force was decasualised

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[389] BL, National Ports Council, *Annual Report and Statement of Accounts* (1964), p. 13.

[390] National Ports Council, *Annual Reports and Accounts* (1968), p. 5; British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts* (1968), p. 19.

[391] British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts* (1968), p. 22.

[392] *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Major Ports of Great Britain*, Cmnd 1824 (London: HMSO, 1962), p. 35

[393] *Ibid.*

on 28 September 1967 and the number of employers was significantly reduced.[394] On the eve of decasualisation there had been 73 employers at Hull, a figure that had been reduced to just 23 by January 1971.[395] In the wake of this reform, the BTDB purchased several cargo handling firms from this reduced number, including J. H. Dickinson and Son (Stevedores) Ltd., P. E. Holland Ltd., the Humber Stevedoring Co. Ltd. and Hull and East Coast Stevedoring Co. Ltd.[396] During March of the following year, the Board amalgamated these concerns and created the wholly owned subsidiary Hull and Humber Cargo Handling Services.[397] Although the maintenance of the National Dock Labour Scheme hampered Hull and Humber's control over dock labour at Hull (the nature and wider implications of which will be discussed in Chapter 4.4), the purchase of these firms made the port authority the largest employer of dock labour in Hull and paved the way for the establishment of a more modern, orthodox employment arrangement.

This evidence shows that as early as 1970 the BTDB had largely overcome the fragmented organisation that had hindered its development since 1945. Consequently, it was in a far better position to respond to the large-scale shifts that were gaining pace within the economy and in the sphere of transport technology.

4.2.2 The Development of New Facilities

Although the NPC was never permitted to develop a fully-fledged national ports plan its Interim Plan published in 1965, provided a reasonably detailed insight into the situation at individual ports and their potential for improvement (despite possessing some substantial shortcomings).[398] Indeed, it was the NPC's plan that largely formed the basis for the BTDB's facilities development and adaptation in line with shifting patterns of trade and technological advancements in transport. In terms of the existing facilities at Hull, the NPC had found 'a mixed picture'. King George Dock's size, location and depth were deemed good, while Alexandra Dock was deemed to possess potential for serving the growing short sea trades despite its limited depth and the constriction of surrounding space by timber storage.[399] Elsewhere across the dock

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[394] David F. Wilson, *Dockers: The Impact of Industrial Change* (Bungay, Suffolk: Fontana Press, 1972), pp. 291-292.

[395] *Ibid.*

[396] BJL, British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts* (1968), p. 23.

[397] *Ibid.*

[398] Goss, 'British Ports Policies since 1945', p. 61.

[399] National Ports Council, *Port Development: An Interim Plan* (1965), pp. 101-102.

estate, the prospects of other facilities were less promising: the Town Docks (Humber, Princes and Railway Docks) do not appear to even have been considered as part of the NPC's assessment, the limited depth and cramped position of Victoria Dock were unfavourable, and the lack of adjacent land at Albert Dock also limited development opportunities.[400] With King George Dock and Alexandra Dock the only facilities possessing any real growth potential, it is abundantly clear from the NPC's assessment that a large percentage of Hull's smaller, older, upstream facilities were deemed nearly or actually obsolete. It was established in Section 2.3 that some at Hull had been cautious about the port's ability to cope with increasingly large shipping from the middle of the 1950s, however, it was not until central government intervention under the auspices of the NPC that the port was compelled to adapt its aged facilities. In the years immediately following the *Interim Plan*, Hull's docks underwent an intensive process of both rationalisation and modernisation. As we shall see, this process, once completed, had a huge impact upon the port's operations, landscape and associated labour.

In parallel with the process of centralisation at Hull, the BTDB had also established a local Port User's Consultative Committee, a move that enabled the port authority to maintain frequent and amicable communications with its customers.[401] The success of this new body is evidenced by the port's successful rationalisation of facilities and deployment of capital investment in collaboration with the NPC. Although Hull's restricted water site did not permit the establishment of deep-water terminals with which to attract the increasingly large bulk-carriers, tankers and container vessels, the port was in a favourable geographical position to compete for other growing sectors of shipping. Similar to Felixstowe, Harwich and Tilbury on the east coast, and Dover and Southampton on the south coast, Hull was conveniently sited to handle the fast-growing volume of European short-sea, unit-load traffic.[402] This prospect was enhanced by the hinterland's gradually improving road infrastructure and substantial capital investment was made in response to this class of shipping. For example, in December 1965, a new roll-on/roll-off terminal was opened at King George Dock's No. 5 quay to cater for a passenger-cargo ferry services, and in May 1966 a second terminal opened for a similar service.[403] In addition, a new £6.75m dock was opened on 4 August 1969 as a south-east

[400] *Ibid.*

[401] BJL, British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts* (1967) p. 21.

[402] Jackson, *The History and Archaeology of Ports*, pp. 153-156.

[403] National Ports Council, *Ports Progress Report* (1969), p. 11; British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts* (1965) p. 21.

extension to King George Dock. Named Queen Elizabeth Dock, this new facility possessed a transporter crane capable of handling 40ft containers and was linked by roadways to the dock's recently constructed eastern roadway.[404] Alongside the construction of a new road entrance at Alexandra Dock, two new stern loading roll-on/roll-off berths were also created at No. 23 Jetty and a container berth with a resurfaced area for unit-load and container standage was established at A Jetty (see Figure 17).[405]

It must be noted, however, that the development of some of these new facilities was far from smooth. The BTDB, NPC and Ministry of Transport Minister often spent extended periods at bitter odds over the justification for the establishment of some of the port's larger projects. For instance, the construction of Queen Elizabeth Dock was only achieved following an ongoing battle regarding future traffic and revenue forecasts, the NPC having refused to grant application for the construction of the new dock until satisfactory figures were provided by the BTDB.[406] Nevertheless, progress was made. In 1965 Hull had been a large port predominantly organised and equipped to deal with large quantities of break-bulk cargoes carried by general cargo liners, the railways and river craft. By the early 1970s it had been reconfigured as a concentrated and compact node which specialised in the handling of unitised goods carried by road.

Figure 18: New entrance and roadway at Alexandra Dock (left) and the unit load service at 23 Jetty Alexandra Dock bound for Hamburg/Bremen, August 1967. These are just two examples of the intensive capital investment at Hull under the guidance of the NPC. (Photos courtesy of Associated British Ports)

[404] National Ports Council, *Ports Progress Report* (1969), p. 9; British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts* (1969), p. 21.

[405] National Ports Council, *Ports Progress Report* (1969), p. 11; British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts* (1969), p. 43.

[406] TNA, DK1-316, National Ports Council, Hull: proposed construction of King George Dock, south east arm, 1965-1966.

The success of this sustained period of investment at Hull is evidenced by the increase of new customers and services in the short-sea passenger and unit-load sector. Although this was not enough to replace the unavoidable loss of traditional bulk and general cargo traffic (which had largely transferred to the BTDB's new deep-water facilities nearby at Immingham) these developments did offset these losses to some extent.[407] The most notable gain at Hull was the acquisition of North Sea Ferries' (NSF): a newly created passenger and freight company established in 1965 that saw Hull as the natural gateway between northern England and northern Europe and its growing network of trunk roads.[408] Based on this premise, NSF introduced the newly constructed ro-ro passenger ferries *Norwave* and *Norwind* onto the King George Dock to Rotterdam service in 1965 and 1966 respectively.[409] Following initial success, several new vessels were introduced into freight-only ro-ro services between Hull and the continent alongside a new lift-on/lift-off (lo-lo) container service between the newly opened Queen Elizabeth Dock and Prinses Margriethaven at Rotterdam.[410] In addition to NSF's operations, the port expanded its container, ro-ro and lo-lo business with other shipping companies that introduced further continental services to Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Portugal, Spain, West Germany and Poland, along with more distant destinations such as the U.S.A., Canada, Nigeria, North Africa, Indonesia and the Arabian Gulf.[411] Although Hull had paid dearly for its restrictive geography with regards to the collapse of traditional bulk shipping services, its successful development of new facilities under the NPC enabled it to attract the custom of new and emerging sectors of shipping traffic (See Appendix VIII).

The growth of such traffic and a closer, more collaborative relationship with its customers also encouraged the BTDB to expand its passenger and unit-load facilities in line with the deployment of new generations of unit-carrying vessel over the 1970s. For example, in 1974, a £2.5m scheme was implemented at King George Dock to accommodate the second generation North Sea Ferries *Norland* and *Norstar,* which included four ro-ro berths, passenger terminals

[407] Phillip Jones and John North, 'Ports and Wharves' in David Symes (Ed.), *Humberside in the Eighties: A Spatial View of the Economy* (Hull, Department of Geography, University of Hull, 1987), p. 104.

[408] Barry Mitchell, *North Sea Ferries: Across Three Decades* (Ferry Publications, 1995), p. 3.

[409] *Ibid.*

[410] *Ibid.,* pp. 3-18.

[411] British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts*, 1972, p. 15; British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts*, 1974, p. 11; British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts*, 1975, p. 10; British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts*, 1976, p. 9.

alongside large freight marshalling yards and roadways (see Figure 18).[412] By 1979, the port possessed 10 ro-ro terminals.[413] That said, Hull did not fare as well as its competitors on the south and east coasts. Between 1972 and 1978, for example, Hull's share of UK ro-ro traffic declined from 8 to 2 per cent, while the 25 per cent increase in the volume of container traffic at the port over the same period was small in comparison with the 98 per cent growth at Felixstowe and 130 per cent at Southampton.[414] This comparatively poor performance was due to geographical and operational factors. Located at the northernmost range of daily unit services to the continent, Hull did not possess lock free-terminals like other unit-load ports and was forced to contend with particularly severe ongoing labour issues, the details of which will be discussed in Chapter 4.4.[415] Nevertheless, having been suitably equipped by the BTDB and the NPC to handle such traffic during the late 1960s, Hull continued to cement its position as a competitor in this new and fast growing sector throughout the 1970s.

Pleased with their achievements, the BTDB and the NPC regularly reported on the progress and success they both achieved in adapting Hull and other UK ports to the greatly altered trading environment.[416] Like many other authorities involved in the modernisation of other long-established industries across the country they were less inclined to detail the impact of the collapse of traditional operations.

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[412] British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts*, 1974, p. 11; Barry Mitchell, *North Sea Ferries: Across Three Decades* (Ferry Publications, 1995), pp. 15-16.

[413] British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts*, 1979, p. 9.

[414] Phillip Jones and John North, 'Ports and Wharves' in David Symes (Ed.), *Humberside in the Eighties: A Spatial View of the Economy* (Hull, Department of Geography, University of Hull, 1987), p. 104.

[415] *Ibid*., 106.

[416] BJL, British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts*, 1969, pp. 17-20; National Ports Council, BL, *Port Progress Report* (1969), pp. 1-3.

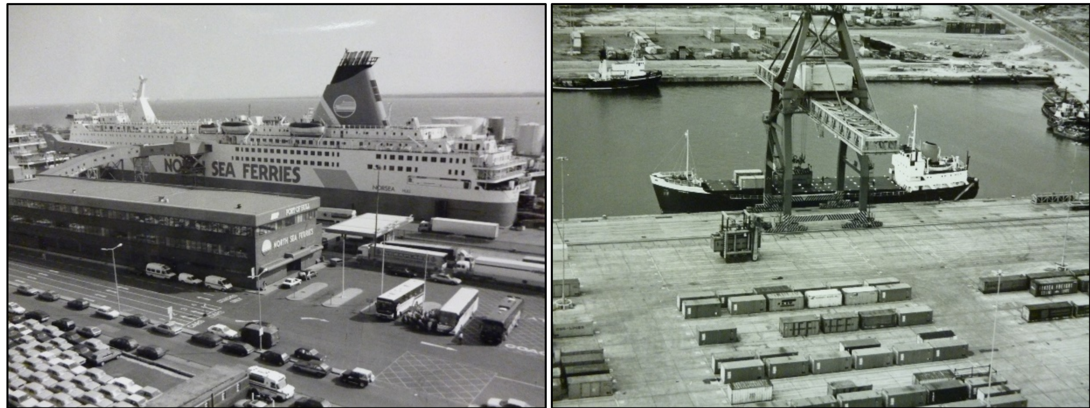

Figure 19: Aerial views of Ro-Ro terminal at King George Dock in 1974 (left) and Container Terminal at Queen Elizabeth Dock in 1972 (right). These are two examples of the most modern type facilities which were implemented at Hull during this period (Photos courtesy of Associated British Ports)

4.2.3 The Collapse and Decay of the Old Port System

Some academics have explored the geographical impact of modernisation upon the landscape of ports. As intermodal operations such as containerisation and ro-ro transport systems generally required deep-water facilities and open land access for container storage and road vehicles, geographer James Bird suggested that port activity had generally become concentrated at larger, deeper downstream terminals away from older facilities located close to the urban core of port cities.[417] Such a pattern was certainly apparent at Hull during this period. In parallel with the intensive capital expenditure and creation of new facilities at the larger downstream docks discussed above, the BTDB also rationalised the smaller, shallower more cramped upstream facilities at Hull that had been deemed outdated in the NPC's *Interim Plan*.[418] Even though this process involved the discarding of substantial areas of the port's historic dock estate, the BTDB's execution was both quick and clinical. By 1968, all of the port's coaling appliances had been dismantled and the Town Docks (including Humber Dock, Princes Dock and Railway Dock) were closed down and later sold to Hull Corporation in 1974.[419] Having had its River Hull entrance closed in 1964, Victoria Dock was also deemed redundant and closed to traffic in 1970.[420] Such large-scale closure and abandonment of facilities suggest that the effects of both modernisation and decline upon Hull's dock landscape were particularly severe.

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[417] J. H. Bird, *Seaports and Seaport Terminals* (London: Hutchinson, 1971), pp. 77-74.

[418] BL, National Ports Council, *Port Development: An Interim Plan* (1965), pp. 101-102.

[419] BJL, British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts* (1968), p. 41

[420] *Ibid*., p. 18.

Although the effects of modernisation upon Britain's long-established port provision were not reported by port authorities, they were investigated in detail by historian Gordon Jackson. In his seminal work, Jackson stressed the fragile prosperity of ports and the economic waste involved in the competitive development of facilities.[421] It is clear from his 'Survey of Disaster' that Hull had suffered particularly badly in this regard. Jackson recorded the still unrepaired wartime bomb-damage, demolished sheds and disused railway lines at the derelict Humber Dock, as well as the scene at Victoria Dock which, having then been closed for over a decade, had been infilled, lost most of its buildings and possessed little more than a decaying timber wharf (see Figure 19).[422] Via this bleak scene Jackson presented a valuable and sobering account of the harsh realities of port modernisation and its impact upon Hull's landscape. However, he did not cover the implication of such developments upon the dock labour force at Hull. By adapting their operations to modern transport and economic needs, port authorities had rendered the various components of the old port system obsolete. Although many shipping companies and road haulage concerns benefitted from such advances, intermodal port operations in particular had swiftly made dockers, barge workers, railway workers and warehousemen redundant.[423] This development has often been alluded to by academics but seldom explored in any detail.

Figure 20: Photographs taken around the time of Jackson's survey show Princes Dock (left) and Humber Dock (right) both in an advanced state of dereliction. (Photos property of the University of Hull).

In Section 3.2.3 many of my interviewees involved in such industries discussed at length the vibrancy, buzz and culture of their lives and work in and around the port between the late 1940s and early 1960s. They were equally keen to relate memories of the collapse and cessation of their respective industries and working lives throughout the late 1960s and 1970s. In contrast

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[421] Jackson, *The History and Archaeology of Ports*, pp. 158-167.

[422] *Ibid*., p. 11.

[423] David J. Starkey and Alan G. Jamieson 'Change on a Scale Unequalled': The Transformation of Britain's Port Industry in the twentieth Century' in Jaap Bruijn et al, *Strategy and Response in the 20th century Maritime World (*Amsterdam, Batavian Lion International, 2001), p. 146.

to the sense of progress and achievement provided by the official documents of the BTDB and the NPC, these years were remembered by many waterfront workers as a period of decline, loss and unemployment. Les Adamson, for example, had worked on the railways on and around the Hull docks since the age of 15. He recalled the demise of the industry in the port area as well as the city's Freightliner terminal in the wake of developments in road transport and infrastructure:

> When I was shunting the inwards yard where I was - that was where the traffic come in… that's where Homebase and Sainsbury's is [now] – Hessle… […] Freightliner Road is still there, but the Freightliner isn't […] The stuff coming inwards - yards and that, used to go down to the T-bridge [at Albert Dock] […] That's all gone and that's the skating rink [now] but that's for unloading. Eventually I went to [road] driving and that become our depot there and that was the other way round – we used to pick up goods in 'ull that were on wagons, take 'em into the warehouse and load them into railway wagons and eventually more was going by road and we was trunking more than rail. So they took some of the railway lines out and put stand trailers in – containers and put them into containers and we 'ad a night staff trunking them wherever they wanted to be, so gradually it went down….[424]

Adamson's recollection indicates how rail work and the landscape of the port's environs were drastically altered during these years of decline. The once bustling rail depots and marshalling yards have since become sites of retail and leisure centres. Similarly to Adamson, barge worker and owner Richard Akester recalled the development of the new unitised transport system at the port during the NPC years and the impact it had upon his business, a firm which had been established in the 1890s by his family and where he had worked since 1942 (aged of 14):

> Oh as soon as the container ships came in, that was the decline of my business because we weren't loading over the side, they were loading containers and the containers went by road. Road transport killed our business […] At the end when it started - containerisation, that was the end of the docks for river craft.

Describing the collapse of his firm, Akester's memory contrasts hugely with the descriptions of life and bustle of the 1950s and early 1960s described by many of my interviewees. Later in the interview he reflected further on the events of this period:

> Oh it's sad, very sad. I mean I had 44 years working up and down there [River Humber] to all the docks. [...] They call it [containerisation] progress but I don't see it as progress. I mean they put men out of work and stopped all this commercial work didn't they and all they did is pile traffic onto the motorways.[425]

[424] Les Adamson, Interview, 16 July 2013.

[425] Richard Akester, Interview, 12 April 2013.

In this testimony, Akester's sense of loss amidst modernisation is clear. Similarly, another barge worker, George 'Mac' McNally also related his perceptions of this period:

> Well the road transport was… obviously the M62 was starting to be built in the 60s once that started getting built then obviously it was… started road tankers going but also they built pipelines for the petrol there was pipelines scattered all over the place and they'd go directly from Immingham from the refineries. We lost a lot of that to railway. We lost the petrol side of it and the oil side of it. Railway undercut us, they even put a rail head into the depot so they even built a new railhead from the mainline so we lost the Nottingham trade.

With advances in road transport, inland pipelines and the carriage of bulk goods by rail, McNally identifies the growing forces that sealed the fate of his occupation. Emphasising the sense of loss he experienced, McNally also explained that the rapid decline of barge traffic could not be arrested despite substantial investment in the waterways industry:

> British Waterways kept going for a while cos they had their own depot there a massive, big depot not now but at Meadow Lane in Nottingham and they used to run there regular but that's all gone. I would say it started [to decline] around 1963 it started. I got made redundant - it started to drop off they tried different things – pay cuts. They even - we always used to have three men on a boat – Skipper, Mate and Engineer and they cut a man out so the just had a Skipper, Mate/Mate, Engineer.[426]

Rather than the arrival of new customers such as North Sea Ferries during this period, Neal remembered the downturn in river craft work, along with the futile attempts of barge owners to arrest decline. Similarly, Dennis Saxby, who had previously worked on the docks as a crane lad during the 1950s and a dock worker in the 1960s, provided a sense of what the docks were like as a place following reform and re-organisation: 'It's so different now, it's like you go on the docks now it's like a graveyard no rail stuff, no winches - it's silent'.[427] Invoking the metaphor of death, Saxby relates the barren lifelessness of the docks which advances in cargo handling and transport had created. The BTDB's and NPC's collaborative endeavours had ensured that Hull was reinvented and able to survive in a much altered economic environment, this achievement was attained at a dear price in the city, a feature that has often been ignored. Although they modernised the port rapidly and efficiently, the BTDB and NPC gave paid scant attention to the lives and work of those who had served the port for generations. Amidst intensive capital expenditure and the optimism regarding the growth and renewal of operations, Hull's historic

[426] George 'Mac' McNally, Interview, 25 June 2013.

[427] Dennis Saxby, Interview, 25 April 2013.

docklands were diminished along with employment and the much cherished way of life apparent within many long-established industries.

4.2.4 Conclusion

In many ways, the NPC reveals the benefits of central planning as it both galvanised and guided the successful modernisation of Hull - a port that had remained particularly conservative and localised in terms of its organisation and operations until the mid-1960s. Not only did the NPC's oversight of estuarial amalgamation encourage greater cohesion amongst the Humber ports, its encouragement of institutional consolidation created a more co-ordinated and administratively sound port authority at Hull. On this basis, Hull was well placed to develop successfully and adapt its aged facilities to compete for the short-sea passenger and unit load sectors: an essential shift given the decline of traditional trade. In adapting the operations at Hull and other ports via the NPC, the British government helped to produce a system of modern and efficient port facilities that were fit to serve the nation's economic needs. However, the impact of this process on both the landscape and those integral to the port's operations was devastating. Whilst large tracts of waterfront land were left to dereliction or regeneration in the 1980s, the livelihoods and way of life of many of those employed in the port's traditional transport operations was rapidly destroyed, a process that still evokes painful memories and resentment in Hull today.

4.3 **De-regulation and Rationalisation, 1979 to 1989.**

Following the election victory of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party in 1979, much of the legislation that had shaped British ports (and the country's industry in general) since 1945 was either reversed or removed. In contrast to the centralising economic policies of the post-1945 Labour governments, the Tories, elected amidst mass unemployment and inflation, embarked upon an ideological campaign to 'roll back the frontiers of state', a policy that was achieved in-part by the deregulation and privatisation of Britain's heavily subsidised nationalised industries. In transferring industry from public to private ownership, the Conservative's intentions were three-fold: to open the door to enterprise, to bring large tracts of industry under the discipline of market forces (both of which would engender industrial efficiency, they argued) and to encourage the creation of a share-owning democracy.[428] By the late 1980s Jaguar, British Telecom, British Gas, British Airways and Rolls Royce were all privatised. In the first wave of privatisation between 1979 and 1983 the country's nineteen nationalised ports (including Hull) were transferred to private ownership alongside British Petroleum and British Aerospace.[429] The process of port de-regulation began with the Transport Act 1981, which abolished the NPC and renamed the BTDB as 'Associated British Ports', a newly created holding company that was privatised and then created as a public limited company in 1983.[430] This development was followed by the repeal of the *Dock Workers (Regulation of Employment) Act 1947*, a move that secured the abolition of the National Dock Labour Board in August 1989 (the process and implications of this will be addressed in Section 4.4.4).[431] By the time the NDLB had been abolished the Thatcher policy of intensive de-regulation and privatisation had not only transformed the country's long-established industries and their associated communities, it had also reconfigured the British economy.

Around a decade after the *Transport Act 1981*, academics began to assess the impact of privatisation upon the UK port industry, an issue that remains controversial today. In his analysis, Richard Goss concluded that although de-regulation had its drawbacks (most notably that the

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[428] A. Cairncross, *The British Economy since 1945: Economic Policy and Performance, 1945 -1990* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 268-269; Eric J. Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism* (London: Routeledge, 2013), pp. 35-38.

[429] John Kay; Colin Mayer and David Thompson (eds), *Privatisation and Regulation: The UK Experience* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); Madsen Pirie, *Privatization* (Aldershot: Wildwood House, 1988).

[430] Alan G. Jamieson, '"Not More Ports, But Better Ports:" The Development of British Ports since 1945', *The Northern Mariner*, 6, No. 1, (1996), p. 33.

[431] *Ibid.*

nationalised ports were sold for too little) privatisation had created undeniable benefits at these ports by enhancing efficiency and by stimulating them to compete and encouraging them to diversify.[432] Such benefits came at a dear price. For example, A. J. Baird and V. F. Valentine argued that following de-regulation, the objective of the newly privatised ports became purely to make profits rather than to facilitate trade and generate economic benefits for their surrounding regions, a feature that publicly owned (but privately operated) ports strived to achieve, particularly in other countries.[433]

In this section I argue that although the volume of Hull's traffic remained depressed during the 1980s, unlike others the port was forced to contend with further reform and re-organisation. I also assert that, as a result of this development Hull was reconstituted as a more competitive, profitable and enterprising concern, although such progress was only achieved following the rapid and rigorous streamlining of a number of employees and redundant facilities which were readily discarded by the new port authority. Consequently, I suggest that the ways this period and its developments were recalled by my interviewees depended greatly upon their position within the port's rapidly evolving structure.

4.3.1 Productivity and Profits

As a nationalised entity the port of Hull's modus operandi had been primarily to facilitate the needs of the nation's seaborne trade. As a private concern, however, its fundamental objective was, as Baird and Valentine suggested, to make profit.[434] Several of my Interviewees, whose employment had transferred in 1981 from management roles in the British Transport Docks Board (BTDB) to the newly created Associated British Ports (ABP), vividly recalled this shift and how it altered the collective mind set at Hull by encouraging a more focussed and incentivised outlook. For instance, Mike Fell, a management employee (whose employment transferred from BTDB to ABP in 1981) elaborated:

> The port business is very competitive. There's many ports around the UK coast but, of course, you had to perform as a PLC you've got share-holders to please, you've got the City to satisfy. A lot of time was spent in PLC days convincing the City that this was a good organisation. A lot of people invested in it – pension funds and so on and they wanted a good performance!

[432] Richard Goss, 'British Ports Policies since 1945', *Journal of Transport Economics and Policy*, 32, 1, 1997, p.68.

[433] A. J. Baird and V. F. Valentine, 'Port Privatisation in the United Kingdom', *Research in Transportation Economics*, 17, (2006)., pp. 81-82.

[434] *Ibid*., pp. 81-82.

Here Fell indicates a marked shift in attitude and noted how, following privatisation, new external forces encouraged the port to be more business-like and competitive. He also explained that, as a PLC, the port's management chain also became increasingly driven to improve their personal performance under this new regime:

> There was an increasing pressure upon managers, upon chairmen, upon the managing director, upon the managers to do well! In fact, it was at that stage that bonuses were introduced for mangers which was a new experience for us! Because if you hit your certain targets in the year you got a bonus. So it was a fundamental change from a nationalised industry to a PLC.

It is clear from Fell's recollection that as a nationalised concern there had been little personal incentive for the port's employees to strive for improvement. Furthermore, he also explained that privatisation not only created a new goal-orientated culture amongst ABP's management employees, it also encouraged a new incentivised and entrepreneurial focus amongst the port's staff in general:

> It was certainly a novel experience because the staff had a number of free shares, I recall first of all and you got an incentive on a whole different level for the company to do well, because you've got a stake in it! And you were encouraged to buy more shares because there were 'one for one' offers and different sorts of offers to encourage you to increase your shareholding and that was certainly… staff latched on particularly the share price… when they could see it rocketing to make a bob or two out of owning ABP shares you see? So all these share schemes we had were always over-subscribed as I recall, because staff were very keen to get more shares. So there was a change in attitude.[435]

As Fell remembered it, the conversion of the port authority into a PLC and the distribution of shares provided employees with a stake in the venture and epitomised the aspiring, popular capitalist culture envisaged by the Thatcher government.[436] Following privatisation a new profit-driven ethos appears to have developed within the Port of Hull's authority. With both performance based incentives and personal profit at stake, privatisation revitalised the motivation and determination of many of ABP's employees and, as intended, made the Port of Hull a more efficient and competitive entity, features that had seemingly been absent since 1945.

This desire for profit also appears to have encouraged the introduction of what some at the port saw as more effective, modern corporate management. As established in the previous chapter, the management structures of several ports had been reconstituted under the NPC

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[435] Mike Fell, Interview, 6 April 2013.

[436] Cairncross, *The British Economy since 1945*, p. 269.

however those of the nationalised ports were simply consolidated rather than overhauled.[437] Consequently, an outdated, class-based management culture appears to have survived within the British Transport Docks Board into the early 1980s, something that has been cited as a general cause of the United Kingdom's relatively poor industrial progress during the second half of the twentieth century.[438] The prevalence of this culture prior to privatisation along with its sudden termination after 1983 was recalled by several of my interviewees as important to the rationalisation process at the port. Many discussed this. Using an old booklet relating to the visit of the BTC's Chairman to the publicly owned port of King's Lynn during the late 1950s, Andrew Brett (an employee of the BTDB and later ABP) exemplified the culture of leisure and excesses previously afforded to the British Transport Commission's managerial staff:

> I dug this lot out of the loft space… [takes booklet from box of docks memorabilia]. This is a visit to the docks - Kings Lynn docks. This was the booklet produced for it in 1959 - "Programme" [an] all structured programme. […] But it was all this [excess], look [shows programme] you're talking about driving 400 feet. Kings Lynn Dock is small – they were driving around in a car all day. It was all structured and then [reads] "Kings Lynn Town Hall via High Street to be received by the Worshipful Mayor of Kings Lynn, "car to the docks" and then "Grove Hotel" for the meal and they'd have lunch with whoever these [people] were. They'd have lunch with the Mayor and then go on and see these other people again. They were the people that went to lunch look these people from British Transport Docks, the Mayor and then they [reads] "go by car to Number 1 gate thence to number 3 gate" then Bentinck Dock "see work on new dock watchman's hut".[439]

Here, Brett highlights the leisure, pomp and ceremony previously afforded to the managers of the nationalised port authority, something that my other interviewees also recalled as being inherent within the management of the British Transport Docks Board, (the British Transport Commission's successor). For instance, Mike Fell, commented:

> There was a hierarchical thing. A lot of the senior people within the [British Transport] Docks Board were ex-vets. There was a Senior Officers Mess and a Junior Officers mess [at Melbury House, BTDB's head offices in London]. You see – [it was run] almost on military lines in a way and, of course, when it was privatised all that disappeared! There wasn't really time to sit down to a lunch everyday – you were getting on with the job! Have lunch if you were taking a customer out by all means but not to sit down with a butler which used to happen in Melbury House![440]

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[437] Alan G. Jamieson, *Ebb Tide in the British Maritime Industries: Change and Adaptation, 1918-1990* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2003), pp. 113-121.

[438] Cairncross, *The British Economy since 1945*, pp. 26-31.

[439] Andrew Brett, Interview, 22 May 103.

[440] Mike Fell, Interview, 6 April 2013.

Fell claimed that an unusual and privileged management culture continued following the accession of the BTDB and widespread reforms of the NPC. In addition, some of my other interviewees explained how such practices even survived into the early 1980s at the time of privatisation. For example, Phil Coombes joined ABP as a pay clerk just six months after privatisation in 1983 and remembered:

> In the very early days Port Managers, which are now more like Port Directors, had their own chauffer, they had a car provided to them – which they still do - like people do have a company car, but in those days they had a chauffeur and the chauffeur would just take them wherever they wanted![441]

The recollections of Brett, Fell and Coombes highlight the overly privileged and leisurely approach to port management during the nationalised period and resonate, some say, with the general complacency in British post-1945 industrial management that was inherited from the days of imperial commerce.[442] Furthermore, these memories contrast sharply with the same interviewees' recollections regarding the port's post-privatised managerial philosophy. Brett, for instance, remembered how a new era of modern corporate management was heralded by the port's creation as a PLC:

> There was a guy called Sir Humphrey Brown [who] ran it [Associated British Ports] He was with British Transport Docks Board and he was sent in by the Government to sort of oversee the swap over to a public company and he was a breath of fresh air, he really was. He came from the coal industry […] It [ABP] was properly organised [following privatisation], he was managing from the top and really running a business. But a visit from him was an inquisition it really was - no fancy meetings and lunches and buggering about…

While Brett indicated that the port began to run on stricter business principles after 1983, he also explained how this new, strong leadership manifested itself at port level:

> The managers were in a state of shock because they've been used to a party for the Chairman's visit and "this is good" but suddenly there was this bloke saying "what's that cost? And what's this cost? And why are you doing that? Why have you spent that? Did you need to build something as big as that?" He was an engineer this guy. To me, I thought he was wonderful. It was a breath of fresh air… it was frightening – "you're the accountant why didn't you do that?!" you were on the ball when he came.

Alongside this new culture of scrutiny and accountability Brett further claimed that under ABP a new era of thrift and economy was inaugurated at Hull:

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[441] Phil Coombes, Interview, 24 May 2013.

[442] M. W. Kirby 'Supply-side Management' in N. F. R. Crafts et al (Eds) *The British Economy since 1945* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1991), pp. 257-258.

> When Sir Humphrey Brown came it was sandwiches in the office and "I hope you haven't spent too much money on these sandwiches" and he had all the overtime earnings that had been done and we had to justify why we'd worked overtime and all the costs anything differential and he'd got all these statistics through sheet after sheet of paperwork. See I was the accountant and I had to be in when the manger was and it was an interrogation![443]

Like Brett, many of my interviewees who were employed in port management at Hull recognised that the privatisation of BTDB signalled the end of an era of inadequate and inefficient management. While many recalled the laxness and excess which had characterised the days of public ownership, under new leadership Hull and the other newly privatised ports were reconstituted with a new managerial philosophy the chief principles of which were to raise efficiency in order to maximise profits. They suggest that, having endured decades of unnecessary slackness and wastage since 1945, privatisation paved the way for efficient, modern corporate management at Hull. In many ways, these years at the port appear to have epitomised the ideological vision of the Thatcher government.

Figure 21: The inauguration of Associated British Port's Port House 23 May 1989 brought the offices of the port authority onto the dock estate for the first time in Hull's history. (Photo courtesy of Associated British Ports).

Although ABP's new corporate management strategy could do little to alter the depressed nature of trade at Hull, it attempted to improve profitability and its ability to compete by other means. This was primarily addressed by reducing the large number of staff from the BTDB. This downsizing strategy, common in many British businesses during this period, aimed

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[443] Andrew Brett, Interview, 22 May 103.

to improve staff utilisation. As we shall see this strategy had significant social and economic implications in the locality.[444] Despite the downturn in traffic trade during the late 1960s and 1970s, the acquisition of various new port functions during these years greatly increased the number of staff directly employed by the port authority. In 1963 the BTDB had inherited some 2,539 staff from its predecessor the BTC and by 1978 the number of employees had risen to 3,168.[445] A sense of the huge volume and variety of staff at Hull in 1981 was provided by ABP employee George Robinson, then the port's Commercial Manager:

> As I say, the port authority had a lot of people… dockers… when we think of a port - dockers come to mind, but let's not forget I mean we had quite a big administrative staff, a big marine staff – dock masters, assistant dock masters, lock gatemen, berthing men, dredging men I mean, at that time, we had quite a big fleet of dredgers. […] A huge engineering staff maintaining the cranes and other equipment and civil engineering and mechanical engineering and then operations staff. Although dockers were doing the [cargo] handling we had… because we controlled the sheds in a sense we had what they call 'quay foremen' and 'shed men' to open and shut the shed doors and sweep up usually some of the light-work men were put on that and then we had on the railway side we had railway porters and permanent [?] staff so the engineer had a permanent [?] gang to go around and keep the track within the dock estate in order.[446]

Robinson's recollection indicates that, upon privatisation, the new port authority acquired a huge and diverse body of staff. Although the port's functions had certainly acquired a greater level of integration and coordination during the late 1960s and the 1970s, the port authority's staff, its overheads and administrative burden had increased hugely. During the early 1980s, in the midst of a recession and with the port's trade at its lowest ebb, George Robinson explained that there was a growing sense amongst the port's management that the authority was indeed heavily overstaffed.

> When I became Commercial Manager in 1983 it was the first time I had a big job in the office in Bond Street [Hull] and I found myself in the Commercial Department I think with eight clerks in it, and they put under me what they called 'Dock Charges' which had been under the accountant were people where basically raising the billing and sending bills out to customers and there was about eight, nine or ten [staff] in there, including a management grade. I suddenly found myself with about eighteen staff under me and honestly they can't have *all* been doing a full day's work, put it that way.

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[444] Zeinab A. Karake –Shalhoub, *Organizational Downsizing, Discrimination and Corporate Social Responsibility* (London: Quorum, 1999), pp.53-75.

[445] BJL, British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts* (1963), p. 16; British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts* (1978), p. 11.

[446] George Robinson, Interview, 28 May 2013.

By then clearly conscious of profits, Robinson recalled being aware of an excess of employees and a distinct administrative slackness across the newly created company. Although no acknowledgement is made of the widespread redundancies that took place at the port in ABP's *Annual Reports and Accounts*, Robinson provided an insight into the pace, extent and implications of ABP's streamlining policy:

> Right through from management, clerical staff, engineering, these quayside staff and so on - we were very liberal with severance schemes. I think it went to…. way above your statutory minimum. In fact, we ended up paying up to… a month for each year of service up to 24 months. So you could go away with two years basic pay in advance plus an extra 3 months as a bonus came in at one time. So there was a big incentive for people to go so a lot of the older people went and of course the payback period for the employer is good because Ok you've suddenly got to pay out a lot but after two years that's it. So that was done extensively… I remember cos I used to see the port's internal profit and loss figures we'd been running at losses of several million pounds and I remember it must have been around '85 or '86 and it suddenly showed a profit one year of £10,000 and it was a cause for celebration you-know - "we're in the black!" – Just getting that little bit in the black in a few years and that's it, it went up significantly short term...[447]

The rapidity and thoroughness with which this new, aggressive PLC reduced its workforce is clear from Robinson's testimony. For him and other management staff, the benefits and success of such a strategy were reflected in the port's annual accounts. After taking an initial financial hit, ABP managed to shed the burden of an excessively large workforce. It was then in a better position to enhance its profitability as a company.

4.3.2 The Development and Diversification of Interests

More streamlined and freed from its responsibility to the Government, the privatised port of Hull was at liberty to deploy capital and invest in facilities without the constraints of either the NPC or Treasury. In direct control of capital expenditure, ABP was able to respond freely to the needs of the market and, in many ways, assumed the role of a landlord that leased facilities and areas of the dock estate to its customers. For example, the port's grain exporting operations were enhanced in 1984 by Cargill UK's modernisation of the grain silo complex, a development that doubled storage capacity.[448] The greatest success, however, remained in providing for shipping firms operating medium sized ro-ro vessels on near continental routes. Developing their collaborative relationship with North Sea Ferries, who had introduced further

[447] George Robinson, Interview, 28 May 2013.

[448] BJL, Associated British Ports, *Annual Reports and Accounts*, 1985, p. 4.

freight services at the port throughout the decade, ABP completed the new £5 million purpose-built Princess Margaret Terminal at King George Dock in July 1987 for the Rotterdam and Zeebrugge service.[449] The terminal, which included a standage area of 145,000 square meters, was designed exclusively for accommodating the new third-generation cruise superferries *Norsea* and *Norsun*, both of which were of 31,000 gross register tons (see Figure 21).[450] No longer required to seek Government consent to improve its facilities, this period witnessed substantial investment in specialised new facilities in conjunction with the procurement of long-term contracts with large and expanding customers.

Figure 22: The Princess Margaret Terminal opened in 1987 at King George Dock epitomised ABP's intensive capital investment following privatisation. (Image from Associated British Ports, Port of Hull: Ro-Ro Services, 1989).

This greater level of freedom and flexibility also permitted ABP to diversify and become more enterprising, a feature which had significant implications for the port of Hull. Alongside investment in new port facilities, ABP was at liberty to make full use of the ports capital assets to generate income. Most notable was property development, a venture that was both logical and lucrative considering the large tracts of derelict waterfront land that modernisation had

[449] BJL, Associated British Ports, *Annual Reports and Accounts*, 1987, p. 8; Associated British Ports, *The Port of Hull: Ro-Ro Services* (1989).

[450] Barry Mitchell, *North Sea Ferries: Across Three Decades* (Ferry Publications, 1995), pp. 39-51.

rendered redundant.[451] By 1988 work converting Hull's former St. Andrew's fish dock into an 83 acre retail and leisure park on the Humber waterfront was well underway. Meanwhile Victoria Dock had been sold to Hull City Council and was in the process of being remodelled as an 'urban village' by property developers Bellway Homes (see Figure 22).[452] Recalling these developments Mike Fell discussed the origin and success of such enterprises at Hull:

> What privatisation did was give the company complete control of its own destiny hitherto while you was with Government there was a certain Government control even though you could operate within it once you were privatised you were absolutely in charge of your own destiny and one of the things ABP did initially because there were still difficulties in ports like Hull was to make full use of its land bank and start to develop property so that was a sea change and it began to make more money in some cases out of its property assets than its port activities particularly in the likes of the port of Hull.[453]

For Fell, ABP's diversification into new areas of business, particularly the sale of derelict but highly prized waterfront land, was recalled as a sure sign of progress. Furthermore, he suggests that the newly acquired freedom to invest beyond general port operations was vital at a time when the port was suffering from a general depression in trade. Although Hull's port authority was not in a position to accrue income from the handling of seaborne trade, its new constitution permitted revenue to be acquired by almost any other means which ABP saw fit.

4.3.3 Remembering Rationalisation

Although this period was recalled by my ABP management interviewees as a time of prosperity and positive development, it was remembered contrastingly by a number of my other interviewees. As established in the previous section, the port of Hull's new quest for profits following privatisation had led to a rapid and intensive streamlining process. Several of my interviewees were amongst this large body of labour that was sacrificed. For instance, Tom Mathers worked as an officer for the Humber Docks Division of the British Transport Police, a

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[451] B. S. Hoyle, D. A. Pinder and M. S. Husain, *Revitalising the Waterfront: International Developments in Dockland Development* (London: Belhaven, 1988); B.S. Hoyle and D. A. Pinder, *European Port Cities in Transition* (London: Belhaven Press in association with the British Association for the Advancement of Science, 1992).

[452] BJL, Associated British Ports, *Annual Reports and Accounts*, 1988, p. 20; Colin McNicol, *Hull's Victoria Dock Village* (Beverley: Highgate Publications, 2002), pp. 75-77. For redevelopment of St. Andrew's Dock see Jo Byrne, After the Trawl: Memory and Afterlife in the Wake of Hull's Distant-Water Trawl Fishery after 1976. (PhD Thesis, 2015).

[453] Mike Fell, Interview, 6 April 2013.

service that was provided by the Ministry of Transport but one which was initially paid for Associated British Ports:

> ABP decided… ABP used to pay for us and one way and the other they found that they [British Transport Police] was putting it up and putting it up and really it got out of hand and they got rid of us… it was their right you see? - The decision was theirs. Some of the dockers and some of the lorry drivers said "well we'll get a petition" and we said "we appreciate what you're saying but by the same rule this decision has been made and I'm afraid it's irreversible".[454]

Here, Mathers, who had worked as a Docks Policeman in the port since 1959, remembered the sudden loss of his long-term livelihood and made clear the finality of the decision that ended his long career on the docks. Similarly, Pete Dixie, another Dock Policeman at Hull, also recalled the surprising suddenness and ruthless efficiency of his dismissal at the hands of the profit-conscious ABP:

> Well back end of '83…it's quite shocking really….they sent a first aid team to a first aid competition in London...Transport Police first aid competition and our lot went up and they were announced as the last ever first aid team from Hull docks and they got a standing ovation and they wandered on saying "what's going on here?" and they said "haven't you heard? You're all being made redundant" and they hadn't told us and this was about October [1983] and they came back and they were telling everybody - "what's this? What do you mean we're being made redundant?" and they were threatened with discipline and all sorts of things and about two weeks later they said "actually, they were right - you're all being made redundant" and two thirds, possibly slightly more of us, were gone by the January [1984].[455]

Those involved in the port's management during these years remembered a process of streamlining and rationalisation during the early years of privatisation. However, those who were sacrificed simply recall the shock of losing their jobs as they joined the ranks of the thousands of the country's unemployed. In 1982, the level of unemployment in Britain had reached unprecedented post-war figures with 3 million (or 13 per cent of the country's labour force) out of work.[456] Although, the huge reduction of staff contributed greatly to the port's cost effectiveness, it also had a dear price in terms of local employment.

[454] Tom Mathers, Interview, 20 June, 2013.

[455] Pete Dixie, Interview, 9 April 2013.

[456] Kathleen Burk, *The British Isles since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 113-114.

Figure 23: Having lain derelict since the late 1970s, Hull's Victoria Dock was regenerated as an 'urban village' as a result of ABP's policy of rationalisation. (Images taken from Colin McNicol, Hull's Victoria Dock Village, 2002).

Alongside widespread redundancy, the sale and regeneration of parts of Hull's historic docks landscape constituted another aspect of rationalisation that was not universally beneficial. Geographer David Atkinson, for instance, has explored in detail the geographies of social memory on Hull's regenerated waterfront and contributed to wider debates regarding the spatiality of memory. More specifically Atkinson has focussed on the simple, comforting 'historic maritime' objects and references such as anchors, sundials and nautical themed buildings and street names that have been implemented by developers to brand the redeveloped docklands of Hull and many other historic ports, something that he conceptualised as a 'kitsch maritime heritage aesthetic'.[457] By investigating this feature in association with Hull's regenerated St. Andrew's and Victoria Docks, Atkinson identified contrasting experiences. Attempts by developers to impose a kitsch maritime heritage aesthetic at St. Andrew's dock (the former home of Hull's distant-water fishing fleet) had been met with vociferous opposition within the fishing community due to its insufficient sensitivity to Hull's fishing heritage.[458] By contrast, at Victoria Dock he found that many of the dock's middle-class residents recognised the contrived nature of the village's theme but engaged with it and felt a sense of embeddedness as a result.[459]

A similar theme of contestation was apparent in the testimonies of my interviewees regarding regeneration on the Hull waterfront. For example, I asked Beryl Whipp, a former docks nurse who had started her long career in the port at Victoria Dock, whether she had ever visited the urban village:

> **Beryl**: No…. I've seen it, but I saw it as well…. in a different place. When I was Captain of the Sea Cadets – Sea Rangers – and we had a boat on there you

[457] David Atkinson, 'Kitsch Geographies and the Everyday Spaces of Social Memory', *Environment and Planning,* 39, 2007, pp. 421-440; David Atkinson, 'The Heritage of mundane places' in B. Graham and P. Howard (eds.) *The Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (London: Ashgate, 2008). pp. 390-392.

[458] *Ibid.*

[459] *Ibid.*

> see? It was…as I say we used to have all sorts of fun on there with the boat and they used to have the ship, the *Humber,* and it used to be berthed there.

Here, Beryl recalls that Victoria Dock had, prior to its redevelopment, served a very different purpose being utilised by the community for recreational activities. For her, the development at the dock had replaced something that she deemed of greater value. During this discussion I also asked Beryl more directly about the regeneration on the Hull waterfront:

> **AO:** What do you feel about what's been done with the docks which have been closed? Obviously you've got Prince's Quay shopping centre in one, you have the Marina, you have Victoria Dock. Do you like what's been done?
> **Beryl**: I don't like Prince's Dock for the simple reason that they could have done something better, cos they put that wretched thing up with shops and everything and they could have used it better to me personally. There's the people who had the - the old sailors - Trinity House - it's there and they could have brought Trinity House [into the design] and… all together and they ruined it. They say it's supposed to look like a ship![460]

In Beryl's response, her feelings about the nature of the development at Princes Dock and its disassociation with the heritage of the area are explicit. In contrast to the memories of those employed by ABP, who made little reference to the heritage, others associated with the port, like Beryl, were clearly unhappy with the fate of the docks.

4.3.4 Conclusion

Similar to the late 1960s and the 1970s, the 1980s was a time of large-scale change and development at the port of Hull. I have argued that the privatisation of the port's authority effected a shift in focus from people to profits. As a leaner, fitter port, Hull's newly acquired traits greatly enhanced its ability to compete and make profits in the altered economic environment of the 1980s. As such, these years were vividly recalled by many who benefitted from such developments as a period of new found determination, progress and revitalisation. In contrast, those who were discarded recalled the years which followed privatisation as a time of sadness and loss. Although many had worked on the waterfront for most of their lives, they were rendered unemployed with ruthless efficiency and their former places of work were redeveloped into places or retail, leisure and business. Ultimately, I have highlighted that privatisation has had very mixed implications for the Port of Hull and its people, a feature that has often been overlooked.

[460] Beryl Whipp, Interview, 15 April 2013.

4.4 **The Hull Dockers: Reform and Militancy**

Following its investigation into the widespread labour problems that had blighted the British port industry since 1945 the Devlin Committee (which had been established in 1964) produced its Final Report. The report presented a number of recommendations designed to achieve the peaceful industrial relations necessary for the deployment and use of emerging mechanised cargo-handling technology.[461] Such reform was implemented in two phases: Phase I was executed on September 18th 1967 (or 'D-Day') and involved the decasualisation of the country's dock workers and their allocation to permanent employers. Phase II was finalised in September 1970 and overhauled the local wage systems of dock labour in line with new cargo handling methods.[462] Based on further recommendations, other areas of labour organisation were also reformed as part of Devlin's modernisation plan. For example, the Transport and General Workers' Union underwent intensive re-organisation in an attempt to restore union control in the larger ports, aspects of welfare and dockside amenities were improved, and moves were made to end the wasteful practices that had long impaired the efficient flow of British seaborne trade.[463] Once completed, Devlin's reforms had transformed the country's dock labour force beyond all recognition and a system of employment that had been in place since the middle of the nineteenth century was consigned to history.

The advent of modernisation did not however secure peaceful industrial relations on the British waterfront. Indeed, the industry entered a new era of heightened unrest following Devlin. While Phase I was met with strikes in London, Liverpool and Hull, Phase II was only completed following a three-week National Dock Strike in 1970 (the first since 1926).[464] Furthermore, new problems within the industry were also afoot. The quickening pace of mechanisation was making dock workers redundant faster than had been anticipated. This issue was exacerbated by the placement of surplus dockers on the National Dock Labour Board's Temporarily Unattached Register (TUR) which was seen by many as a new and hidden form of casualism.[465] Furthermore, such technological developments had also blurred the definition of 'dock work' as defined by the National Labour Scheme. As result, the period witnessed the

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[461] *Final Report of the Committee of Inquiry into certain matters concerning the Port Transport Industry ,* Cmnd. 2734 (London: HMSO, 1965), p. 88.

[462] Jamieson, *Ebb Tide in the British Maritime Industries*, pp. 107-113.

[463] Wilson, *Dockers*, pp. 192-224.

[464] Jamison, *Ebb Tide in the British Maritime Industries*, p. 110.

[465] *Ibid*., pp. 110-111.

growth of non-scheme ports and inland container bases that utilised cheaper, more flexible unregistered labour.[466] Again, this was to the detriment of the registered dock worker. As unemployment in the industry increased throughout the 1970s and 1980s, labour relations deteriorated and further national stoppages across the ports occurred with general strikes in 1972 and 1984.[467] A final strike occurred on 10 July of 1989 in response to the Thatcher Government's abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme, a move that formed part of the Conservatives' deregulation of the industry.[468] With the vast majority of the country's dock workers subject to compulsory redundancy by this event, the British port industry subsequently entered an era of peace, recovery and prosperity.[469]

Considering the widespread conflict and industrial unrest that characterised the industry during the post-Devlin period, several academics have analysed the nature and success of the Committees' reforms. These key studies commonly concluded that although the Devlin settlement comprised some elements that were positive and progressive it also contained a series of fundamental flaws that failed to remove old grievances amongst the dock labour force and also created new problems within the industry.[470] While these studies provided a valuable insight into the nature and impact of Devlin, they examined its general implications for either the industry in general or more often with a keen focus on its effect on the Port of London. As yet, there have been no case studies that examine the impact of this piece of externally-imposed, industrial reform on other large ports and their labour forces. In this chapter I argue that Devlin's recommendations resolved many long-established grievances at the port of Hull and successfully paved the way for the implementation of modern cargo-handling methods vital to the port's trade. However, I also contend that Devlin's external reforms had major shortcomings, and, due to a series of additional local factors, progress at Hull was poor during this period. Ultimately, I question the value of centrally-imposed, uniform industrial re-organisation that does not contemplate thoroughly the implications of localised factors.

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[466] Turnbull, *Dock Strike*, pp. 67-72.

[467] *Ibid*. pp. 27-28 and pp. 88-97.

[468] *Ibid,* pp. 141-174

[469] *Ibid*., p. 182.

[470] Wilson, *Dockers*, pp. 278-307; Stephen Hill, *The Dockers: Class and Tradition in London* (London: Heinemann, 1976), p. 7; Gordon Phillips and Noel Whiteside, *Casual Labour: The Unemployment Question in the Port Transport Industry 1880-1970* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 267.

4.4.1 Devlin's Achievements

As established in the previous chapter, the port of Hull was able to offset some of its traditional trade losses by expanding its unit-load business following the establishment of ro-ro and container facilities. In many ways the successful development of these operations belonged as much, if not more, to Devlin's reforms as it did to the collaborative efforts of the National Port Council and the British Transport Docks Board. Like other ports which intended to compete for such traffic, Hull required regular, specialist teams of dock labour to work the new berths and terminals that operated mechanised and unitised cargo-handling equipment. [471] This, however, would require a rapid and thorough overhaul of both the deeply entrenched-casual system and local pay structures - the natures of which varied greatly from port to port. Not only was this something that Devlin achieved at Hull, it was completed decisively, comprehensively and amidst staunch opposition from large sections of the port's dock labour force.

Resentful of external interference in their industry, the Hull dockers immediately went on strike alongside their counterparts in London, Liverpool and Manchester on D-Day, however they voted to return to work the following day 'willing to give decasualisation a chance'.[472] With no further industrial action at Hull in this regard, Devlin had pushed through a change that the National Dock Labour Scheme had failed to implement in twenty years. Following decasualisation, extensive negotiations, and the Hull dockers' participation in the three-week National Dock Strike in July 1970 over a national wage claim, the port's wage system was also reformed as part of the modernisation deal required to permit the development of unitised operations.[473] The outcome at Hull was an agreement that abolished payment by the piece and placed the port's dockers on a regular wage of £36 15s for 40 hours work, with shift-work at the employers' option at a premium of £1 per shift.[474] Although it was undeniably achieved amidst significant upheaval, the Devlin Committee could claim to have successfully introduced the port of Hull to the container age by the second half of the 1970s.

Thereafter Hull was at liberty to develop its unit-load operations with relative ease. Indeed, when I asked TGWU official Brian Barker about the introduction of containers at Hull he explained that it was Devlin's reforms that had provided the framework:

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[471] Wilson, *Dockers*, p. 290.

[472] HHC, *Hull Daily Mail,* 18 September 1967.

[473] HHC, *Hull Daily Mail,* 16 July 1970.

[474] Wilson, *Dockers*, p. 281.

> **AO**: So from what you remember Brian, there weren't many disputes about containers and containerisation and things like that?
> **Brian**: No, cos it was all done by agreement by the Joint Port Working Committee.
> **AO**: So it was kind of phased in?
> **Brian**: It was phased in and I should think the thing that changed it all was Devlin and when 'e came up with the Devlin Agreement instead of blokes bein' at controls they all 'ad to be allocated to a permanent employer.[475]

As Barker indicates, it was Devlin's replacement of the deeply entrenched casual system with a modern employment arrangement that largely permitted the successful introduction of modern cargo-handling at Hull. This development enabled the Hull to offset its losses in other areas of trade and ensured its very survival as a port.

Figure 24: Dockers working new container berths at Albert Dock in 1971. Such facilities having been successfully implemented following Devlin's reforms. (Photos courtesy Associated British Ports).

Alongside the large-scale reorganisation of dock labour, Devlin also successfully initiated the root and branch overhaul of the employers of dock labour at Hull. In its report, Devlin had recognised that the large and varied number of employers at many ports created problems in terms of dock labour organisation, because many smaller firms did not have the means to retain a permanent workforce or invest in new mechanical handling equipment.[476] For instance, the Committee had found that of the 90 Hull employers registered under the National Dock Labour Scheme "65 hardly operated at all" whilst "quite a few of the rest were only casual employers".[477] Andrew Brett, then Operations Manager at Albert Dock recalled how Devlin overcame this problem during Phase I:

> Pre-Devlin you could call yourself a stevedore – registered stevedore in Hull and you could do two ships a year theoretically, and some did! Some didn't do 10 ships in the year but because they were registered employers they

[475] Brian Barker, Interview, 1 May 2015.

[476] *Final Report of Inquiry into certain matters concerning the Port Transport Industry,* Cmnd. 2734 (London: HMSO, 1965), p. 103.

[477] *Ibid.,* p. 83.

> could go to the National Dock Labour Board when they had a ship come in and they could take enough men to work that ship. So those people went by the board with Devlin - Devlin kicked those into touch. They couldn't be allocated 50 men. That's what killed them - not Devlin per se - saying "you've got to go". They created a situation where they had to go![478]

Here, Brett provides a sense of the tactful efficiency with which Devlin reduced the large number of employers at Hull. By 1971 the number of registered employers at the port had been limited to just 10. [479] One of these was the British Transport Docks Board's wholly owned subsidiary 'Hull and Humber Cargo Handling Services' (discussed in section 4.2.2). Having successfully decasualised the dockers at Hull, Devlin also succeeded in decasualising the port's employers in preparation for containerisation.

Similarly, Devlin also initiated an overhaul of the Transport and General Workers' Union at Hull; an achievement that would almost certainly not have been completed without external intervention. As established in section 3.3.9 the TGWU's officials had previously possessed little control over their membership at the port and elsewhere, particularly following the arrival of the rival National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers' Union at the northern ports during 1954. Recognising the union's particular lack of authority at Hull (alongside London and Liverpool), the TGWU sent Tom Cronin (one of the ablest London officers) to the port to restore union authority.[480] To a large extent this objective was achieved. Over the course of 10 months Cronin reorganised the union's branches, established a system of shop stewards and sent a damning report to London headquarters that resulted in the sacking and replacement of the three full-time officials. [481] In addition, some of my docker interviewees recalled other improvements at Hull following Cronin's visit, which included a 30 per cent increase in piece-work rates:

> **Barry:** [Cronin] 'e altered a lot of things in this port. 'e couldn't believe the way we was workin' and such as that and 'e'd never seen it before and – "what you gettin' paid for this?"
> **AO**: And it was by far worse than anywhere else in terms of conditions?
> **Barry:** Well according to 'im it was. 'e came from London dint 'e and 'e couldn't believe what we were doing and what we was getting' and 'e altered a lot of things - for the better for us.[482]

[478] Andrew Brett, Interview, 22 May 2013.

[479] Wilson, *Dockers*, p. 292.

[480] *Ibid.* pp. 192-193.

[481] *Ibid.*

[482] Dennis Mayhew, Barry Cheney and Clive Shields interview, 2 April 2013.

This evidence indicates that, in a relatively short period of time, the rank and file's respect for the union improved greatly following Cronin's visit. Decades of distrust were largely reversed. In addition the inter union rivalry between the TGWU and NASDU appears to have subsided at Hull, not least because the newly-created system of shop stewards elected from amongst the rank and file created a more democratic organisation (the lack of democracy having encouraged many members to leave the blues and transfer to the whites). After decades of union distrust and uncontrolled unofficial action at Hull (which was highlighted extensively in section 3.3.9) Devlin's initiative restored effective union control virtually overnight.

While it is clear from this evidence that the port authority at Hull, like those of many other British ports, gained much from Devlin's reforms, many of the port's dock workers also benefitted greatly from the Committee's programme of reorganisation. Although there is certainly some truth in Trotskyist writer Bill Hunter's claim that Devlin's improvement of the employment conditions of dock workers was a concession made by employers, the government and the state in the interests of British capitalism, it ignores the fact that the dockers gained much from the process of modernisation.[483] Indeed, many of my docker interviewees discussed how their terms of employment improved significantly following the Committee's reforms. For example, Mike Galloway explained that many had initially been sceptical of decasualisation, however the benefits of regular employment soon became evident to the labour force:

> Well the dockers didn't want that [decasualisation] at first but gradually… we went on strike over that … that got implemented and we all got… had to join… we all had our own firms then but you could transfer. When North Sea Ferries wanted extra men I transferred from Hull and Humber [Cargo Handling Company] to North Sea Ferries […] When you first kicked off there you went as a tug driver but you got a job for a couple of days. They used to try and vary your jobs – put you on a different ship – couple of days on one ship you used to do one or two days on roping and you used to drive a little forklift and do all the fork lifting jobs.[484]

For Galloway, affiliation to a single employer improved the security of his employment matching that of workers in other industries, whilst also retaining some elements of freedom and flexibility in terms of the routine of dock work. Along with employment stability the dockers also acquired financial security. Indeed, it was during this period that British dock labourers established themselves amongst the highest paid of all wage-earners.[485] Dock worker Ray Simms

[483] Bill Hunter, *They Knew Why They Fought: Unofficial Struggles and Leadership on the Docks, 1945-1989* (London: Index Books, 1994), p.59.

[484] Mike Galloway, Interview, 13 May 2013.

[485] Phillips and Whiteside, *Casual Labour*, p. 235.

remembered how Devlin's reforms and increases in pay ended the culture of short term speculation on the waterfront at Hull:

> **Ray**: [Devlin] gave me stable money whereas before when you was ordinary under the National Dock Labour Board, you dint know what money you was getting but at least [after Devlin] I knew I was getting - a certain amount every week without any overtime. So you could work out what you could afford and luckily we were able to afford this [house].
> **AO**: So your standard of living improved after [Devlin]?
> **Ray**: Yeah.[486]

As Simms indicates, the modernisation settlement which the Hull dockers negotiated provided both financial stability and a good standard of living: two things that had previously eluded the dock workers.

The introduction of modern mechanised equipment following Devlin also reduced the risk of injury or fatality. Having left the port of Hull in 1967 during the midst of reform, docks nurse Beryl Whip returned to her profession on the docks during the mid-1970s and recalled the extent to which working conditions had improved:

> **AO**: Were conditions much improved when you went back on the docks?
> **Beryl**: Yes, because they had more equipment.
> **AO**: So it was less manual?
> **Beryl**: Yes, they had more equipment.
> **AO**: So mechanisation improved their working conditions?
> **Beryl**: Oh yes.
> **AO**: And would you say there were subsequently less injuries?
> **Beryl**: Yes to some extent but somebody always manages to get something.[487]

It is evident from Beryl's memories that, although dock work undoubtedly still remained a dangerous occupation, the introduction of new mechanised working practices during her absence had made the docks a less hazardous place.

The standard of amenities for dock workers were also greatly enhanced as a direct result of reform. Having recognised that the amenities in many ports fell 'far short of what they ought to be', the Devlin Committee had therefore called upon the National Dock Labour Board to complete a thorough investigation and improvement of dockside facilities.[488] The Board's subsequent 1966 report at Hull recommended that a large number of improvements be made

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[486] Ray Simms, Interview, 24 June 2013.

[487] Beryl Whipp, Interview, 15 April 2013.

[488] *Final Report of Inquiry into certain matters concerning the Port Transport Industry,* Cmnd. 2734 (London: HMSO, 1965), pp. 30-33.

to ‘canteen/amenity buildings’, ‘shelters’, ‘drinking fountains’, ‘lockers’, at an estimated cost of £330,175.[489] As a result, new amenities were established which included the replacement of the old and squalid dockside coffee shops such as ‘Black Hut’ and ‘Klondyke’ with several purpose-built dock-side canteens (see Figure 24). The impact of such improvements were recalled vividly by many of my docker interviewees, including Barry Freeman:

> Our kid was thinking about leaving and he said “I don’t know, there’s nowhere to go to toilet”… and I remember this fella sayin’ to our kid… he’d been to some meetings and he said “it’s gunna change, their gunna build all new places, you’re gunna ‘ave showers, you’re gunna ‘ave lockers, you’re gunna ‘ave a wonderful canteen - give it time!…” and it did - that ‘appened. So when they did mek us regular they built all these new places![490]

Although this initiative provided basic facilities that had long been provided in other industries, the significance of these improvements to dock workers like Freeman was clear. Following generations of uncertainty on the waterfront, in many ways, Devlin inaugurated dock workers as the elite of the British working class. Amidst these collective achievements there were fundamental flaws to Devlin’s plan for modernisation. These failings, which largely offset progress elsewhere and were extremely damaging to industrial relations at Hull, will now be discussed.

Figure 25: Hull dockers at the newly established Diana (left) and Victoria (right) restaurants at Albert Dock in April 1970. (Photos courtesy of Associated British Ports).

4.4.2 Inflated Labour Costs

It has been argued that one of Devlin’s central failings was the local negotiations it sanctioned in phase II that permitted dock workers across the country to be overly compensated for the abolition of restrictive practices and the unemployment that would inevitably come with

[489] HHC, DPN-11-2,National Dock Labour Board, *Amenities Report*, 1966.

[490] Barry Freeman, Interview, 2 April 2014.

modernisation.[491] While this was widely acknowledged as a problem at many ports evidence suggests its effects were more acute at Hull than elsewhere. First of all, the modernisation pay deal struck between the port's employers and the TGWU was one of the most expensive in the industry. As the previous section argued, Cronin's visit highlighted how the Hull dockers had long suffered from particularly poor terms of employment and, having been provided by Devlin with the opportunity to negotiate a better arrangement in exchange for new working methods, it is perhaps not surprising that they held out for a good deal. Indeed, between 1967 and 1971 Hull dockers were granted a 102.5 per cent pay rise - a huge increase that was second only to Glasgow's 117 per cent, and one that dwarfed the 57 per cent and 74 per cent raises at Southampton and Tees/Hartlepool respectively.[492] This wage increase at Hull made the port's dockers the second highest paid amongst the major ports (with Southampton being the highest).[493]

Naturally, such wage inflation had a noticeable impact upon the port's operational costs. In parallel with declining volumes of traffic at Hull during these years, the British Transport Docks Board recorded substantial rises in dues and charges at the port, an increase attributed, in part, to National Dock Labour Board 'levies' and 'higher working expenses'.[494] Added to this problem were the effects of the Hull men's transferal from piece earnings to a regular wage during Devlin Phase II. Although the favouritism associated with piece-work had been a major source of discontent amongst many of the Hull dockers its principle had been sound: the more productive the individual the more money he could earn. Many of my interviewees involved in the port's management, including Mike Fell, described how, as the wages of dock labour had increased hugely, the effort of the Hull workforce declined:

> There was another shift in Hull and other ports when the pay structure moved from piece–work – so much per-ton, per-hour which tended to accelerate work and get the thing done faster. Because once you'd finished and there wasn't another job to go to you could legitimately go home. So you had an incentive to work hard and get a good output from the ship. Now that

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[491] Wilson, *Dockers*, pp. 296-299; Phillips and Whiteside, *Casual Labour*, p. 266; Peter Turnbull, Charles Woolfson, John Kelly, *Dock Strike: Conflict and Restructuring in Britain's Ports* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1992), p. 22.

[492] Wilson, *Dockers*, p. 297.

[493] *Ibid.*

[494] BJL, British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts*, 1967; British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts* 1968; British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts* 1969; British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts* 1970; British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts* 1971.

> system was changed to a day rate in Hull and the port's productivity plummeted. Not all ports shifted it – for example in Kings Lynn we had piece-work they continued and that's what the dockers wanted there and we got very good productivity there - much better than in Hull.[495]

Fell highlights how the removal of incentivised wage payments immediately damaged efficiency and increased turn-around times. Fell was not alone in stressing the adverse effects of wage reform under Devlin. Another of my interviewees, Len Scott, a dock foreman, asserted:

> Devlin came along – a man who's never worked in his soddin' life, 'e came along and 'is idea was everybody would get the same wages - everybody would do the same work and they took the incentive away [...] But as I say - Devlin - that man destroyed the docks [...] that man had never worked in 'is life - no experience of working people. 'e just took the incentive away and eventually you got the lazy man and you got in a situation where you said "I'm not gonna work 'ard here! Why should I work 'ard when that prat over there is sat on 'is arse?!" So it just disappeared then.[496]

Scott's distain for Devlin's externally-imposed reforms upon local working arrangements are abundantly clear. So too was the shift in mentality that occurred amongst the workforce following the abolition of piece-work. Having long prided itself as 'Britain's cheapest port', Hull was amongst the most expensive and least efficient by the time Devlin's overhaul of the industry had been completed.

Given the general rise in expenses and declining productivity within the industry, port customers looked to other sites for their cargo-handling needs. As established at the outset of this chapter, such alternatives were increasingly provided by the growing number of non-scheme ports. Having originally been too small to be covered by the National Dock Labour Scheme in 1947, places such as Holyhead, Milford Haven, Portsmouth, Ridham, Amble, Littlehampton, Norwich, Shoreham, Watchet, Newhaven, Dover and Folkestone all experienced significant growth during the second part of the 1960s.[497] Indeed, between 1965 and 1970 the tonnage of dry cargo handled by the larger scheme ports as a whole increased at an annual compound rate of only 0.5 per cent, compared with an annual compound rate of growth of 11.5 per cent for the non-scheme ports.[498] Such expansion was largely due to their employment of cheaper, more flexible unregistered labour that posed less opposition to the development of new mechanised cargo handling methods. Also, finding operational costs damagingly high

[495] Mike Fell, Interview, 6 May 2013.

[496] Len Scott, Interview, 4 July 2013.

[497] Turnbull, Woolfson and Kelly, *Dock Strike*, p. 67.

[498] *Ibid.*

following Devlin, many employers of dock labour at the registered scheme ports had elected to relocate to the emerging non-scheme sites or to inland container groupage depots (where unregistered labour was also used) primarily to 'stuff' and 'un-stuff' containers.[499]

Although the loss of trade affected the Scheme ports generally, Hull and the other Humber ports suffered more than most in this regard. Again the port's unfavourable geographical location was at the heart of the issue. Not only was Hull located in relatively close proximity to the growing non-scheme ports of Norwich, Felixstowe, Harwich and Dover, it was also close to a number of privately-owned, non-scheme wharves on the surrounding inland waterways, including New Holland on the south bank of the Humber, Howdendyke on the River Ouse, and Keadby, Gunness, Flixborough and Burton Stather along the lower Trent.[500] Consequently, Hull's customers (particularly those engaging in short-sea bulk-trades between the UK and the continent) were presented with a large number of convenient and cheaper alternative non-scheme sites. Naturally, many took full advantage - with the total traffic through these non-scheme wharves increasing rapidly from 3.1 million tonnes in 1966 to 7.8 million tonnes in 1971.[501] The loss of traffic to the non-scheme sites was such that it had a profound impact upon the memories of those who worked for the port authority. For instance, Mike Fell recollected:

> Other ports on the Humber were growing! New Holland for example, Howdendyke, Gunness, Flixborough all these little wharves were taking the traffic. It was being transhipped on the continent. So instead of coming to 'the great, big, mighty Port of Hull' with all its facilities, deep sea ship taking a 25,000 tonner dead-weight sort of thing the cargo was on their doorstep.[502]

Similarly Andrew Brett explained:

> They pinched all the business! A lot of the business - Howdendyke, Gunness, Keadby all the way up the Trent all wharves taking the traffic![503]

Both Fell and Brett recalled how they could do little but watch helplessly as the port's traffic increasingly by-passed Hull and berthed at the numerous, growing non-Scheme wharves. Devlin certainly cannot be blamed for the large number of alternative non-scheme sites available to

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[499] Terry Turner, *Diary of the Docks Dispute 1972-1973* (Hull: Hull University, 1980), p. iv.

[500] Peter Lewis and Philip N. Jones, *Industrial Britain The Humberside Region* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1970), pp. 53-55.

[501] *Ibid.*

[502] Mike Fell, Interview, 6 May 2013.

[503] Andrew Brett, Interview, 22 May 2013.

Hull's customers however its reforms, which hugely inflated labour costs and a reduced productivity, can be held responsible for making these alternative locations so attractive.

4.4.3 Militant Leadership

Alongside rising unemployment due to the rapid implementation of mechanised cargo handling equipment across all ports, the heavy losses of trade to the non-scheme sites and the in-land container groupage depots further reduced employment opportunities for the industry's registered dock workers. In 1967 there had been 60,144 registered dock workers but this fell to 43,647 by 1971 following the introduction into the industry of the National Voluntary Severance Scheme (NVSS).[504] Whilst these losses caused increasing tension amongst the workforce, other new problems also emerged in the wake of Devlin's reforms. Although the committee had placed the majority of registered dock workers into regular employment during Phase I it had also created another category of non-permanent docker: the 'temporarily unattached worker'.[505] Controlled by the National Dock Labour Board and intended for registered men awaiting a disciplinary case or pending re-allocation to another employer, the 'Temporarily Unattached Register' (TUR) was being increasingly abused by the employers as a 'reserve pool' or 'backdoor' method to dismiss surplus dock labour in a period of rising unemployment.[506] Based on these developments it is perhaps not surprising that labour relations within the industry deteriorated rapidly towards a new era of unrest that culminated in a second national dock strike in July 1972. The stoppage lasted three weeks and involved the country's 42,000 dock workers. While industrial action was widespread across the ports leading up to, and during, the second national dock strike, the Hull dockers, alongside their counterparts at Liverpool and London, engaged in a militant campaign to protect their work.

The events of these tumultuous years were described in great detail by Hull docker Terry Turner in his valuable record 'Diary of the Docks' Strike, 1972-1973'. His account sheds light on the factors that underpinned the heightened unrest at Hull, much of which can be traced back to the failure of Devlin's reforms. For example, Turner recorded that the considerable loss of traffic to the non-scheme wharves on and around the Humber following Devlin created particularly high tension about unemployment at Hull. The number of registered dock workers at the port stood at 4,057 on D-Day in September 1967, however their number had already been

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[504] Wilson, *Dockers*, pp. 181-191, p. 308.

[505] Turnbull, Woolfson and Kelly, *Dock Strike,* pp. 24-25; Phillips and Whiteside, *Casual Labour* p. 264.

[506] *Ibid.*

reduced to 2,784 in 1971.[507] Furthermore, he noted that with a high of 932 TUR men in April 1972, Hull was second only to London in this regard.[508] Turner's account also suggests that Devlin's union reforms were responsible for the swift way that dissatisfaction at Hull was converted into coherent and organised militant action. As established in a previous section, a system of shop stewards elected from within the rank and file was created by the TGWU at Hull and Liverpool following Devlin's recommendations. As in Liverpool, however, the TGWU at Hull devolved a substantial amount of power and authority to its newly-created shop stewards and largely failed to incorporate them into the union's existing institutional structure.[509] As a result, the TGWU's officials at Hull continued to wield little control over a membership that, led by militant shop stewards, was in a position to launch a sustained campaign to protect against unemployment.

Turner's diary, for example, recorded how the shop stewards led the port's dockers in a prolonged 'blacking' campaign against the inland container groupage depots in April of 1972, a move designed to protect the dockers' work by establishing the right to 'stuff' and 'un-stuff' containers to and from the depots.[510] Alongside the blacking campaign, he also detailed how the port was brought to a complete standstill over several days in the following month when shop stewards led the workforce in picketing a small River Hull wharf owned by H. S. Barchard and Sons Ltd in protest over their use of unregistered labour to discharge a cargo of timber.[511] This encounter (which was so disruptive it required Police intervention) was recalled in detail by Hull and Humber Cargo Handling Company management employee George Robinson:

> Barchard was a small timber importer. If I remember correctly up near Air Street on the west side of the River Hull doing the odd cargo of softwood which had gone on for many years, I don't think it was very frequent but I seem to remember this was about - he brought in some hardwoods, these would have been trans-shipped in Rotterdam or Antwerp into a coaster either sawn hardwood or logs and the dockers found out and immediately said "well that's deep-sea cargo in our back door in a coaster" and they went down there and were nasty and threw things over the wall and this sort of thing.[512]

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[507] Turner, *Diary of the Docks Dispute*, p. v.

[508] *Ibid.* p. 2.

[509] Wilson, *Dockers*, p. 292; Turnbull, Woolfson and Kelly, *Dock Strike*, p. 24.

[510] Turner, *Diary of the Docks Dispute*, pp. 4-11.

[511] *Ibid*., p. 10.

[512] George Robinson, Interview, 28 May 2014.

Here, Robinson recollected how readily the Hull dockers were spurred into militant action by the union's shop stewards in the months leading up to the second national stoppage in July 1972. However, it was during the strike itself when the true extent of the shop steward's militant resolve was displayed. Having begun an intensive picketing campaign of the unregistered ports and wharves surround the port during early July, the Hull men spent a large part of the actual strike mass-protesting against the use of unregistered labour at the Trent wharves of Neap House and Gunness. Turner recorded how this action descended into three days of running battles at these two sites between Police, road haulage drivers and the shop steward - led Hull dockers:

> At 1.30pm with the pickets growing more restless and frustrated because the wharf was working normally events started to warm up. At a signal from one of them several shop stewards and other dockers charged up the wharf's bank where the Police were more thinly lined in an attempt to get on to the wharf. When the men made their rush the drivers who had sat on the bank smirking hurriedly retreated and the Police thwarted the picket's attack by using any method they could. They pushed and punched the dockers back down the bank, there were really vicious blows struck by both sides. Police and dockers wrestled on the floor; some dockers were bundled roughly into police vans. One long-haired picket was dragged cruelly by his mane up the steep bank by a burly Policeman before being taken away. An elderly docker was half-throttled into unconsciousness by another policeman and he sat in the roadside before he was taken to Scunthorpe hospital. By this time other pickets had gone to the aid of their colleagues and several running fights took place. The whole of men's bodies – fists, feet, knees, heads and fingers became weapons to try and overcome one another. Police arrested several more dockers by simply overpowering them with numbers and the dockers were taken into custody. The Police had retained their wall and repulsed the dockers attempts to enter the wharf.[513]

Here, Turner's documentation highlights the role of the shop stewards in the 'Battle of Neap House', an event which gained widespread national media attention. It also outlines the lengths that they were prepared to go when leading the Hull men in the protection of their work. Although there is no doubt that unrest amongst the country's dock labour force was widespread during the early post-Devlin years, it was the Hull dockers, led by the militant shop stewards appointed following Devlin that were at the very fore of industrial unrest at this time.

Following the cessation of the second national dock strike in August 1972 the industry entered a period of comparative peace over the 1970s and 1980s. Before the stoppage had even commenced, the growing unrest across the country's ports following Devlin had led the government to create a new non-statutory committee that aimed to resolve the new problems

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[513] Turner, *Diary of the Docks Dispute*, p. 40.

within the industry. Jointly chaired by Lord Aldington (then Chairman of the Port of London Authority) and Jack Jones (then General Secretary of the TGWU), the 'Aldington-Jones' Committee issued its final report in 1974. Whilst the main recommendations of the report did little more than offer a commitment to abolish causal employment at, and unfair competition from, the non-scheme ports, to reserve some container groupage work for registered dockers, and to establish a voluntary severance scheme, the Committee's settlement placated many dock workers.[514] Nevertheless, the Hull shop stewards continued to lead the port's dockers in a militant campaign to protect dock work. Consequently, Hull, unlike many other ports (including the neighbouring port of Immingham, which had an excellent labour record during this period), continued to be blighted by ongoing industrial unrest into the second part of the 1980s.

Whilst another national stoppage was threatened and only narrowly averted following fears of the return of the TUR in Hull and Liverpool during 1980, the Hull dockers were again at the fore of a third national dock trike during July 1984. This was called in response to British Steel's use of unregistered labour to unload iron ore at Immingham.[515] Despite receiving little other support outside of Scotland, the Hull men also engaged in a further national strike in August of the same year following the use of unregistered labour to discharge a shipment of coal from a 'blacked' vessel at Hunterston.[516]

The Hull men's battle against growing unemployment on the docks did not just manifested itself via their participation in large-scale strike action. Many of my interviewees involved in the port's management described militant action amongst the labour force as a permanent and ongoing feature on the Hull docks during this period. For example, in the years immediately following Aldington-Jones the Hull men extended their container blacking campaign and actively resisted some aspects of new technology (see Figure 25).[517] Remembering this issue, Mike Fell explained:

> There was some resistance to the new methods of cargo handling. If you look at that picture there which was taken in the 70s [points to large framed photograph depicting an aerial view of King George Dock] you only see the containers one high - the men wouldn't put them two high like they did on the continent - a resistance to it. There was a system called 'Barge Aboard Catamaran' which was an attempt to move cargo from Hull on the canal

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[514] Turnbull, Woolfson and Kelly, *Dock Strike*, p. 28.

[515] Terry Turner, 'The Dockers Temporarily Unattached Register Issue, 1980' in *Hull Dockers' Essays on Freight Transport Systems* (Hull: University of Hull, 1980); *Hull Daily Mail*, 10 July 1984.

[516] Turnbull, Woolfson and Kelly, *Dock Strike*, pp. 90-92; *Hull Daily Mail*, 31 August 1984.

[517] *Ibid*. p. 29.

> system… BACAT – resisted by the docker completely, such that it didn't even get off the ground or the quay-side might be a better description.[518]

Fell was not alone in recalling the ongoing militancy of the Hull men and its adverse effect upon the port's trade. George Robinson also recollected a number of long-established protective practices such as the inflation of manning-scales to increase employment amongst the workforce:

> [The dockers were] refusing in a sense to give the flexibility for modern handling methods. An example of that is a grabbing gang just to grab bulk cargo out of a ship. I think the minimum was five – two in the hold, a trigger man for the grab because it was manually triggered and two men on the land. I'm not sure what for probably to pick up sweepings but when you got towards the bottom of the hold you had to put at least two more in to clean up – sweep up so you could have up to seven.

Robinson went on to explain how this tactic was used by the dockers whilst negotiations were taking place with new and existing customers:

> Well I mean before the Scheme ended we were offered quite a big company came to us to do sea dredged aggregates – you-know where you got these dredgers go off the Wash and so-on in licensed areas and hoover up sand and gravel for the building industry. And these vessels were equipped with conveyors in them into the hold - nobody does anything except stand on the bridge of the ship and press a button and it conveys it out the hold over a chute and you have a conveyor system on the land into a stack yard and they still wanted their grabbing gang there because its bulk cargo and in the Port Agreement that's what is says. So even if there wasn't any work they wouldn't do it without the men there and then in the stack yard they wanted - I don't know how many people something silly - and the people just couldn't contemplate it.[519]

Despite further concessions under the Aldington-Jones Committee and a general decline in worker days lost throughout the industry, the strength and coherence of the Hull docker's militant resolve did not weaken. Refusing to relinquish work which had been passed on for generations, the port's shop stewards led the Hull dockers in a campaign spanning over two decades.

[518] Mike Fell, Interview, 6 May 2013.

[519] George Robinson, Interview, 28 May 2014.

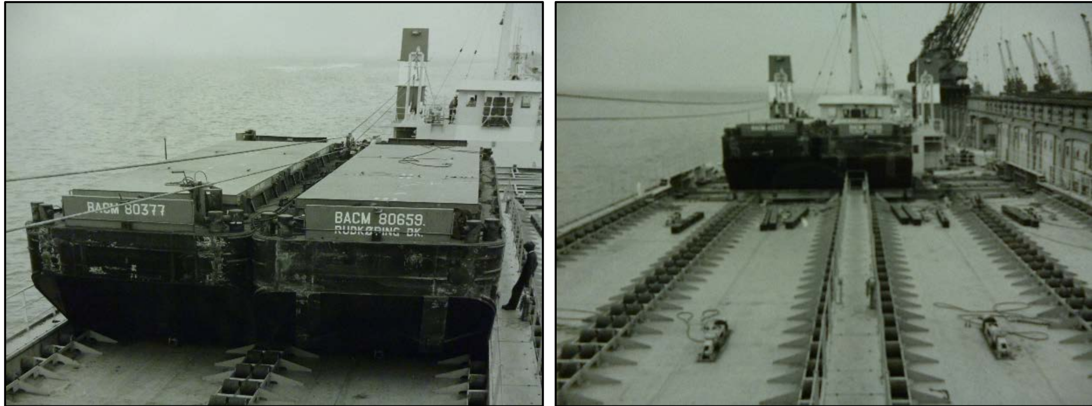

Figure 26: The Inauguration of the ill-fated BACAT I service at Hull's Riverside Quay, 7 March 1974. Fearing its affect upon their traditional work, the Hull dockers militantly opposed this new technology. Consequently, the service was never established at the port. (Photos courtesy of ABP).

Though all of my interviewees agreed that it was the shop stewards appointed during Devlin that were at the helm of militant action at Hull during this period, memories about the nature of their authority were hotly contested between my docker interviewees and those involved in the port's management. Management employee George Robinson, for example, explained:

> We had these, not only unofficial strikes here but spontaneous walk-outs on a ship or the port as a whole. I've put down here [on notes] "we've chucked it!" was the local expression. So the message came back "they've chucked it in" and a dispute on one ship, if you were lucky, could be contained to that ship but if the Shop Stewards felt like it, it would only take one of them to get on his bike and cycle round past every other ship and shout out "we're out lads" and they'd bog off! Without even knowing what it was about just herd instinct or loyalty or whatever you want to call it so it was as daft as that!

Here, Robinson emphasises how easily the shop stewards could attain the backing of the rank and file dock workers to implement a port-wide strike to meet their aims. Furthermore, Robinson elaborated on how little control the TGWU's newly appointed officials had over this, and other militant, action:

> The Union officials hid behind them. Without mentioning names the Dock Officer at the time, probably if you got him on the side was quite a nice chap, he was a bit like us – a bystander in the sense that the Joint Port Working Committee he would sit in the middle with two shop stewards either side of him and they would make all the ground and he was a bit like us… you'd think being a Union Officer you would say to shop stewards "look you're being silly" you-know "this is daft you're asking too much, ease off a bit" or whatever you-know - stand up for them yes - like any union had to stand up for the workforce to try and curb the excesses and I think that perhaps does happen in some unions or did in those days but it certainly didn't happen from what we saw.

Later in the interview Robinson elaborated just how much control the shop stewards had over the labour force and over the port's daily operations:

> The shop stewards ruled the day […] even then they had things like agreed days for doing union card checks with lorry drivers coming in and the implication was that shop stewards could go down the line of trucks waiting to deliver or pick up containers or anything in the port and "where's your Union card mate? Oh you haven't got one then? Why haven't you got one?" Putting… not necessarily turning them away… but putting that subtle pressure on them to be in the TandG presumably if they were lorry drivers.[520]

Another management employee, Mike Fell, echoed Robinson's sentiments regarding the TGWU's lack of control over its membership and the damaging effect this had on industrial relations at Hull:

> The shop stewards had far more clout than the union officials. If it was a wage negotiation each year then we did have the union official present but the union official was very, very rarely present for one of these ship-side disputes that was all dealt with by the shop stewards […] I don't think the Unions were actually in charge of their members, they were not. Perhaps they were at one stage but the militancy of the shop stewards grew and grew and it was *they* that were really in charge and the men followed them like sheep. You could talk to a docker on the quayside just as we are talking now and they would agree with you - "nonsense, you know how it is Guvnor". They'd follow because that's what they thought they had to do. It could get quite nasty if you stuck out – a brick could come through the window and so on - it could be very nasty if you stepped out of line for the individuals concerned – it could be![521]

Like Robinson, Fell suggested that the strength of shop steward control was based on a degree of naivety amongst the men and even coercion. In direct contrast, Barry Freeman discussed his memories of one particular shop steward and the nature of this man's position with the militant campaign of these years:

> Walt Cunningham he became…. how can I put it Walt Cunningham was a man that nobody… he could get all the men behind him and not because he dictated to 'em it's because he did what the men wanted - the vast majority of men wanted. That's why I had such respect for Walt. I always remember listening to that Martin Luther King speech before I went on the docks… I mean I could speak to about 10 or 20 men but you put me in that City Hall with a thousand I'd've fainted - Walt Cunningham could 'ave [addressed] 'undred thousand![522]

[520] George Robinson, Interview, 28 May 2013.

[521] Mike Fell, Interview, 6 May 2013.

[522] Barry Freeman, Interview, 2 April 2014.

While Devlin's initiation of the TGWU's reform during the second part of the 1960s did much to both improve rank and file trust of the union's officials and defuse tension with the rival blue union, this section has shown that in the case of Hull, new problems were created for the internal workings of the TGWU following its overhaul. The creation of a system of shop stewards elected from the rank and file certainly made the TGWU more democratic and improved communications with the shop floor, however too much power was devolved to this group. The rank and file dockers had effective control on the Hull docks and the TGWU's officials continued to possess little authority or control over its membership's propensity to strike or engage in militant action. In light of rapidly growing unemployment due to the development of mechanisation and the particularly large loss of traditional dock work to unregistered labour in the port's vicinity, it is perhaps not surprising that the Hull men wielded the weapon of collective action so readily during the post-Devlin period.

4.4.4 The Atrophy of the National Dock Labour Scheme

As established in section 4.4.1 of this chapter, the Devlin Committee's recommendations that successfully decasualised the industry on 18 September 1967 were certainly worthy of commendation. However, the merit and progressive nature of this achievement was greatly reduced by Devlin's failure to either remove or reform the National Dock Labour Scheme in line with the abolition of the casual system.[523] Evidence from Hull supports this assertion. First, the Scheme did not permit the port's employers of dock labour (which had effectively taken on the role of maintaining the workforce after Devlin) to make reductions to the registered labour force commensurate with an increasing labour surplus on the docks. As established earlier, the number of employers had been reduced greatly following Devlin phase I, however, the number of employers of dock labour contracted further during the 1970s and 1980s as a result of declining trade at the port or the transferal of their operations to the expanding non-scheme sites. The continuation of the scheme, however, meant that the registered dock workers of these defunct employers were simply re-allocated by local dock labour boards to the remaining cargo-handling companies within the port. For example, in 1973 when the port's largest employer of dock labour Ellerman's Wilson Line folded, the port's remaining employers suddenly became burdened with the Line's registered workers. Then working for Hull and Humber Cargo Handling Services, Mike Fell vividly recalled this particular event and its problems:

> [The Port Authority at Hull] did acquire certain stevedoring companies during its existence and the logic behind that was that if you were in charge of it you

[523] Phillips and Whiteside, *Casual Labour*, p. 267; Wilson, *Dockers*, p. 303.

> got better control but in the end that fell foul because under the old Dock Labour Board system: If a company, Ellerman's Wilson Line for example, went bust in Hull, all their dockers were reallocated to the remaining employers and of course you took on a thousand people you didn't want![524]

Despite an improved level of control and cohesion in the organisation of the port's employers after Devlin, Fell's explanation clearly highlights how the external intervention of the National Dock Labour Scheme maintained a large surplus of labour within the port. With unit labour costs already inflated following Devlin's modernisation deal at Hull, the Scheme's continued system of registration burdened the port's remaining employers with the upkeep of an excessively large work force and despite the ongoing National Voluntary Severance Schemes (NVSS) reducing the port's register of dock workers to just 669 by April 1989, a high level of surplus labour remained into the late 1980s.[525] George Robinson, explained that this was evidenced by the persistence of long-established restrictive practices such as the welt:

> I mean the welt was the proof of over-manning, every day they proved to us they over-manned because half of them weren't there! It was blatant! You could allocate 15 men to ship and go along two hours later and try and count them and you-know if you got to 10 you might be lucky and this, of course, was why the productivity wasn't good and it was just well-known that they got down to the ship and "well, it's your turn to be off this morning Fred" and off they'd go to do the gardening or a window-cleaning round or whatever else….[526]

While Robinson's testimony regarding the welt indicates the ongoing problem of over-manning in the port, it also suggests that the port's disciplinary system remained ineffective under the post-Devlin Labour Scheme. As I identified in Section 3.3.4, such practices had emerged during the days of the casual system and were intended to either raise the dockers' earnings or protect against underemployment. As the Scheme remained largely unmodified following Devlin, the employers' ability to stamp out such practices (which impaired operational efficiency) also endured. Not surprisingly this grievance and its damaging effect upon Hull's trade, loomed large in the memories of several of my interviewees. For instance, Gary Marks, the manager of a large road haulage business based at King George Dock, spent much time discussing this issue and the way it adversely impacted the port's customers:

> **Gary**: During the 80s there was problems on the docks in terms of loading times – it could take a long time to load. There were also problems at the end of the day being a result of unrest. So a lot of my customers started taking their business elsewhere.

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[524] Mike Fell, Interview, 5 June 2013.

[525] Turnbull, Woolfson and Kelly, *Dock Strike*, p. 182.

[526] George Robinson, Interview, 28 May 2013.

> **AO**: So this approach to dock work was having a serious effect on the business?
> **Gary**: Yeah absolutely. A lot of the customers… […] what transpired a lot of shipping companies weren't going to put up with what they put up with before […] there was problems getting the stuff [cargo] moved in time obviously you've got x amount of time for stuff to be unloaded off the boat and delivered to the customer […] It was an issue for a while, it was an issue for a long time. Things were happening in the docks which weren't you-know and the shipping companies moved themselves out and moved the business and this had big impact on haulage companies obviously, cos we lost work as well.

Marks is explicit about the damaging effects that these persistent and unchecked practices had upon trade at Hull. He went on to provide an example of the common practice of restricting working hours, a tactic intended to increase employment by prolonging the time a vessel could be worked:

> Regularly I'd take a vehicle from - sometimes I'd have a vehicle from Gloucester at Goole at half past 2 saying "have you got a load that I can do? "And I'd say "yeah come into Hull and meet me on King George Dock. We'll load it tonight and deliver tomorrow morning". So he'd come through and I'd then contact the foreman, send a fax to him, go down meet the driver at approximately quarter past three for instance only to be told that we couldn't load until the next morning - at quarter past three and I'd say "well it's only quarter past three, you're working 'till six, technically you load 'till five and I'd be told in no uncertain terms not to and the driver wouldn't be happy cos he'd just come through from Goole and he could have gone elsewhere for a load. He could've gone to Grimsby and he has to now sit tight till eight o'clock in the morning.[527]

Mark's testimony provides a sense of the control that the dock labour force enjoyed over employers and customers well into the 1980s. Without an effective or consistent system of discipline, wasteful practices abounded long after they had been curbed in other industries. Some of my other interviewees, including George Robinson, also described the continuation and adaptation of other wasteful practices at Hull following Devlin, such as the spinning of work into overtime to increase earnings:

> They were happy to just sit back on fixed earnings looking for manufactured overtime particularly weekends - you had to order overtime I think at 11am on a Friday so a ship that you knew should finish on a Friday, on a Friday morning it would go very slow so it became a game of bluff - "yeah well you-know it's going a bit slow" the foreman would report back "it should finish but it might not" and, of course, as a stevedore you were just working up a ship owner you relayed that to him and he said "what should I do"? And you said "if you want to be absolutely sure you'll have to order Saturday morning overtime" – "oh alright then, what's that cost?" There was a premium on it

[527] Gary Marks, Interview, 8 May 2013.

> so they forced you in a situation really of ordering it in which case it would immediately speed up and they'd leave a few tons for Saturday morning which made it look like… and knew they'd be away by nine o'clock or something. If you called their bluff on it they may think well they've called our bluff on it we may as well speed up and finish now or they may to teach you a lesson and it'd still be there Monday which would be a disaster for the ship owner of course if it was a deep sea ship so there were daft situations like that.[528]

Similar to Marks, Robinson detailed the clear lack of control that employers had over the dock labour force. While highlighting how labour costs were inflated even further at the port, he also recalled a culture of vindictiveness amongst the labour force towards employers and port customers. The maintenance of the scheme after Devlin therefore not only restricted employer control but also preserved deeply-entrenched grievances damaged labour relations.

The true extent of Devlin's failure to remove or reform the Scheme at Hull is evidenced by the subsequent prosperity and growth experienced by the port following the Scheme's abolition in July 1989. Deeming it anachronistic and an impediment to efficiency, the Thatcher government took the opportunity to act in April of that year, and to complete the deregulation of the industry. By this time, the huge progress achieved by the non-scheme ports such as Felixstowe and Harwich in comparison to the scheme ports which were blighted with restrictive practices, alongside the weakening of the dockers' position (given their declining numbers, made this juncture an ideal time for the Conservatives to make their move.[529] Following the creation of *The Dock Work Bill* (the main tenet of which was a redundancy programme designed to entice registered workers to leave the industry), the *Dock Work Act 1989* was passed on 3 July and the Scheme was abolished.[530] When announced, large numbers of registered dock workers accepted generous redundancy pay-outs and left the industry. For example, at Hull 250 dockers were issued with redundancy notices just hours after the announcement and three days later a further 200 men accepted individual pay-outs of some £35,000.[531] Perhaps not surprisingly, these developments were met with a national strike across the ports and on Midnight 10 July the waterfronts of London, Liverpool, Southampton, Grimsby and Hull all fell

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[528] George Robinson, Interview, 28 May 2014.

[529] Jamieson, *Ebb Tide in the British Maritime Industries*, p. 113.

[530] *Dock Work Act, 1989* (London: HMSO, July 1989).

[531] HHC, *Hull Daily Mail* 7 July 1989

silent.[532] Although lasting three weeks until 1 August, the strike was ineffectual as, by this time, thousands more dockers had either left the industry or returned to work under new contracts.[533]

There is little doubt that Devlin's decasualisation of both dock workers and employers during the late 1960s was a vital step in the modernisation of the workforce at Hull. However, it was not until the Scheme was abolished some 22 years later that the benefits of progress could take effect. When implemented during the wake of war in 1947 the scheme's principal of joint control over labour organisation across the ports would, in theory, achieve peace on the waterfront via industrial democracy. The case of Hull indicates that the Scheme was certainly progressive in nature, but in practice its negative aspects far outweighed the positives. As a result, peace remained elusive on Hull's waterfront until the scheme's abolition.

4.4.5 Conclusion: Discord and Decline

As stated at the outset of this chapter, Devlin's programme achieved its primary objective of adapting the Hull dockers to the container age, a feat which almost certainly could not have been achieved without external intervention. The true gravity of this achievement was evidenced in sections 4.2.2 and 4.3.2 that established the port authority's success in developing the modern cargo handling facilities necessary to attract custom, particularly in the short-sea unit-load sector. What Devlin failed to do, however, was organise the port so it could compete effectively for future shipping traffic. The port's particularly high working expenses and low productivity resulted directly from Devlin's scheme and certainly contributed to the major decline in the port's traffic during the period between 1965 and 1970. However, the poor state of labour relations during the 1970s and 1980s (for which Devlin must take at least partial blame) also had a significant impact upon the port's trade. For example, in 1972, the year of the second national dock strike, the British Transport Docks Board reported:

> The service offered to port users, particularly during the first half of the year, was again disturbed by unofficial industrial action by the dock workers, over and above the national strike, and the cumulative effect of these interruptions was undoubtedly a major cause contributing to the decline in the level of trade through the port.[534]

Furthermore, following the loss of a major Scandinavian service to the less militant port of Immingham in September 1978, the British Transport Dock's Board also announced that several

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[532] HHC, *Hull Daily Mail* 11 July 1989.

[533] Turnbull, Woolfson and Kelly, *Dock Strike*, p. 174.

[534] BJL, British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts, 1972,* p. 15.

other services had been lost during the second half of that year and in early 1979 due to the dockers' action regarding 'a breach in the Board's pay policy'.[535] Indeed, the volume of traffic lost from Hull as a result of industrial unrest was so significant that a surplus of facilities was created. Consequently, further docks were closed in addition to those that had been sacrificed during the NPC's process of modernisation. Having elected to close William Wright and Albert Docks to shipping traffic during 1972, the British Transport Docks Board turned them over to the port's fishing industry, a sector that was also in the midst of a dual process of contraction and modernisation.[536] In addition, Alexandra dock, Hull's second largest dock, was closed in September 1981 - a development that left the port with just two operational docks during the 1980s.[537] The turmoil of this period was evident in the port's declining tonnage figures and the memories of those involved; it also left its mark upon the port's landscape in the form of moribund docks.

[535] BJL, British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts, 1978,* p. 9. British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts, 1979,* p. 9.

[536] BJL, British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts, 1972,* p. 15.

[537] BJL, British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts, 1981,* p. 8.

4.5 **The Dockers' Community: Decline and Disappearance**

The origin, function and nature of many of Britain's occupational communities have been examined by academics.[538] However, the decline, displacement and disappearance of these groups, and the implications of such developments, have received comparatively less scholarly attention. As yet there have been no studies about the specific effects of the decline of the country's traditional port system upon dock workers. This chapter, which examines the collapse of the docking community at Hull, addresses this gap. First, however, it is necessary to outline one important issue.

Despite being a sensitive issue, virtually all of my docker interviewees were very open and frank when recalling their memories and feelings regarding the decline and disintegration of their long-established community. Significantly, however, the period when decline set in was remembered differently between my respondents. Several suggested that decline commenced during the second half of the 1960s, a period identified in chapter 4.4 as one marked by widespread modernising reform. Barry Freeman, for example, explained:

> All this [change] happened..... what I'm telling you now - all this happened in my 8/9 years on the dock from 1964 to 1970 - *everything* happened! […] That was the period of 3000 men... years unloading ships.... [when] cargo went to a ship and it was loaded [manually] and then it was unloaded [manually] it *stopped*. A miracle invention came along called the container [...] All the dockers' jobs went overnight. […] Summat that'd gone on for 'undreds of years, thousands of years it stopped in my ten years on the dock. The whole world stopped in ten years... I can't believe it.[539]

Freeman was explicit in his recollection of modernisation and the introduction of new cargo handling methods as the event that prompted the loss of the dockers community. Other dock workers such as Len Scott, also cited this period as the start of the dockers' demise:

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[538] Mary J. F. Gregor and Ruth M. Crichton, *From Croft to Factory: The Evolution of an Industrial Community* (London: Nelson, 1946); University of Liverpool. Social Science Series, *The Dock Worker: An Analysis of Conditions of Employment in the Port of Manchester* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1954); Dennis N. Henriques, Fernando M. Louis, Cliff Slaughter, *Coal is our Life: An Analysis of a Yorkshire Coal Mining Community* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1956); G. W. Horobin, The Fishing Community at Hull: An Occupational Subsystem (PhD Thesis, University of Hull, 1962); Stan Hugill, *Sailortown* (London: *Routledge*, 1967); Stephen Hill, *The Dockers: Class and Tradition in London* (London: Heinemann, 1976); Tony Parker, *Redhill: A Mining Community* (London: Heinemann 1986); Alec Gill, *Village Within a City: The Hessle Road Fishing Community of Hull* (Hull: Hull University Press, 1986); J. A. Jowitt, *Model Industrial Communities in Mid-Nineteenth Century Yorkshire* (Bradford: University of Bradford, 1986); Ian P. Roberts, *Craft, Class and Control: The Sociology of a Shipbuilding Community* (Edinburgh: The University of Edinburgh Press for the University of Durham, 1993).

[539] Barry Freeman, Interview, 2 April 2014.

> As I say, Devlin that man destroyed the docks and Thatcher wanted this… what she wanted was to get rid of the dockers and that's fair enough but that man had never worked in his life - no experience of working people.[540]

For both men it was clearly the onset of modernisation that terminated the dockers' traditional way of life suddenly and definitively. Based on the developments during this period it is logical that many dockers considered this as the process that destroyed their community. For instance, reform under the Devlin committee had removed the long-established and distinctive manual-casual working arrangement of the dockers. In parallel, the labour force's working environment was also greatly altered. As established in section 4.2.3 the National Ports Council's overhaul of the port's organisation and operation not only modified its long-established function, it also impacted the landscape of the waterfront as old docks and facilities were closed and left to dereliction. Furthermore, section 4.3.2 detailed how these redundant areas were transformed by regeneration projects under ABP. In combination, these developments served to create a new and very different port and workforce.

Not all of my interviewees, however, viewed the events of these years as signalling an end to their community. Some suggested that this fate occurred much later following the abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme in July 1989. Ray Simms, for example, recalled:

> We couldn't see it [abolition] comin'. I couldn't believe it 'ad come cos I'd just been to a meeting in Liverpool and 'e was an MP – Labour 'e was a New Zealander 'e was from New Zealand but 'e was a Labour MP in the Labour Government 'ere and 'e said "look" and 'e said "I can assure you that nobody can do anything to the National Dock Labour Board – it *cannot* be touched". So, 'e said "you've no need to worry about anything there". Six weeks later Maggie Thatcher closed it – no consultation nothing! I don't know 'ow she did it she just did it and that was it - just gone. That's when most of the people left when it'd gone they left that was the finish, yeah.[541]

Likewise, Pete Neal remembered:

> Oh [it was] bad, bad! That was a cruel blow really for most people. I was fortunate, I finished on the Friday night and I went to work again on the Saturday morning with a private firm.[542]

The sudden shock and loss Simms, Neal and others felt upon learning that the Scheme was no more is clear from their testimony. Furthermore, they indicate that, for them, it was this event that brought an end to the Hull dockers as a group. Even though Neal returned to work the next day, he still claims that the scheme's end marked a clear break with past. Again this is logical:

[540] Len Scott, Interview, 4 July 2013.

[541] Ray Simms, Interview, 24 June 2013.

[542] Pete Neal, Interview, 23 April 2013.

having been enshrined in statutory law to protect the work of the dockers for over 40 years, the National Dock Labour Scheme had long been considered part of the furniture of dockland. Not surprisingly, its sudden removal by the Thatcher Government was, and to a certain extent still is, a source of bitterness to many associated with dock labour. To some such as leftist writer Bill Hunter, the Scheme's abolition was viewed as the 'final sell-out' of the dockers under the guidance of the TGWU leadership, the industry's employers and the Tory Government.[543] Indeed, my interviewees echoed similar sentiments of shock, betrayal and finality when discussing their memories of the day the Scheme ended.

Taking both of these perspectives together there is dissonance in the collective memory of the Hull dockers as to when their community and culture was lost. Those who felt that change was prompted by the modernisation of the late 1960s, had accepted that their traditional work and way of life had ended at this time. For those who felt that the end came around 1989 when the scheme ended, the interim years between modernisation and abolition retained some sense of tradition, community or identity. Research in the field of psychoanalysis provides some explanation for how the port's dockers' experiences of change and collapse in their community differed. Earl Hopper and Susan Gantt, have argued that when groups experience trauma a fear of annihilation is commonly activated and provoked. [544] This, they suggest, can be expressed as psychic paralysis and the death of psychic vitality - and it is often characterised by groups either clinging together or breaking apart and fragmenting.[545] In this chapter, I argue that both of these contradictory characteristics were displayed by the dock workers at Hull in response to the trauma of losing their community and way of life during this period.

4.5.1 Disenchantment and Disengagement

The evidence of some of my docker interviews strongly suggested that there was indeed a growing sense of disintegration or breaking apart amongst their number following the rapid and widespread reforms of the late 1960s and the abolition of the Scheme in 1989. In section 4.4.3 I outlined how the Hull dockers became increasingly militant during the years following Devlin and leading up to the removal of the scheme. While this was a common to many of the older,

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[543] Bill Hunter, *They Knew Why they Fought: Unofficial Struggles and Leadership on the Docks, 1945-1989* (London: Index Books, 1994), pp. 103-113.

[544] Susan P. Gantt and Earl Hopper, 'Two Perspectives on a Trauma in Training Group: The Systems Centred Approach and the Theory of Incohesion', *Group Analysis*, 41, 2008, pp. 98-112.

[545] *Ibid*., p. 106.

larger British ports, it has also been suggested that, in parallel, the labour forces at such ports often displayed an increasing sense of demoralisation or lack of pride in their work during this period.[546] In the case of the Hull dockers I found much evidence to support this assertion. For instance, Barry Freeman vividly remembered a collective feeling of loss and despondency amongst the workforce at this time:

> **Barry**: Me elder brother 'e was at King George dock on the containers – a really, really easy job. You just made sure everything was going smooth you know what I mean? You dint do any physical work cos 'e was used to physical - real 'ard physical work and 'e wasn't keen on it and I said "don't you think its time Bill? The docks have gone - its changed. Don't you think it's time you packed it in?" And 'e did. And then me brother-in-law did, me mate Hutchy did, me mates – all me mates they give it up.
> **AO**: Do you think they missed that physical….?
> **Barry**: Oh yes! The physical side of life.
> **AO**: And do you think it was too mundane after that – just hanging [hooks] on [containers] and…?
> **Barry**: Yes, very much so.

Of particular importance is Freeman's recollection of the feeling of others that the docks had 'gone'. Of course, the port's physical dock facilities still remained (aside from the ones that had closed following modernisation or the decline traffic), however, Freeman's statement likely relates to the sense that the dockland world that he and others had known and loved had disappeared and been replaced with something more modern yet less desirable to the workforce. Freeman also recalled that modernisation and dwindling numbers had reduced the dockers' long-cherished opportunity to socialise on the job:

> You dint 'ave so many men [after modernisation]. Say you 'ad six men in a gang you 'ad 'undred men on a ship [before modernisation] you was all talking to each other – coffee shops, muggers, pubs! Whereas it went down to maybe two or three men it just… it just seemed to stop.

Freeman provides a clear sense of how the work force at Hull became increasingly isolated and demoralised during this period. Section 3.4.3 established that the communal nature of dock work was not simply seen as a perk of the job, but a device that served to motivate and stimulate the labour force in a physically tough and repetitive job. Once these elements of their work had been removed and men increasingly worked in small numbers when operating machinery, Freeman's recollection of a growing sense of solitude on the docks. A similar theme arose when he spoke about the atmosphere within the new quayside restaurants that had been installed on the docks following Devlin:

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[546] Peter Turnbull, Charles Woolfson, John Kelly, *Dock Strike: Conflict and Restructuring in Britain's Ports* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1992),

> **Barry**: You still got a little bit of comradeship in there... but the men were gerrin' less, and less and less. Whereas before there was a queue a mile long and you was all packed tight like sardines all of a sudden there was maybe twenny or thirdy people in there...
> **AO**: And it wasn't the same?
> **Barry**: Completely different.[547]

Although many of my docker interviewees, including Freeman, previously spoke of the filth and squalor of the older, ramshackle coffee shops that had served the dock labour force prior to the purpose built restaurants, the sense of comradeship and opportunity to socialise at these sites perhaps caused many to recall the former more fondly and in greater detail. Similarly, when Mike Galloway reflected upon the marked changes in docking culture following reform, he concluded that it was actually life on the pre-modernised docks that he had preferred:

> **Mike**: It was a different job altogether [after modernisation] but lookin' back I think the best days was the early days.
> **AO**: Working in a gang and things?
> **Mike**: Yeah I think… when I first went to North Sea Ferries I used to enjoy it then, it was a bit of a smaller firm and gradually it got bigger and then it altered after the NDLB went altogether didn't it.[548]

Although modernisation brought a less arduous and more sanitised working environment, Freeman and Galloway recalled how they and others felt that a way of life had been destroyed and replaced with something more mundane and impersonal. Some of my other interviewees, including foreman Len Scott, also described how they became increasingly disenchanted with life and work on the docks when modern regulations were imposed alongside new methods of working:

> I'll tell you a truthful story. I was a foreman on the dock at the end I said to the manager one day "my car comes on the dock at 20 mile an hour and goes off at 80 mile an hour and if the barrier is down it jumps over the soddin top of it!" and that's the way I felt at the end […] But by that time you see they brought 'ealth and Safety into it and from a foreman's point of view it was just ridiculous. They could turn round and "oh it's dangerous" and that was it - it went from the sublime to the ridiculous."

Despite being intended to protect the welfare of dock workers, Scott clearly resented the imposition of modern Health and Safety measures, much preferring the days when dockers and foremen were largely left to organise work themselves. He went on to explain how he had been keen to leave the industry:

> So I took the golden handshake - redundancy. See by that time I had a real bad knee and I could hardly walk. I did get a replacement but that was after

[547] Barry Freeman, Interview, 2 April 2014.

[548] Mike Galloway, Interview, 13 May 2013.

> I'd left the dock and the port doctor then said "if you don't take the money you'll finish up in a wheelchair" so he advised me to take the money… so I did and that was in… I was 57 and half when I left [in] '87. And if you look at your age and that kind of thing and the wife and I sat down and talked things out and I decided yes and to tell you the truth I never looked back. [549]

Alongside a growing lack of pride in their work, some of my interviewees also remembered the weariness they felt in relation to the ongoing industrial action and militancy which characterised the waterfront of the 1970s and 1980s. Dennis recollected for example:

> **Dennis**: It got a bit ridiculous at times though dint it? There was fuckin' strikes every… there want a week went by without a strike! Cos I was a shop steward then… well an unofficial shop steward and we said "nobody can call a strike now! No shop steward can call a strike without first calling a meeting with all the shop stewards, then we'll decide whether were gonna 'ave one or not"[550]

Despite displaying outward signs of loyalty and collective solidarity, Len Scott recalled feelings of resentment and internal divisions within the dockers':

> These kids came along and promoted themselves as shop stewards and then they become masters of the dock. I mean Geraghty 'e finished up with the Council and all that kind of thing… But the man never did a decent days work in 'is life but 'e used 'is gift of the gab or whatever they call it and 'e could talk himself into it and Cunningham and all these people got their selves settled in there.[551]

The weariness about continuing industrial action remembered here is a far cry from the contemporary media portrayal of dockers as bloody-minded industrial bully boys. In sum, these memories indicate that, following reform, there was a growing sense of fracture and disenchantment amongst the dockers' community. In turn, this contrasts with memories of the pre-modernised docks when, despite a time when dock work was dangerous and conditions were poor, the job was generally recalled with nostalgia and as being marked by hard work, comradeship and freedom. By contrast, dock life following modernisation was predominantly characterised by a growing sense of decline and dejection.

Alongside a growing disengagement at work, some of my docker interviewees remember a parallel decline in the cohesion of the work force and community outside of work. As a section 3.3.4 established, the Hull dockers had generally not lived in residential segregation close to the waterfront after 1945, however, many still often clustered together in new suburban housing

[549] Len Scott, Interview, 4 July 2013.

[550] Dennis Mayhew, Barry Cheney and Clive Shields, Interview, 2 April 2013.

[551] Len Scott, Interview, 4 July 2013.

on the outskirts of the city. As Davies suggested, it appears that any remaining degree of cohesion further deteriorated after the reforms of the late 1960s.[552] As noted in Section 4.4.2, the Hull dockers had received particularly substantial financial inducements during Devlin phase II in return for the acceptance of new unitised and mechanised methods. Consequently, the port's dockers were likely amongst the most mobile and affluent labouring groups in the city if not the country. This newly acquired financial security manifested itself in the relocation of some dockers from inner city housing to suburban housing or more middle-class locations in villages outside of the city. For example, Mike Galloway explained that he and his wife Judy then had the means to move from their city terrace of the 1960s to the villages of the East Riding during the early 1970s:

> We bought a little place in Holland Street [in Hull] not far from where me Mam and Dad where and I bought that with a view to doing it up, selling and moving out to… Then we bought this house at Sproatley [in the East Riding] and we lived there for a while and then came here [Thorngumbald, East Riding] and we've lived here ever since. So I've always had a car like to get to work and that.[553]

Others, such as Pete Neal, recalled just how widely the dockers became dispersed around the towns and villages within the region during the years following modernisation:

> **Pete**: Some of 'em lived in Cottingham! […] Harold Farmery 'e lived in Cottingham, Bobby…..Bobby can't remember 'is other name but they was best mates – they were two snooker players, they lived in Cott.
> **AO**: So quite a way away [from the docks] then?
> **Pete**: Oh some lived in Aldborough, Withernsea […] With the commercial docks… big Jim 'e was from Withernsea, little Carl the deckman 'e was from Aldborough, John 'e was from Aldborough there was quite a few of em from out and about, Sproatley you-know all them places – Cottingham, Beverley.[554]

While these testimonies confirm how the Hull dockers became more dispersed residentially from their co-workers following reform, other interviewees suggest that this also reduced the frequency with which dock workers engaged with each other socially outside of work. Section 3.4.4 established that many dockers, along with their families, socialised extensively -

[552] Sam Davies 'The History of the Hull Dockers, c. 1870-1960' in Sam Davies et al (eds) *Dock Workers International Explorations in Comparative Labour History, 1790-1970* (Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 2000), p. 193.

[553] Mike Galloway, Interview, 13 May 2013.

[554] Pete Neal, Interview, 23 April 2013.

particularly at the dockers' social clubs that had been established by the National Dock Labour Board and the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers' Union. However, respondents noted how such activities gradually became less frequent during these years. Val Green, the wife of docker Trevor, mentioned:

> When the boys was little we never got in [the dockers' clubs] much and when the boys got older… and if we 'ad a night out we would go and it was good cos it was a nice club was that Posterngate dockers.[555]

Here, Val suggests that, having started a family, she and Trevor were less inclined to spend time with her husband's co-workers from the docks. Likewise, when I asked dock worker Mike Galloway and his wife Judy if they still attended the Willows Dockers Club after they had moved out of Hull, they responded:

> **Mike**: I think we did do for a while… dint we Jude?
> **Judy**: Yeah…. we stopped really going when the dock went down.[556]

Having once considered themselves a distinctive and tight-knit working class group, the memories of my docker interviewees and their families suggest that this community cohesion was fractured following the port's modernisation during the late 1960s. While a large number became disheartened with their work and the ongoing industrial unrest that blighted the port during these years, the culture associated with dock work appears to have declined in tandem. Having become financially prosperous, some dockers appear to have switched their attention away from their occupational community and engaged in a more private and comfortable home life.

4.5.2 The Marfleet Collection

Although disenchantment and disengagement were prominent in the recollections of docker interviewees when discussing the collapse of their community, there is evidence to suggest that many of them countered this loss or displacement by attempting to cling to their traditional way of life. Similar episodes characterised other industrial groups reacting to the loss of their community and way of life. Valerie Walkerdine's 'psychosocial' study of a tight-knit and insular South Wales steeltown community, for example, identified that they too engaged in comparable activities amidst the breakdown of their industry. The steelworkers and their families often refused to move away from their homes, they organised communal activities such as the

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[555] Valerie Green, Interview, 4 June 2013.

[556] Mike Galloway, Interview, 13 May 2013.

hanging of Christmas lights, and they engaged in youth work in their community.[557] Walkerdine conceptualised these as 'affective practices': as attempts to stop the fragmentation of their group and to 'cling together' and counter the feeling of 'falling apart'.[558] This suggests some common traits with other industrial communities also faced with traumas such as the loss of their way of life. For the Hull dockers, attempts to bolster a sense of community is best exemplified by their creation of, and engagement with, the 'Marfleet Collection'. This collection was a sizeable exhibition of dock workers' materials and memorabilia gathered and displayed in a barber's shop located close to the port's King George Dock. The instigator and custodian of the collection was the shop's owner, Walter Oglesby, a local barber whose customer base was largely formed by dockers. The events and emotions surrounding the initiation of this collection during the early 1980s provides insight into the psyche of the dockers' amidst the fragmentation of their community. In a contemporary local newspaper interview, Oglesby revealed that it had been a visit to the 'Docking Gallery' at the city's recently opened Town Docks Museum that had inspired him to begin gathering and displaying materials relating to the port's dock workers:

> I was rather disappointed because there is very little there [in the museum] about the dockers themselves. I felt I could do a better job and believe I have. I started collecting the implements about two weeks before Christmas [1982] and, with the aid of dockers, have built up this collection.[559]

Reflecting in a 2005 newspaper interview, Oglesby further elaborated upon the origins of the collection:

> It seemed a shame that, at that time, we had nothing to show that there had been dockers in Hull. I decided to do something about this.[560]

Oglesby's statement reveals that his unofficial exhibition was born out of the absence of dock workers in the city's official heritage narrative. It also reveals that many dockers' actively collaborated in the preservation of their fading identity and heritage. Indeed, the extent to which they engaged with this project was clear in another local newspaper article from the early 1980s. This described the collection as already containing '1,400 photographs, 38 different type

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[557] Valerie Walkerdine, 'Steel, Identity, Community: Regenerating Identities in a South Wales Town' in Margaret Wetherell (ed) *Identity in the 21st Century: New Trends in Changing Times, Identity Studies in the Social Sciences* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 59-75; Valerie Walkerdine and Luis Jimenez, *Gender, Work and Community after De-industrialisation: A Psychosocial Approach to Affect* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

[558] *Ibid.*

[559] HHC, *Hull Daily Mail,* 29 April 1983.

[560] *This is 'Ull*, June 2005.

of bag hook, 60 assorted hand hooks and scores of other implements' (See Figure 26).[561] Furthermore, in the same article Oglesby explained that he had gathered so many items that his barber's shop was becoming overloaded with docks memorabilia:

> What I would like the Council to do is start a dock workers' museum in a disused warehouse on Prince's Dock. I would transfer all the items there on loan and act as curator free of charge. I hope the Council take me up on this because I think it would be an extremely worthwhile project which would fill a gap in local history. Believe me, I would have no difficulty in stocking the museum. Stuff is coming in all the time.[562]

These accounts suggest that despite their numbers being in decline, many dockers still possessed a strong communitarian way of doing things. Amidst despondency at the disintegration of their community they still acted collectively in a communal act of preservation and remembering. For some, the collection appeared to constitute something of a monument or memorial to the dockers' community. Earlier in this chapter, a number of my interviewees related the sudden shock and trauma they felt regarding the dockers' demise during the reforms of 1965 and 1970. Consequently, the barber's shop appears to be somewhere that the dockers could grieve the loss of their culture and find closure. Again, contemporary newspaper coverage of the collection sheds light on this:

> As dockers retire or leave the job, Walter photographs them in his shop and sticks their pictures in an album. The names read like a dockers' roll-call in Hull – Ernie Garmston, Billy Harland, Nick Rumble, Joss Lampin, Paddy Cannon, Joss Fratson, Joe Wright, Herbert Shillito: craggy faces peer out of the pages against a backdrop of Mr. Oglesby's collection of dockland bric-a-brac.[563]

In this instance, the photographs and lists of dockers' names suggest a site of memory more akin to a war memorial than a simple collection of nostalgic images depicting a group of labourers. Equally these photographs depict a ghost community, one that now only existed within the pages of the photo album. In a later newspaper interview Oglesby recalled how other elements of the collection served to commemorate the dockers:

> Some of the tools I've got are 100 years old, says Walter, They've been handed down from grandfather to grandsons. Some of the dockers said to

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[561] CHC, *Hull Daily Mail* [unknown date]

[562] CHC, *Hull Daily Mail* [unknown date].

[563] CHC, *Hull Daily Mail,* 1989.

> me "if it weren't for you there would be no record of us working on the docks". And they thanked me.[564]

Some of my interviewees considered the barber's shop as an important site or marker of memory for their community. Ray Simms explained for instance:

> **Ray**: [The collection] used to be right down Hedon Road near King George Dock in a barbers shop… [it contained] different kinds of hand hooks and things.
> **AO**: Oh on the wall? Walter Oglesby they called the chap.
> **Ray:** Oh did they? I never knew what they called him!
> **AO**: Did you ever go in?
> **Ray**: Oh yes, oh yes!
> **AO**: To get your hair cut?
> **Ray**: No, to go in and have a look in mainly. It was just hand hooks and what kids did…. I mean there was two little forked one, there was one like a tiger's paw they could have for different things and big ones and the real big ones what was for bacon – used to pull the bacon with and all like that.[565]

For Simms, the display was clearly a monument or a reminder of the lost methods and tools of his work that he could visit casually. Although the Oglesby's barber's shop formed an unlikely setting for an exhibition of traditional dock life, there is some evidence to suggest that the shop itself constituted much more than simply a house for the collection.

Figure 27: Photograph of the Marfleet Collection at Walter Oglesby's barber shop.

[564] *This is 'Ull*, June 2005.

[565] Ray Simms, Interview, 24 June 2013.

Following its assemblage, the shop formed a hub or haven where the dockers would continue to meet and socialise. As a male domain located in an industrial area of the city, the shop and its collection were largely patronised by working-class males. In this regard, it appeared to have served as a replacement, replica or recreation of the old private dockside coffee shops to some extent. As established in Section 3.4.3 such places were warmly recalled as sites of congregation, leisure and socialising for the dockers' prior to the construction of the modern (and seemingly less popular) National Dock Labour Board restaurants. Reflecting upon the atmosphere of his shop, Oglesby remembered daily life in the barber's shop alongside the dockers:

> They [the dockers] were so witty and funny. I had the patter to deal with them – whatever they said you had to have some retort back, […] once I got their confidence, they'd confide in me about all sorts of things.[566]

So, Oglesby recalls that, amidst the nostalgic icons of traditional dock life and work, his shop retained a strong communal aspect. In addition, details of his own personal background also provide an insight into his motivation in creating this microcosm. Born in the Drypool area of Hull close to Victoria Dock in 1923 as one of 11 siblings, Oglesby had been orphaned at a very young age.[567] His mother had disappeared when he was four and his father died just two years later.[568] Following an abusive childhood in foster care, he served an apprenticeship as a barber and, after a spell in the army during and after the Second World War, he began work in the barber's shop close to the port's Alexandra Dock during the 1950s.[569] Having been accepted by, and forming a bond with, the tight-knit dockers' community by the early 1980s, it is likely that Oglesby, a man whose formative years had been marked by a combination of trauma, instability and constant change, enjoyed his access to the dockers' community. Naturally, he was keen to reinforce this sense of security and community to which he was affiliated in the face of change, upheaval and loss. Indeed, many of my docker interviewees, including Pete Neal, remember the prominence and importance of the barber's shop to the dockers during the 1980s:

> **Pete**: There used to be [a barber's shop]! 'e used to 'ave 'and 'ooks and everything!
> **AO**: Did you used to go there?
> **Pete**: Yeah.

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[566] *This is 'Ull*, June 2005.

[567] *Ibid.*

[568] *Ibid.*

[569] *Ibid.*

> **AO**: Did everyone used to go there? All the dockers for their haircut?
> **Pete**: Yeah, yeah, yeah.
> **AO**: Everybody? This one guy?
> **Pete**: 'e 'ad hand hooks and tomahawks – Oglesby, yeah.[570]

Amongst others, Len Scott too remembered frequenting Oglesby's barbers:

> Well there's a story there – the barbers near King George Dock just opposite New Inn [pub] 'e had a board in there with all the nicknames of the dockers. There was 'tween deck ghost… see all this they [the dockers] 'ad a dry sense of humour. There was a foreman there called drug addict – 'e always said "we've got some more-for-yer" [morphia]. You used to work on a Saturday in them days till 12 o'clock but they could call for an extra hour off you till 1 o'clock and he always used to come along and say "I've got some more for yer" – some more cargo and they used to say "here's the drug addict".[571]

For Oglesby, Neal, Scott and many other dockers, the barber's shop was not only simply considered as a repository or storage facility for their memorabilia but it also appears to have possessed an intrinsic communal function as a place where the dockers gathered, socialised and reminisced. In addition, the barbers shop, like the old coffee shops, was a relatively private and exclusive place. This came to light when I asked the wives, children and wider associates of the dockers' community about their memories of Oglesby, his barbers shop and the collection it housed. Whilst many were vague, Shirley Cooke, the daughter and wife of dock workers remembered:

> **Shirley**: I looked through the window once cos his [husband's] mum lived down Marfleet [Lane] and there was [hand] hooks and [shoulder] saddles and all the paraphernalia.
> **AO**: Can you remember seeing all that?
> **Shirley**: Yeah, just looking through the window in the barbers shop and he was very popular that chap.[572]

Shirley's memory of peering through the shop's window from the outside, suggests that the barbers was of interest but was, to a certain extent, off limits to women and children. Although markedly different from the methods used by the Steeltown community of south Wales, this development of the Marfleet Collection by Oglesby and the Hull dockers suggest an act that was an affective memorial practice as conceptualised by Walkerdine.

[570] Pete Neal, Interview, 23 April 2013.

[571] Len Scott, Interview, 4 July 2013.

[572] Shirley and June Cooke, Interview, 7 May 2013.

4.5.3 Conclusion

The collapse of the docking community at Hull was a more complex process than might, at first, be imagined. Like many groups that experience trauma or loss, a large number of the port's dockers reacted by drifting apart or becoming increasingly disengaged with their community following the port's modernisation during the late 1960s. This process took on a variety of different forms. While many recalled a general, growing disenchantment with dock work and industrial action, others remembered how a number of dock workers moved out of the city and became less interested in socialising with their co-workers. Others were seemingly less accepting of their fate. By creating and interacting with the Marfleet Collection at Walter Oglesby's barber shop during the 1980s, many dockers attempted to cling to the past. For some, the shop acted as a memorial site where they could casually engage with the memories of a disappearing community. For others, the shop provided an added function as a place in which they could gather and socialise amongst their own as they had done for decades in the quayside coffee shops. Although I infer here and throughout this chapter that there were two types of docker during this period; those who disengaged with the community after modernisation and those who clung to it until the abolition of the Scheme, it is sensible to assume that many of the port's dock workers could relate to both experiences in varying degrees as they attempted to come to terms with the loss of a long-established way of life during these years.

4.6 **Conclusion**

The Port of Hull that entered the 1990s was almost unrecognisable from that of the mid-1960s. In contrast to the conservative politics and steady economic growth of the 1945 to 1964 period, the years between 1965 and 1989 were a time of great political and economic flux. During the late 1960s Labour's 'white heat' policy saw the collaborative efforts of the British Transport Docks Board and the National Ports Council effectively dismantle the old port system at Hull and create a new, modern, streamlined node equipped to compete within the growing short sea unit-load sector. This changes formed part of a co-ordinated port plan on the Humber that involved Hull's incorporation into an estuarial port complex. The modernisation of the port, however, was achieved only after the implementation of the recommendations contained within the Devlin Report. Delivered in two phases amidst widespread industrial unrest across the country's ports, Devlin secured the decasualisation of dock labour and reform of their wage system. This, it was believed, would secure the industrial relations that were required for the successful introduction of new methods of cargo-handling. By 1970 the process of adaptation at Hull (as intended by Rochdale and Devlin) was largely complete. However, Hull underwent further alterations during the early 1980s following privatisation. This period witnessed an intensive process of rationalisation that saw the port's new profit-conscious owners shed those employees and facilities that were deemed expendable. This policy, along with the diversification of interests (which included the regeneration of disused dockland) saw the port become a more competitive and financially sound proposition. These findings indicate the merits of externally imposed reform upon the organisation and operation of a port that were previously outdated and unlikely to change independently.

In this part I also argued that despite the general success of modernisation at Hull, certain reforms had fundamental flaws. Moreover, I asserted that the adverse effects of these flaws were incredibly problematic for the port's operational efficiency. This issue largely related to the price at which modernisation was achieved at Hull by Devlin. The huge inflation of the dockers' wages (sanctioned by the local negotiations approved by Devlin) greatly increased operational costs, and inevitably this burden was passed onto the port's customers. The damaging effect of this development was evidenced by the large-scale departure of traffic from Hull to the unregistered wharves that offered a cheaper, more efficient turnaround. Devlin's failure to modify or remove the National Dock Labour Scheme simply added to the problem as large numbers of dockers were retained at the port at a time when rapidly increasing mechanisation required a severe reduction of workers. With an excess of employees,

operational costs were further raised. Furthermore, the scheme's creation of a barrier between employers and employees following decasualisation meant that labour could not be effectively managed. Having occupied the weaker position in the employer-worker relationship for around a century, the dockers were greatly empowered under Devlin. This was not least because the preservation of the scheme provided almost complete impunity. With the alleged past abuses of employers (discussed in sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.9) no doubt still fresh in the minds of many dock workers, it is perhaps not surprising that there is compelling evidence that suggests the dockers often exploited their improved position.

This part also explored the impact of externally imposed reform that does not consider fully its implications for localities. In part, my discussion focused on the large tracts of dockland rendered obsolete by the development of new downstream port facilities, as well as the creation of unemployment within the port's associated transport industries. The former had been left to dereliction and decay prior to their transformation into places of business, leisure and retail; places that often paid little heed to the communities that once laboured there. In conjunction, the harsh realities of unemployment and redundancy were also highlighted by those who had once worked on and around the docks. Those who benefited from these developments recall these as years of progress, but the people who lost their jobs in the wake of reform recalled a sense of shock and sadness at the sudden collapse and decline of their long-established work and livelihoods. In addition I showed how the effects of reform were also felt keenly by many within the docking community, some of whom spoke about how change destroyed their much cherished way of life virtually overnight. However, the improved terms of employment won by this group during the process of re-organisation meant that some become more upwardly mobile and embraced a more middle-class way of life.

5 Heritage and Memory

5.1 **Remembering the Dockers**

5.1.1 Context: The Port of Hull since 1989

Following the abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme in July 1989 the port of Hull entered a period of recovery, growth and stability. Like the authorities at many of the other former Scheme ports, Associated British Ports (ABP) at Hull were able to re-assert managerial control following the scheme's removal and employ dock labour on more competitive terms. Indeed, revival was almost instantaneous despite the country being in the midst of a recession. Having handled 4682 thousand tonnes of cargo (excluding bulk fuels) in 1988, the total volume passing through Hull by the end of the year of abolition had increased to 4790 thousand tons.[573] Such was the break from the port's previous slump and malaise that a number of my interviewees once employed by the port authority reminisced how a new sense of freedom and optimism at Hull. For instance, Mike Fell, the port's manager at the time, remembered the days following the corresponding national dock strike of July 1989:

> One of the first things after the strike to abolish the National Dock Labour Scheme we had a Samskip Vessel and we worked it on the container terminal cos *we* were in charge! During the last strike for the Dock Labour Scheme people thought it would go on for months! It only went on for three weeks because the Scheme had actually been abolished so it was no longer a criminal offence for anyone to handle cargo other than a registered dock worker in a registered port. So I got all the staff together accountants and the like - the lot and went through the picket line and drove off cargos of Lada cars and it was the first time we could do it because you couldn't do *anything* before![574]

For Fell, the removal of the Scheme, which he felt had placed a stranglehold on the port's operation, stimulated a sense of liberation across the docks. Like Fell, George Robinson, then the port's deputy manager, also described feelings of freedom and prosperity in the wake of abolition:

> The Dock Labour Scheme went in July '89 and then it completely turned round then. We were the most popular people in the world suddenly and myself and the [port] manager… I was the deputy manager by then and myself and the Manager became the golden boys in a sense. Well you couldn't go wrong. We had customers knocking on our door immediately. One of the earliest ones was a chap who'd been operating over at Barton in a small - it was called the Clay Pit wharf at Barton - it was literally just a hole in the River Bank - a very small wharf and very tide dependent for getting ships in and he came across and said "can you give me a facility and work

[573] Turnbull, *Dock Strike,* p. 182.

[574] Mike Fell, Interview, 5 June 2013.

> with the men I've always worked with?" – "yes of course you can – do your own thing!"[575]

Robinson not only remembered how the early post-Scheme period witnessed the return of much trade to Hull, but also how new custom was also being attracted. Similarly, Andrew Brett recalled how Hull's dock labour organisation was overhauled and became more flexible during this time. He noted how he and his associates were encouraged to embark upon a new enterprise at the port:

> We formed [Northern] Cargo Services [Ltd] in 1990 as a separate private stevedore. […] We had the pick of all the dockers in that time and I think we took about 120 on and none of them would go with anybody else - the other stevedores that they'd set up after 1990 - until they found out if they'd got a chance with us and we had the pick of them. And there was no shop stewards and the men were so happy. I know it sounds like a daft thing to say but it was like a great weight taken off their shoulders. There's nothing worse than driving a forklift truck slowly all day, doing it very carefully, working to rule - it's a nightmare. Men want to get on with the job and those guys took a pride in their work but they were [previously] being held down by shop stewards![576]

Against the backdrop of over four decades of militancy and industrial strife on the Hull waterfront, Brett recollected how, for him, the scheme's abolition permitted the creation of a modern and productive workforce. Indeed, such was the expansion of trade during the early post-scheme years that ABP were encouraged enough to inject £336 million of fresh capital investment into the port by 1994.[577] This expenditure reversed some of the physical decay experienced at Hull since the late 1960s. Mike Fell, for instance, recalled:

> While Hull was in decline there was a lack of investment in craneage. When I went back in '87 it was geriatric – ancient craneage. But as soon as the Dock Labour Scheme was abolished we could go on investing in new cranes and new equipment again you-know it was like putting a jigsaw back together![578]

While new facilities and the presence of new custom addressed signs of depression and stagnation at Hull, it was Associated British Port's re-equipping and re-opening of Alexandra Dock in July of 1991 that epitomised the reinvigoration of the port's landscape and stood monument to its rapid revival (see Figure 27).[579] In contrast to the sense of shock, despair and loss felt by the port's dockers in July 1989, these memories and images show that, for many at

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[575] George Robinson, Interview, 28 May 2013.

[576] Andrew Brett, 22 May 2013.

[577] *Kingston upon Hull: The Northern Gateway* (1994), p. 4.

[578] Mike Fell, Interview, 5 June 2013.

[579] BJL, Associated British Ports, *Annual Reports & Accounts 1991*, p. 12.

Hull, the Scheme's removal heralded a renaissance or a new golden age which, to some extent is still apparent today.

More recently the port of Hull as has arguably entered another new era. This is based on the local authorities' reinvention of the port as 'Green Port Hull', a project that was given very significant encouragement in March 2014 following ABP's agreement with Siemens to invest a combined £310 million in offshore wind turbine blade manufacturing, assembly and servicing facilities at Alexandra Dock (see Figure 28). [580] Intended to serve offshore wind farms in the North Sea, the facility's construction began in April 2015 and will form the core of Hull and the East Riding of Yorkshire's bid to establish itself as a world-class centre for renewable energy. If nothing else, this development highlights the port of Hull's continuing resilience and its ability to adapt to a constantly changing world. Indeed, since 1989, there has been an increasing propensity by many in the port to move forward, to embrace progress and leave the post-1945 decades of conservatism and decline behind. Despite the social costs outlined in previous pages, in simple economic terms the port has never looked back since July of 1989.

Figure 28: Following the abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme just two years earlier, the ceremony which marked the re-opening of Hull's Alexandra Dock on 16 July 1991 symbolised the era of re-birth at the port. (Photos Courtesy of Associated British Port

5.1.2 Heritage

Following the collapse of Hull's old port system and several other large, long-established industries in the city (most notably one of the world's largest distant-water trawling fleets in the late 1970s), local authorities have been keen to move away from Hull's often traumatic industrial past. Part of this strategy has involved an attempted reinvention of the city as a modern, vibrant and enterprising place. For example, much of the dockland which had been discarded or left to dereliction by the port authority has, following its purchase and re-sale by the City Council, been regenerated. To some extent this has enabled these expansive former industrial spaces to be re-

[580] *Hull Daily Mail*, 25 March 2014.

integrated into the city: Humber Dock and Railway Dock were remodeled into a marina complex as early as 1983, St. Andrews Dock and Princes Dock were converted for use as combined leisure and retail sites during 1988 and 1991 respectively, whilst Victoria Dock is now home to an 'urban village' following its redevelopment from the late 1980s.[581] As a result of this revitalisation of much of Hull's historic waterfront, like the docklands of many other port cities across the western world, has been sanitised and transformed from a place of production into a place of consumption.[582]

In conjunction with this physical regeneration, local authorities have also promoted a new identity for Hull in a bid to market the city to tourists and external investors. This has taken the form of Hull's re-branding as 'The Pioneering City', an ambitious and forward-looking place ideal for modern business, leisure and living. The conceptualisation of Hull as an enterprising and groundbreaking place has largely been drawn from aspects of the city's heritage. Indeed, a web page on the Council's official website that spearheads their campaign states that "Pioneering is something our city has been doing since its earliest beginnings and it is something we are proud of. Pioneering is shaping our future".[583] The site goes on to cite the Humber Bridge as a 'masterpiece of civil engineering' as well as famous trailblazing sons and daughters from Hull's past including the slave trade abolitionist William Wilberforce and pioneering aviator Amy Johnson.[584] With a new look and identity, which has become increasingly well cemented today, much has been done to divorce the city from its previous image as a backwater characterised by high unemployment, industrial decline and urban decay.

It has been argued, however, that certain problems have arisen with regards to this commodification of heritage at Hull and in many other cities. For example, historical geographer David Atkinson has highlighted how such essentialised articulations can frequently be fixed in their readings of place and space and, when commandeered by powerful local elites, can often

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[581] HHC, L.387.17, Associated British Ports, *St. Andrew's Quay Background Information for Redevelopment;* L.797 (DUP), Hull City Council, *Welcome to Hull Marina: Including Development information* (1983); C TDR/6/3 *The Princes Dock Shopping Development*; Colin McNicol, *Hull's Victoria Dock Village* (Beverley: Highgate, 2002).

[582] D. A. Pinder, B. S. Hoyle and M. S. Hussain (eds) *Revitalisng the Waterfront: International dimensions of Dockland Redevelopment* (London: Belhaven, 1988); B. S. Hoyle and D. A. Pinder (eds), *European Port Cities in Transition* (London: Belhaven Press, 1992).

[583] http://www.pioneeringhull.co.uk/pionerring.html [Accessed 30 June 2015]

[584] *Ibid.*

exclude more mundane, but no less important, heritages.[585] In this chapter I argue that, amidst the back drop of progress and reinvention at Hull since the late 1980s, memories of the port's dockers have struggled to acquire a place within the city's official heritage narrative. Furthermore, I contend that this exclusion, which has occurred despite community-led heritage projects, is partly due to the often controversial memories of the dockers as well as to strong competition from other 'rival' heritages in the locality.

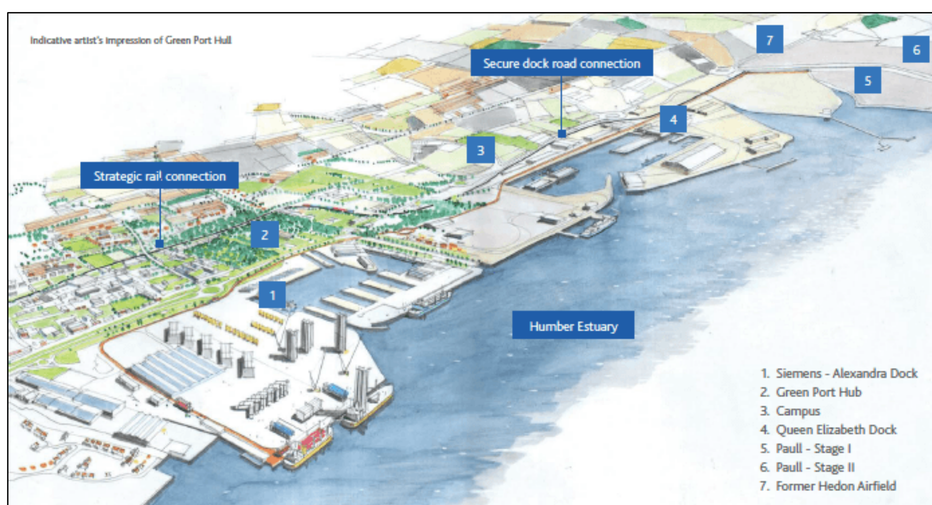

Figure 29: An artist impression of Green Port Hull which is currently under construction. (Image: http://greenporthull.co.uk/about-green-port)

5.1.3 Hull Maritime Museum's Docking Gallery

The 'Docking Gallery' at Hull's council-run Maritime Museum provides a prime example of the way memories of the port and its dock workers have, and continue to be, excluded from the official heritage narrative of the city. The Gallery was unveiled to the public in 1978 shortly after the opening of the museum in the port's former Victorian dock offices.[586] Then known as the Town Docks Museum due to its situation close to Hull's inner city dock area, the building already hosted exhibits relating to aspects of Hull's other historic maritime industries including whaling, trawling and merchant shipping.[587] Since the gallery's creation there have been significant developments in museum studies. In particular, the 'new museology' of the late 1980s, which

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[585] David Atkinson, 'The Heritage of mundane places' in B. Graham and P. Howard (eds.) *The Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (London: Ashgate, 2008) pp. 383-384; David Atkinson, 'Heritage' in D. Atkinson et al (eds.) *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), pp. 141-150; David Atkinson 'Kitsch geographies and the everyday spaces of social memory' in *Environment and Planning* Vol. **39,** 3, pp. 521 – 540

[586] *Kingston upon Hull Town Docks Museum Guide* c.1979.

[587] *Ibid.*

identified museums as sites of contestation and controversy, involved a radical re-examination of museums and encouraged reflection upon their role, function and the accountability and agency of those who work within them.[588] In order to accommodate this shift in emphasis, many museum exhibitions were revised to incorporate 'other' perspectives. No longer wishing to be perceived as sites of elitist and exclusive knowledge, many museums rejected distinctions based on gender, social class and narratives of empire and race, and adjusted their perspectives and outputs to reflect contemporary society.[589] Despite these academic advances, however, the Docking exhibit, along with the rest of the Hull Maritime Museum's collection, has received only minimal revision or development. Consequently, the exhibit is, in many ways frozen in time and effectively a museum of a museum which says more about the interests of the museum professionals and museum audience of the 1970s than it does about the activity that is represented. This will now be discussed more specifically.

By examining the spatiality and content of the Docking Gallery it is possible to learn how its subject matter is projected and understood. Indeed, museum space is now recognised as a space with a history of its own, a space active in the making of meaning, and most importantly, a space open to change.[590] The first feature one notices when entering the Docking Gallery is its rather awkward location on the upper floor of the museum building within what appears to be a converted corridor. Taking up far less space than its 'Trawling' and 'Whaling' counterparts (which together constitute the entire ground floor of the building), the exhibit is effectively a passageway and visitors are encouraged to simply walk through this section en-route to the adjacent Shipping Gallery. Based on this factor alone, there is a sense that the heritage of dock work is less important or secondary in comparison to the port's other maritime industries. This is perhaps a little ironic as both fishing and whaling were century-long industries in the port's history when compared to Hull's 700 year role as a place of commercial maritime trade.[591]

In terms of the gallery's content, its focus is narrow. Based on the work of the museum's original research consultant Edward W. Paget-Tomlinson (an expert on waterways history and a

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[588] Hilary Geoghegan, 'Museum Geography: Exploring Museums, Collections and Museum Practice in the UK' *Geography Compass,* Vol. 4/10, pp. 1462-1476.

[589] *Ibid.*

[590] Suzanne Macleod, *Reshaping Museum Space: Architecture, Design, Exhibitions* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 1.

[591] Edward Gillet and Kenneth A. MacMahon, *A History of Hull* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the University of Hull, 1980).

noted author of publications on river craft, shipping and navigation) it primarily presents the technical and administrative aspects of docking.[592] For example, its displays include a collection of ‘past and present’ dockers’ tools, information boards explaining the different ways in which the port’s traditional cargoes were handled, and pictures regarding the history and evolution of dock cranes (see Figure 29). Elsewhere, the ‘How Cargo is Shipped’ display is accompanied by Bills of Lading, Shipping Manifests and Customs and Excise documents that present a step by step clerical guide detailing the process of container exportation. The displays about the actual dock labour force, likewise extend little beyond the nature of their administrative organisation. Furthermore, as they have not been revised since 1978 their content is largely outdated. For example, one information board about cargo handling explains that “Although handling techniques have advanced with suction hoists conveyors, pallets, and above all, containers there are still shovels, forks, and skip baskets on the docks”. Furthermore, another information panel relating to trade union organisation in the port incorrectly informs visitors that ‘Nowadays the dockers are members of two unions, the Transport and General Workers, a huge amalgamation dating from 1922, and the Stevedores or ‘Blue’ Union’’. Whilst manual tools have long ceased to be used on the docks and substantial trade union reorganisation has since taken place since, visitors learn of working practices and a labour force that no longer exists. Situated in an unfavourable location within the museum and dominated by the traditional tools and ephemera relating to dock work, the gallery's representation of the culture and experiences or social conditions of the Hull dockers is minimal.

Figure 30: The Docking Gallery at Hull Maritime Museum. This image provides some sense of the narrow focus and awkward siting of the gallery.

[592] Paget-Tomlinson, E., ‘A Maritime Museum for Hull’, *Transport Museums*, Vol. 3, 1976, pp. 9-17.

This not to say that the Docking Gallery has not been developed in line with advancements in museum studies since its inception. The Maritime Museum's current curator Robin Diaper has attempted to overcome some of the gallery's short-comings. This has included introducing a small visual exhibit: *Berth 24.* A semi-dramatised documentary film produced by British Transport Films in 1949, *Berth 24* depicts the turn-around of the Ellerman's Wilson Line vessel *S.S. Bravo* at the port's Alexandra Dock.[593] A large part of the film concentrates on the role of dock labour in the process and includes rare footage of the hiring of labour and their discharge and loading of the vessel. In an interview, Diaper explained his intentions by introducing this film:

> I did that [implement the *Berth 24* exhibit] when I started and that, in my view, makes it come alive - there are people involved in doing this thing [dock work] and that's such a good source that film […] It covers actual people in their jobs – that's why we were very keen to put that in there […] because, otherwise, it was just a corner really and it is a good way of getting people to stop in that area cos otherwise it's a bit of a corridor in terms of the layout of the building.[594]

Although the film certainly improves the representation of dock workers and provides some insight into the danger and poor conditions of their work, as Diaper explained it constitutes the only real development of the exhibit since its creation. Whilst the gallery's contents satisfied the specialist interests of certain groups during the late 1970s, their narrow, outdated and exclusive focus offer little in terms of heritage to the city's modern inhabitants and visitors. With no representation of the social conditions of dock workers and their families, the complex history of trade unionism on the docks, and the experience of collapse and decline of the dockers' community, valuable aspects of the city's history and its people continue to be forgotten.

5.1.4 Contesting the Docker's Heritage: No Surrender!

David Atkinson explained that 'communities and groups who have been disinherited by powerful elites have been increasingly encouraged to reflect upon their individual and collective pasts themselves'.[595] In doing so he adds, 'they create a dissonance of voices, opinions and perspectives that together weave a richer tapestry of social memories'.[596] With the no formal

[593] http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/705128/ [Accessed 25/6/2015].

[594] Robin Diaper, Interview, 2 November 2014.

[595] David Atkinson, 'The Heritage of mundane places' in B. Graham and P. Howard (eds.) *The Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (London: Ashgate, 2008) pp. 383-384.

[596] *Ibid.*

site of memory and the city's official heritage narrative concentrating on the more dramatic, pioneering episodes of the port's maritime history, the dockers' community at Hull have indeed elected to articulate the heritage of their lives and work themselves. Discussed in Section 4.5.2, the Marfleet Collection established during the early 1980s at Walter Oglesby's barber shop provides one instance of the dockers' community led heritage. There are, however, other examples of occasions when the wider docking community has participated in the articulation and celebration of their collective past. Most notable was No Surrender! a 1996 community play that charted a century of life on Hull's waterfront. Performed at Hull's City Hall over 11 nights in August of that year, it was based on community research and produced by Remould Theatre Company, a group that specialised in producing plays with communities from a particular town, village or city (see Figure 30). Although materials relating to the origin and content of the play have proved difficult to locate, much information is contained within a fifteen page newspaper supplement entitled *Dock Life* which was issued in an August 1996 edition of the *Hull Daily Mail* in support of the play.[597] The evidence used in this section was primarily drawn from this source.

As Section 4.5.2 identified, Oglesby's Marfleet Collection was created from 1983 directly in response to the exclusion of the dockers' community and culture at the Hull Maritime Museum. However, No Surrender! developed out of a more general and ongoing sense of working-class disinheritance within the city during the late 1980s and 1990s. By 1996 Remould had already produced two plays based on the lives, stories and experiences of Hull people. The Northern Trawl (1986), a celebration of Hull's vanished fishing industry and associated communities, was based on real-life anecdotes and told through the voices of Hull and Grimsby fishermen.[598] Another play, Vital Spark (1992), performed at Hull City Hall, told the history of the city since medieval times but also focussed on two main events; the 1911 Dock Strike and the 1968 Women's campaign for safety on trawlers.[599] It was on the back of these first plays that No Surrender! was conceived. In August 1996 a member of the Remould production team explained the origin of the play:

> Many people in Hull suggested a play on Hull's commercial docks would be just as entertaining as a play about deep-sea fishing. For several years, the idea remained as a plan until research started in 1991 for Hull's first City Play

[597] 'Docklife' *Hull Daily Mail*, 3rd August 1996, p. 2

[598] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

[599] *Ibid.*

> Vital Spark […] The research into the history of Hull Docks, and the dock workers we met and whose stories we recorded [during the production of Vital Spark] convinced us that here was a story which was largely untold, a story important to the City of Hull and to the history of the British Labour Movement. […] The Company decided that the history of the Hull Docks and its community was best told by the people of Hull.[600]

As Walter Oglesby had perceived thirteen years earlier, Remould recognised that there remained an unmistakeable void in local memories in terms of the dockers and the story of the docks. This, they believed, was not simply the commemoration of a single working group, it was also integral to the history of the city and even of national significance.

The dockers' high level of enthusiasm and engagement with virtually every aspect of the production process was reminiscent of their participation in creating the Marfleet Collection. Like Oglesby's project, this highlights that, in the absence of any formal recognition, there was a collective desire amongst the dockers to articulate their heritage and to be remembered. This feature was something also highlighted by members of Remould in *Dock Life*:

> Research started in 1995 with a series of weekly meetings involving dock workers, local historians and people generally interested in the subject. The project involved scores of people undertaking historical research, sharing their personal stories and experiences, finding photographs and typing up mountains of material. Many more have joined the drama workshops held all over the city in the spring, and have been building the set, making the costume, working in the office, rehearsing their parts and learning the music, to create a spectacular production for, about and with the people of Hull.[601]

Although there were clear similarities between the Marfleet Collection and No Surrender! in terms of the level of enthusiasm for community curated heritage, the two projects are dissimilar in terms of their accessibility. As previously established, the former was generally a private affair exclusive to the dockers themselves: the latter was open to the wider community. Indeed, the inclusive nature of No Surrender! is evidenced by the heterogeneous body of contributors listed in *Dock Life.* This included trade union officials and shop stewards from both unions, the families of dockers, docks police, docks nurses and, of course, the barber and creator of the Marfleet Collection Walter Oglesby.[602] There were also local professional and amateur researchers involved including Tony Topham, Keith Sinclair, Arthur Credland, Chris Ketchell and Hull College's Local History Unit.[603] This was clearly not a small-scale production about a niche subject, rather

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[600] *Ibid.*

[601] *Ibid.*

[602] *Ibid.*

[603] *Ibid.*

No Surrender! was a broad and inclusive project which was open to, and embraced by, the wider docks community, local researchers and academics, all of whom had a common interest.

As a wide variety of people were involved in the play and its production, its content was diverse, multi-faceted and contrasted markedly from that of the rather one dimensional representations contained within the Hull Maritime Museum and Ogleby's collection. Whilst the Marfleet Collection had been a reaction by the dockers to their disinheritance from the Maritime Museum, No Surrender! may, to some extent, be a response by the wider docks community to their exclusion from the Marfleet Collection. For example, No Surrender! articulated the memories of the wives and children of docking families as well as those of the dockers. Indeed, the daughter of one dock worker included her memories of daily life for women on the other side of the dock wall:

> The men used to go out, they used to have to be there before eight o'clock to get a job. What the women used to do, they used to stand at the top of the terrace and watch the men coming home and they'd say: 'Oh Albert hasn't got a job' or 'Ted hasn't got a job', 'Bill hasn't got job'. Then they'd turn to me mother and say: 'Ooh, Chuck must be working'. They used to get 12 shillings and six pence a day. On the night me dad would give me mother 12 and six and she would put the rent and insurance and all the payments on the mantelpiece. She said 'Oh, that's good, he'll get 12 and six tonight'. Well all these women had no money for their dinner, so what she did, she went and lent them all half a crown and she took half a crown and she went and got a rabbit and veggies. So she gets this rabbit all ready to put in the oven, and sure enough Chuck come walking down the street. He'd been dawdling. So she gets this rabbit and she says: 'you can't have it! I thought you were working! You can't have it! Oh, what am I going to do for my rent?' she's loaned all her money out so the women in the terrace could get a dinner in![604]

Memories such as these highlighted important aspects of community heritage. For example, the way in which short-term speculation and financial strains caused by the casual organisation of dock labour was not only experienced by the dockers but also created an unorthodox and often unpredictable pattern of life for their families. The play also provided the families of dock workers with the opportunity to share recollections of other facets of their lives - such as experiences of change and displacement within the waterfront community:

> I was born on Hedon Road down Seward Street, at the very bottom in a terrace house […]. Two years after I was born, all those houses were pulled down. It was a slum clearance and they were all moved to various parts of Hull, and different estates. But just because they moved didn't mean to say

[604] *Ibid*. p. 4.

> they lost touch with one another. They were still very close. When me Dad was out of work, me mam would take in washing. I remember her doing that in a tub, a dolly tub. Me mam had it rough.[605]

Whilst the play represented the tough and changing nature of life on the waterfront during the post-1945 period, it also articulated a strong sense of the happiness and solidarity of the docks:

> My happiest memory of the docks was me Dad. He used to love the dock. It was hard work but they had a lot of fun and he used to come home and tell us about it. Sometimes he couldn't tell us for laughing and we laughed along with him even though we didn't know what he was laughing about.[606]

Memories such as these bring an alternative domestic dimension to the heritage of the dockers community. They contrast with the cargo handling processes and trade union organisation displayed in the city's Maritime Museum, and the tools and equipment displayed in Oglesby's barber shop. In this sense, No Surrender! is a prime example of the dissonance of voices, opinions and perspectives that overlooked communities are increasingly articulating in response to their disinheritance. Despite these well publicised community heritage engagements, the dockers have, unlike other people and groups within the city, enjoyed little success in acquiring a place within Hull's *official* heritage narrative. In the remainder of this chapter I offer some reasons why this has occurred.

5.1.5 Representing the Dockers

There is little doubt that the dirty, mundane and industrial nature of dock work has contributed to the exclusion of the dockers from the city's official heritage narrative. However, there are other, more specific and complex, factors which have almost certainly contributed to this group's disinheritance. This elision relates directly to the contrasting ways in which the port's dockers are remembered as a group by the city's inhabitants – something that became abundantly clear during my interviewees with those associated with the docks. When discussing the absence of docking heritage in Hull, my respondents suggested that it was the dockers' actions and poor reputation that made many of the city's inhabitants reluctant to celebrate the memory of this group. For example, Dennis Briggs, a former barge worker, explained:

> They was always goin' on strike for more money I can remember - always on bloody strike for more money! Tu'pence and thre'pence an 'our extra and all that you-know […] It was always going on like that! […] They was always after more money. I mean, in them days they 'ad a bloke - called 'im Cunningham and 'e was a right union basher you-know! You all 'ad to be in the dockers'

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[605] *Ibid*., p. 4.

[606] *Ibid*., p. 5.

union or you was out - you never got a job if you want in the dockers' union. Oh there was always strikes going on, all the time in my day – a lot of trouble. […] They were always causin' trouble - this Cunningham was a bugger! 'e was like that Arthur Scargill with the bloody coal miners! Oh very militant! 'e had 'em on strike nearly every other week!

Later in the interview Briggs reaffirmed his memories of the dockers:

> In them days - I can tell you - in them days this kid called Syd Johnson who worked on the dock - he was on about £16 a week and I was at British Aerospace and I was on £7 a week. He used to get double what I got but they used to keep quiet about it. They was on ever such good money - ever such good money.[607]

Here, Briggs is explicit in his recollection of dockers as a group who were over-paid and ruinously strike prone. Like Briggs, George McNally, another former barge worker, also espoused similar sentiments regarding the dockers:

> They was a law unto themselves at that time… they spoilt the port really to be quite honest, they spoilt the port. They didn't see further than their nose end. Alright, we knew containers were coming and we knew there wouldn't have been as many men employed but they could have dragged it out another few years I think. And had they not been so militant… same with the miners - they just spoilt it for everybody. Alright pits would have closed, I'm not going to say they wouldn't but they would have dragged it out a lot longer cos there was still quite a bit of coal down there.[608]

Whilst outlining similar sentiments to Briggs, McNally too draws a comparison between the dockers and Britain's miners, another group that were at the centre of much industrial unrest during the 1970s and 1980s. Likewise former railway and haulage worker, Les Adamson also had little sympathy for the dockers' plight:

> A lot of our drivers… when you'd go on the dock you could have trouble with the dockers […] They was always on strike want they! At that time they were. Cunningham used to be on TV… but they killed the golden goose in the end – they went too far and then they got rid of 'em.[609]

Significantly, a number of my docker interviewees were well aware of the contempt in which they were held by some sections of the city. For example, Mike Galloway, related:

> I think a lot of it was jealousy cos… we weren't a bad paid group of blokes really and we always stood by each other and we stood up for what we thought was right and in some parts of the town there was a little bit of animosity you could say towards the dockers like if you. Some people was OK

[607] Dennis Briggs, Interview, 27 March 2013.

[608] George 'Mac' MacNally, Interview, 25 June 2013.

[609] Les Adamson, Interview, 16 July 2013.

with it and some wasn't I think it was mainly people who didn't know what went on, on the docks – they thought you went down and you just didn't do anything and you just went…I used to love it on the dock it was a bit of a hard and tough job to do – there was a big accident rate the first week I was on the dock there was a bloke killed on Alex dock.[610]

In these, and several other, testimonies there are unmistakeable inferences to privilege, greed, selfishness and tyranny in relation to their memories of the port's dock workers. Furthermore, it is evident that many people in Hull have strong, negative feelings towards the dockers and some still hold them at least partly responsible for the city's economic plight of recent decades.

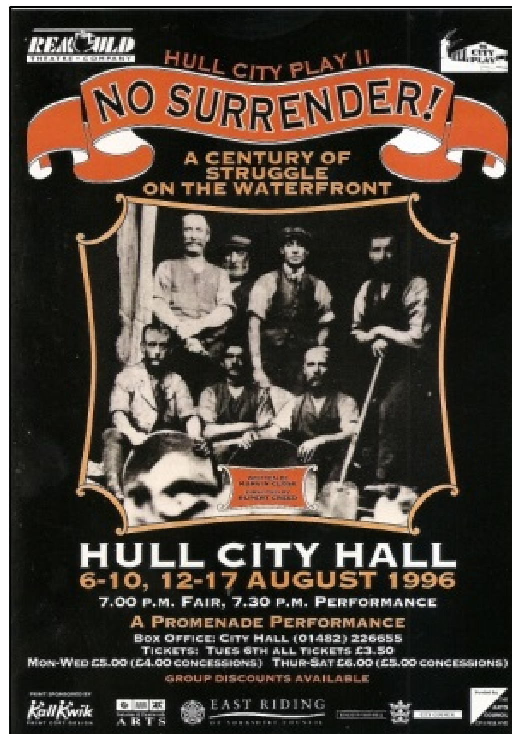

Figure 31: The promotional poster for No Surrender from August 1996.

Many of my other interviewees connected with the docks were quick to counter the unfavourable image of the dockers and were keen to defend them against accusations of greed and selfishness. Indeed, several suggested that, as a group the port's dock labourers were in fact the polar opposite of how many in Hull perceived them; some even spent time celebrating the dockers as a kind and virtuous group. Docks nurse Beryl Whipp explained, for instance:

They were wonderful to deal with, they really were. They cared for us and all the rest of it you-know - I won't have anything said against them […] If they [the dockers] knew we were on board anywhere and they was swearing and

[610] Mike Galloway, Interview, 13 May 2013.

carrying on and by golly the supervisor soon got…"shut up there's Sister on board!" No they were great people I won't say anything against them.[611]

Others too were quick to praise the character of the dock workers. John Taylor was employed by the Hull and Goole Dock Labour Board as a Welfare Officer and likewise described:

> [The dockers were] absolutely second to none. They were just absolutely… salt of the earth [they would] do anything for you, they really would. [There was] a lot of camaraderie […]. They had their own way of sorting things be it the right way or the wrong way.[612]

In marked contrast to the earlier, more cynical recollections of the dockers, these interviewees remembered them as a group that were epitomised by their generosity, loyalty and gentlemanly conduct. Given such controversy and contestation it is possible to see why it has been particularly difficult for the heritage of the dockers to earn an official place in the city's memory. Furthermore, this begs the question as to how and why such starkly contrasting and distinctive images of the dockers were produced? This issue will now be examined.

As established in Chapter 3.4, the Hull dockers displayed features of a group that was distinct from the general working-class milieu of the city. Such characteristics included their clannish tendencies, claims upon a specific work territory, and propensity to wear traditional working-class clothing. But being different or separate appears to have lent a distinct sense of mystery or the unknown to the dockers, particularly as their work took place beyond the dock wall on the waterfront, a place that other citizens did not see or know. Indeed, a segment in an edition of the *Hull Daily Mail* from July 1970 expressed this difference and mystery during the national dock strike of that year: 'They are suspicious and distrustful of strangers. To the rest of the world their job remains something of a mystery and the docker is quite content to let it stay that way'.[613] In light of these perceptions of difference and mystery, it appears that a shadowy image, identity or representation of 'the docker' was generated by writers and the media particularly during the 1970s and 1980s when the country was in the midst of serious economic decline and industrial unrest.

In recent years much research dealt, in different ways, with the question of representation.[614] Amongst this body of literature some have explored how difference or

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[611] Beryl Whipp, Interview, 15 April 2013.

[612] John Taylor, Interview, 19 February 2015.

[613] *Hull Daily Mail*, 17 July 1970.

[614] Van Maanen, *Representation in Ethnography* (Thousands Oakes: Sage Publications (1995); S. C. Watkins, *Representing: Hip-Hop Culture and the Production of Black Cinema*, (Chicago: University of

otherness is represented in popular culture. For example, cultural theorist Stuart Hall postulated that images of people and places that are significantly 'different' are often presented through 'sharply opposed, polarised binary extremes'.[615]

Hall examined how this was manifested in media depictions of racial difference but suggested that this theory could also be applied in dimensions of difference such as gender, sexuality, class and disability.[616] In this regard, it is possible to see how two separate and contrasting popular images of the Hull dockers as simultaneously hero and villain were presented and accepted particularly during the period in question. An example of the villain narrative, which was commonly espoused by the right-wing media of the period, is provided by the caricature below (see Figure 31). Taken from the *Sun* newspaper's coverage of the incident at Neap House wharf during the national dock strike of August 1972, it presents an image of the violent confrontation between the Hull dockers and Police that followed the picketing of the wharf to protest its use of unregistered labour.[617]

Depicted as atavistic, maniacal thugs wielding the tools of their trade at hapless officers, the dockers are clearly portrayed as the aggressors or villains of the piece. The accompanying caption, which reads "why can't you see all we want is peace on the docks?" ironically mocks the dockers but also suggests that, amidst serious economic hardship, the dockers had their own personal interests rather than those of the nation at heart. In many ways, this image reflects an underlying sense in this image of the futility and chaos that is wrought to economies when the perceived narrow-minded working classes are over-empowered.

Chicago Press, 1998); D. Chambers, *Representing the Family* (London: Sage, 2001); M. C. Escobar-Lemmon and M. M. Taylor-Robinson (eds), *Representation: The Case of Women* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); K. Sturge, *Representing Others: Translation, Ethnography and Museum* (Hoboken: Taylor & Francis, 2014).

[615] Stuart Hall (et al) (eds), *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage, 2013), p. 219.

[616] *Ibid*., p. 215.

[617] The *Sun,* 11 August, 1972.

Figure 32: Two details from the Sun's Caricature depicting Hull dockers attacking Police at Neap House wharf in August 1972.

In stark contrast to this unflattering portrayal, some left-leaning writers of the period generated a very different image of the Hull dockers. This is perhaps best exemplified via the two images below taken from a 1975 publication entitled *Dock Worker.* [618] Produced by Sarah Cox and photographer Robert Golden and part of ten-strong book series 'People Working Series', *Dock Worker* was based on a 'children's book concept' and aimed to present 'what it was like' to work on the Hull docks where 'apprenticing, long-hours and strikes' were the norm.[619] With signs of years of physical toil etched on their lined faces and a twinkle or look of innocence in their eyes, these stout looking dockers are depicted as strong and honest working-class labour whose traditional work, values and way of life was being torn from their grasp by the modernisation brought about by capital investment in mechanised cargo-handling equipment (see Figure 32). These images (and others in the book) are the polar opposite of the *Sun*'s portrayal of dockers as industrial bully boys. Yet, *Dock Worker*'s representation of them as working-class heroes struggling to get by in hard economic times is no less stereotypical or reductive.

In both cases, the mystery surrounding the dockers and their culture was being exploited. On the one hand the dockers were scapegoated for the country's economic ills, and on the other they were held up as poster boys for a disappearing working-class life where idealistic qualities such as hard work and honesty were central. With little having been done within Hull's heritage articulations to challenge these stereotypes, they appear to have endured and cemented in the minds of many in the city. This is evidenced by the testimony of a number

[618] Sarah Cox and Robert Golden, *Dock Worker* (London: Kestrel Books, 1975).

[619] http://www.robertgoldenpictures.com/the-home-exhibition-and-home-in-bridport/ [Accessed 29 July 2015].

of my interviewees regarding their perceptions of the dockers. This often closely mirrored the essentialist representations of dock workers in the popular media during the 1970s and 1980s.

Figure 33: Photographs of the Hull dockers taken by Robert Golden as part of the research that contributed to the 1975 publication Dock Worker (Images courtesy of Robert Golden).

5.1.6 Distant-Water Trawling: A Rival Heritage

Deemed smelly, dirty and archaic in terms of its organisation, Hull's fishing industry and its associated community, have also been frequently airbrushed from the city's heritage profile by local authorities.[620] Like the Docking Gallery, the Fishing Gallery at Hull Maritime Museum is largely outdated and unrepresentative, having also enjoyed little development since its creation. However, the response of the fishing community and of others in the city to this disinheritance has been far more vocal, organised and sustained than that of the docking community. For example, the St. Andrew's Dock Heritage Park Action Group (or STAND) was established in September 1989. Comprised largely of members of the Hessle Road former fishing Community it was formed in response to plans to redevelop St. Andrew's Dock, the former home of the fishing fleet.[621] Determined that their heritage should not be forgotten, STAND have since campaigned successfully for tangible sites of memory including the erection of a memorial to the port's lost trawlermen at St. Andrew's dock[622] Furthermore, they campaigned for the restoration of a Hull sidewinder trawler *Arctic Corsair* which Kingston-upon- Hull City Council has incorporated into its broad range of maritime related museum exhibits alongside a visitors'

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[620] David Atkinson, 'The Heritage of Mundane Places' in B. Graham and P. Howard (eds.) *The Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (London: Ashgate London, 2008), pp. 381-392; David Atkinson, 'Heritage' in D. Atkinson et al (eds.) *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), pp. 141-150.

[621] *Ibid.,* 169.

[622] Craig Lazenby, David J. Starkey, 'Altered Images: Representing the Trawling in the Late Twentieth Century' in David J. Starkey, Chris Reid and Neil Ashcroft (eds.) *England's Sea Fisheries: The Commercial Sea Fisheries of England and Wales since 1300* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2000), pp. 166-172.

centre.[623] In turn, the Edinburgh Street Community Centre near Hessle road is home to a painted wall mural entitled 'Spirit of Hessle Road' and featuring sporting stars, war heroes, figures from the fishing industry and other characters from Hessle Road. The mural also depicts some of the area's best known businesses, a list of the streets in the district and other poignant pictures of the fishing industry (see Figure 33).[624] Furthermore, former fisherman have contributed oral history recordings to a video exhibit at Hull Maritime Museum's Fishing Gallery. Here, they recount their experiences and stories about life and work in the industry. Although frequently excluded from Hull's heritage narrative the port's fishing community have fought for, and won, a more prominent place in the city's formal heritage. On this basis, the heritage of the Hull dockers has been eclipsed by that of the fishing industry. In this section I will advance several reasons as to why this may have occurred.

Compared to the dockers, the fishing community have had a greater number of tangible sites around the city at which to articulate their heritage. Hessle Road, often described as 'a village within a City' was the heart of the fishing community and forms an entire district of memory.[625] Whilst the majority of St. Andrew's Dock has been regenerated, a portion of the east end of the dock and its surrounding quayside buildings near the lock pit remain, although they are increasingly. The *Arctic Corsair* too has come to form a heritage site in its own right. In contrast, the dockers were a more mobile group who were less attached to any particular district.

With the death of some 3000 fishermen there is also a strong sense of tragedy attached to fishing, a feature which makes memories of that industry more potent than docking to heritage consumers. As already established, dock work was a hazardous profession that saw many dockers seriously injured and killed. However, it is arguable that the deaths in the fishing industry are perhaps harder to bear. Unlike fishermen, the men who were killed on the commercial docks could be mourned and buried within communities. Furthermore, the Triple Trawler Tragedy (1968) and the loss of the trawler *FV Gaul* (1974) were two disastrous events that saw entire crews lost at once.[626] The Cod Wars and the sudden collapse of the fishing

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[623] *Ibid.,* p. 172.

[624] *Ibid.*

[625] Alec Gill, *Village Within a City: The Hessle Road Fishing Community of Hull* (Hull: Hull University Press, 1986); Alec Gill, *Hull's Fishing Heritage Aspects of life in the Hessle Road Fishing Community* (Barnsley: Wharncliffe Books, 2003); Jo Byrne, After the Trawl: Memory and Afterlife in the Wake of Hull's Distant-Water Trawl Fishery after 1976. (PhD Thesis, 2015).

[626] Stuart Russell, *Dark Winter: The Hull Triple Trawler Disaster of 1968* (Hull: Hull Daily Mail, 1997); Brian W. Lavery, *Headscarf Revolutionaries: Lillian Bilocca and the Hull Triple Trawler Disaster* (Barbican Press,

industry were also dramatic in comparison to the gradual adaptation and decline within the commercial port.[627]

Figure 34: (Clockwise) The Trawler Arctic Corsair, the memorial to lost Trawlermen at St. Andrew's Dock and the Spirit of Hessle Road Mural at Edinburgh Street Community Centre.

The mundane and largely unremarkable nature of dock work is perhaps less appealing to heritage consumers than fishing. Whilst the former involved the handling of uninteresting, bulky goods such as timber, coal, oil seed and grain, the latter was replete with danger, excitement, distance and elemental force.[628] The flamboyance and excess of the fishermen, known as the 'Three Day Millionaires' when spending time ashore on brief leaves between trips, contrasts sharply with the typical flat caps, long overcoats and trade union meetings of the dockers. The heritage of the dockers is perhaps more difficult to represent than fishing. Dock work was a service of sorts: a facet of the transport process that straddled several industries. Dockers could be employed or hired by shipping companies like Ellerman Wilson to work in the holds of deep sea vessels. Alternatively, many worked in timber yards and sidings, employed by

2015); Jo Byrne, After the Trawl: Memory and Afterlife in the Wake of Hull's Distant-Water Trawl Fishery after 1976. (PhD Thesis, 2015).

[627] Robb Robinson, *Trawling: The Rise and Fall of the British Trawl Fishery* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996), pp. 224-243.

[628] Craig Lazenby, David J. Starkey, 'Altered Images: Representing the Trawling in the Late Twentieth Century' in David J. Starkey, Chris Reid and Neil Ashcroft (eds.) *England's Sea Fisheries: The Commercial Sea Fisheries of England and Wales since 1300* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2000), p. 168.

timber merchants. Their labour defied easy description. The dock labour force was only given coherence by the National Dock Labour Scheme. By contrast, fishing was more coherent, its many components were geared up to the catching, movement and processing of fish. As such, fishing was more easily represented. In sum, although dissonant heritages are produced by disinherited groups in response to exclusion, the popular memories of groups that are more dramatic and widely promoted can often come to dominate or overshadow those of other less colourful or more controversial groups. In Hull's heritage the dockers have come a distant second to the fishermen.

5.1.7 Conclusion

Against the back drop of the Port of Hull's revival, growth and progress since 1989, little has been done officially to commemorate the heritage, culture and way of life of the workers in one of the city's largest and oldest industrial communities. The disinheritance of the group is perhaps best indicated by Hull Maritime Museum's Docking Gallery. Having been developed little since 1978, this exhibit continues to overlook the lives of the people involved in dock work in favour of a more technical approach. Outdated in its focus and located unfavourably within the museum, the Docking Gallery symbolises how the dockers' heritage has been sidelined. However, the dockers' community, like many groups who have been excluded from more sanitised and selective official heritage narratives, have been determined to articulate their heritage themselves. Yet their efforts, have enjoyed far less success than other groups in acquiring a place in the city's official heritage narrative. This can almost certainly be attributed to the controversial nature of the dockers identity and reputation in Hull. In addition, the heritage of the port's fishing industry and associated community has been perceived as more heroic and tragic and has often eclipsed memories of the seemingly less colourful dockers.

6 Conclusion

6.1 **Conclusion**

This study has explored the transformation of the port of Hull during the second half of the twentieth century. I have blended the disciplines of history and geography and this thesis has drawn widely and simultaneously on the literature of both disciplines. Research produced by economic, social, cultural and political historians has informed this research, as has work completed by economic, historical, and cultural geographers. I have also used and juxtaposed the methodologies associated with these separate fields. More specifically, I have combined the traditional documentary and archival research of the historian with the more innovative methods of human geography, including research interviews, field work and the use of maps and images. By engaging with interdisciplinarity this thesis has contributed towards a wide variety of debates that straddle both fields. This has included a discussion about the regional and local impact of the broader economic and technological developments that occurred during the post-1945 period. I have also explored aspects of the organisational and operational evolution of the British port industry, and changes to labour organisation, regulation and representation in response to the varied polices of successive governments. Further, I have addressed geographical issues relating to the transformation of docklands following major advances in transport technology and local regeneration strategies, as well as issues regarding the nature and decline of working class culture and community on the waterfront.

Using a model suggested by Starkey and Jamieson, the early part of this thesis identified, and detailed the negative impact of, and the economic and technological developments upon, the port of Hull during the post-1945 period. Although the volume of traffic passing through the port generally reflected the level of seaborne trade in the period, a series of economic shifts (both domestic and global) had a substantial impact upon almost every aspect of Hull's long-established trading profile. The huge domestic demand for imported oil into the 1970s stimulated Hull's bulk-liquid business to such an extent that major capital investment was required by the British Transport Commission for the expansion of the port's oil handling facilities at Salt End. This positive aspect of trade was, however, offset by other developments in the domestic economy. Of greatest significance was the decision of the Conservative government to join the European Economic Community, a move that hindered the port's long-established trades in imported foodstuffs, agricultural produce and raw material, primarily from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada. Unlike those ports on the west coast of Britain, Hull's east coast position enabled the port to offset the loss of this Commonwealth trade to some extent by enhanced trade with Europe. However, its greater distance from the continent

in comparison to other ports such as London, Felixstowe, Harwich and Dover meant that any potential gains were curbed significantly. In parallel, Hull's traditional exports were also impacted during this period. The contraction of the British coalmining industry after 1945, for example, had devastating consequences for Hull, particularly as coal had been the port's principal export since the 1880s and a large part of the equipment, infrastructure and operation on the docks had developed around the shipment of coal. This situation was compounded further by the superior recovery and growth of foreign industries, which, coupled with industrial decline in the Humber region, adversely affected the port's traditional exports of machinery and manufactures during these years.

Like other ports, Hull was forced to contend with major advancements in sea and land transport technology, particularly from the 1960s onwards. However, Hull's unfavourable geographical position made the implications of these developments far more acute than elsewhere. The general increase in the tonnage and dimensions of merchant shipping that had taken place over the interwar period accelerated rapidly after 1945. Coupled with this was the deployment of new types of vessel. Hull's water site on the tidal Humber Estuary, 35 km from the open sea and located at the inland extremity of the river's deep-water channel, meant that its ability to accept these new, larger classes of vessel declined rapidly over the period. Consequently, many of the bulk trades they carried, including coal, ores and oil (previously handled by Hull), were transferred to ports that had developed lock-free, deep-water facilities, most notably at the neighbouring Humber port of Immingham.

In parallel, the remoteness of the port from its industrial and commercial hinterland was exposed by the rapid development of road transport from the 1950s. Although an extensive national network of roads and motorways had evolved by the 1970s, planners in the Hull and Humber region were slow to respond and to equip the local and regional area surrounding the port with an adequate road network. As a result, the efficient carriage of goods to and from the Hull docks was impeded and traders were, no doubt, encouraged to utilise the services of more easily accessible ports. The slow pace of progress in the area was, in part, due to the lack of prior development. This included a failure to construct a crossing over the Humber estuary and an over reliance on increasingly outmoded railway and waterway communications. The Hull and Humber area's struggle to acquire external financial support from the government until the late 1960s meant that the creation of a suitable system of roads was delayed significantly. Even when major investment was directed towards transport in the city and region over the 1970s and 1980s, the road infrastructure surrounding the port of Hull still possessed marked weaknesses. The bridging of the Humber estuary (not achieved until 1981) also failed to have the impact upon

the port's trade that had been hoped for. By illuminating the economic and geographical issues that successive port authorities at Hull faced, this part of the thesis ultimately showed that while the business and development of all ports are subject to the same external forces of change, they may not all be impacted in the same way.

Given the quickening pace of change in the global economy and within transport technology, it was imperative that the British port industry responded accordingly after 1945. However, British policy during the 1945 to 1964 period placed far greater emphasis on social welfare than it did on industrial development. This contributed to the comparatively slow pace of growth in the country's economy. Deemed one of the least efficient parts of the economy by the early 1960s, the British port industry epitomised the lack of industrial progress of these years. The production of numerous government reports that investigated problems and inefficiency across the industry is testament to the extent of the outdated organisation and equipment of the major ports. Drawing extensively from these and other documentary materials, I showed that these problems were especially acute at Hull, a port that performed particularly poorly during this period.

In Chapter 3.2 I identified how the port's authority was not only required to contend with the widespread redevelopment of severely bomb-damaged and very aged facilities after 1945, but they were also forced to do so amidst a change of ownership. The Labour government's bid to create an integrated transport system via nationalisation caused the port's administration to be transferred from private to public ownership at a crucial time. As a result, the port's progress was further delayed and its cargo-handling capacity had improved little by the early 1950s. Other non-nationalised ports, which sustained less or no bomb damage during the war and that offered facilities that had previously received more capital investment, were therefore in a far better position to resume peacetime operations and increase their share of trade and traffic. Over the 1950s and early 1960s progress at Hull continued to lag behind that of the other major ports. This, I argued, was primarily the result of the port's extremely outdated and fragmented institutional organisation that led to slow-paced, limited and misdirected capital investment in new facilities and equipment.

I also demonstrated how the efficiency of Hull's operations during these years were blighted by heightened labour unrest, a development that was apparent despite, and as a result of, the implementation of innovative reform under Clement Atlee's Labour government. By introducing fall-back pay and some elements of training for dock workers, the National Dock Labour Scheme curbed some of the worst excesses of the port's long-established casual system. However, its failure to eradicate this system preserved some its problematic features; it even

exacerbated some of them due to certain aspects of the scheme. Complaints primarily included the way that work was allocated under the piece rate system, the archaic and dangerous methods of working, and the standard of conditions on the docks. Others resented the National Dock Labour Scheme's attempts to reduce and remove the casual system which many found lucrative. A general aversion to the externally imposed Scheme was also created amongst much of the labour force due it its joint control by union officials, a group that had long been distrusted due to their seemingly pro-employer attitudes. Although there is evidence to suggest that employers made a concerted effort to increase their numbers of permanent employees under the scheme, the dissatisfaction held by many of the port's employers of dock labour also survived and was, in some cases, increased at this time. This largely related to the mechanism of discipline under the scheme: an inadequate process that resulted in the continued and widespread use of wasteful practices.

By the early 1960s there were growing problems. The institutional organisation, operations and dock labour of Hull were in particular need of reform by this time, and external intervention was imperative. Such reform was swiftly implemented at Hull and across the rest of the industry during the second half of the 1960s. Under the NPC, the British Transport Docks Board transformed Hull's previously fragmented organisation and outdated equipment, replacing them with a modern administrative and operational infrastructure. In parallel, Devlin's recommendations did much to modernise the organisation of the dock labour force at Hull. By decasualising the port's dock workers and the employers of dock labour the Devlin scheme achieved its principal aim; to successfully pave the way for the introduction of new and efficient facilities for cargo handling that were vital to the national economy. Undoubtedly a by-product of this process, Devlin also improved the Hull dockers' terms of employment and resolved many of the deep-rooted grievances which had previously marred relations between labour, employers and trade unions. Devlin's recommendations did much to adapt the port's workforce to modern requirements. However, it was also evident that the scheme had fundamental flaws. Amongst the most serious was the considerable inflation of unit labour costs and a failure to revise or remove the increasingly irrelevant National Dock Labour Scheme.

It was these features in particular which underpinned the ongoing industrial conflict on the Hull waterfront into the 1980s, a problem that contributed to a sharp decline in the port's traffic and the closure of further facilities during these years. In spite of this, the port, remodelled as a competitor in the growing short-sea unit load sector, was able to offset some of the considerable losses it had sustained in the wake of economic and technological developments. Although certain aspects of this external intervention were clearly flawed, had it

not been implemented it is conceivable that Hull's long-established function as a centre of seaborne commerce could have been rendered negligible or even obsolete during the 1960s.

Unlike some ports Hull was forced to undergo a further, rapid process of reform during the 1980s. This involved the privatisation of the British Transport Docks Board in 1981 followed by the abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme in 1989. Part of the Thatcher government's wider policy for the deregulation of British industry, these transactions suddenly reversed the initiatives of Atlee's Labour government during the late 1940s which sought to create a state-owned, and centrally controlled, transport system. Having been reconstituted as a private entity during the early 1980s, some of those employed by the newly-created Associated British Ports recalled a positive and marked shift in the modus operandi at Hull. This took the form of a new outlook that was considerably more democratic, competitive and profit-orientated: characteristics synonymous with the Thatcher government's vision for Britain. All of my respondents explained in detail how this involved an intensive programme of rationalisation at the port including the sale of areas of the dock estate that had been deemed redundant. Furthermore, they also reported the large-scale reduction of staff, many of whose employment had transferred from the previous publicly-owned authority. These interviewees also described how this development was complimented during the late 1980s by the abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme. All described how its removal enabled a further reduction of staff and liberated the port (and wider industry) from the joint control that had made the effective management of labour problematic since decasualisation in the late 1960s. While these interviewees openly admitted to personally benefitting from the Tories' reforms, other evidence suggests that they did indeed reconstitute Hull as a leaner, fitter port, and its ability to develop new operations was greatly enhanced. Indeed, the success of this new constitution was evidenced by the port's improved financial performance, the deployment of new facilities and diversification of interests. Ultimately, this dimension of my research has shown the extent to which the development and prosperity of an individual port during these years was dictated by government policies - the extent and underlying ideologies of which were hugely diverse.

Throughout this thesis I have also identified and analysed how the economic, technological and political changes that occurred during the second half of the twentieth century were experienced, interpreted and remembered by those who laboured on and around the Hull docks. I found that the lack of progress during the years between 1945 and 1964 encouraged, and was perhaps a symptom of, a distinct inertia amongst many on the Hull waterfront. The memories of my dock workers and those who worked in the port's associated transport industries revealed that many were unaware of, or unconcerned with, the major

changes in the economy or the port's functional problems. For them, this period was seen as something of a golden age. Rather than recalling the outdated nature of their organisation or its operational inefficiency (issues which formed the basis of numerous government reports), many recalled a sense of tradition, revival and prosperity. For some, it was the large volume and variety of goods that were handled on the docks that stood out. Others talked about the revival of the port's long-established operations and trade links. To many of those involved in dock work, however, it was the enduring sense of community that was most memorable. Not only was a unique sense of camaraderie, mutual support and sense of tradition apparent on the docks, it appears, to a certain extent, to have also survived beyond the work place. Although interwar housing schemes and intensive wartime bombing appear to have disbanded any real residential segregation on the waterfront by 1945, suburban docking families still lived in close proximity with many also choosing to congregating at the dockers' clubs. For a city which had enjoyed little economic progress during the interwar years and suffered particularly severely during the Second World War, it is perhaps not surprising that there was a collective yearning amongst many in the Port of Hull for a return to the prosperity of the late Victorian and Edwardian period, the landscape and attitudes of which appear to have still be present as late as the 1960s.

The memories of those whom I interviewed suggest that this inertia likely caused those in Hull to feel the impact of reform, and the port's resulting transformation, more keenly than their peers elsewhere. The process itself was externally imposed, carried out in a relatively short period, and often paid little, if any, regard to implications within the locality. In part, my discussion focused on the large dockland areas that had been rendered obsolete by the development of new downstream facilities. These facilities were readily discarded and left to dereliction following the process of rationalisation, I also established how their subsequent regeneration into places or retail, leisure and business during the late twentieth century paid scant regard to those who had once laboured there. Furthermore, I highlighted how reform during these years created widespread unemployment in the port. The harsh realities of this situation was highlighted by those who had been employed in rail, barge and police work on and around the docks. Many of those to whom I spoke had worked in their respective occupations from a young age and all recalled a common sense of shock and sadness at the sudden collapse and decline of their long-established work and way of life.

Above all I showed that it was the port's dock workers who struggled to come to terms with the break with the past. As a distinctive group that continued to carry with them the particularly deep-rooted values, traditions and beliefs of their forebears, it is perhaps not surprising that externally imposed reform (intended to adapt them to the container age)

brought with it conflict, resistance and even violence. The dockers' hostility to change and external interference at Hull was first evidenced in the late 1940s by their visible resentment towards certain aspects of the National Dock Labour Scheme - a programme that intended to improve their security but did not take into account local considerations. It was the dockers' militancy during the early post-Devlin period that highlighted the lengths that they were prepared to go to to protect their work, something which many considered to be their birthright. Indeed, Hull dock workers were often at the very front of the industrial action which pervaded British industry in the early 1970s. However, amidst inevitable decline and rising unemployment at the port over the late 1970s and 1980s, the dockers increasingly fought a rearguard action. It was during this period when many remembered a sense of their culture and community began to erode. The response of the Hull dockers to this loss appears to resemble that of other tight-knit and insular working class groups such as miners. Oral testimony showed that some became disillusioned and detached from their colleagues and former lifestyle shortly after Devlin. This faction often embraced a more middle-class standard of living that was permitted by their improved financial status.

Conversely, others were more inclined to cling to, or commemorate, the past. In the case of the latter, this was epitomised by their creation, and interaction with, the Marfleet Collection: a community generated shrine to traditional docking culture.

Despite the upheaval and trauma on the Hull waterfront during these years, Part 5 of this thesis showed there has been little commemoration of these events in the city. Rather, local authorities have elected to promote a more vibrant, sanitised and pioneering version of Hull's maritime heritage that excludes references to historic port-based industries including dock work, shipbuilding, distant-water trawling and whaling. Building on the work of human geographers, I explored this issue further by examining contemporary representations of the Hull dockers' heritage at the 'Docking Gallery' within the city's Council-owned Hull Maritime Museum. I argued that, in spite of the substantial developments in the field of museum studies, little had been done at this official site of memory to update or improve the exhibit since its creation in the late 1970s. Accordingly, the display remains fixed in time: presenting a version of docking heritage that celebrates the technical aspects of port work but largely ignores the social and cultural aspects of dock life. I also suggested that, to some extent, the gallery stands as a monument to the city's neglect, rather than a celebration of its commercial port heritage

In this part of the thesis I also investigated the ways in which the dockers have reacted to being excluded from local memory. I concluded that, like other disinherited industrial communities, the dockers have attempted to engage with their heritage through community-

led projects. The Marfleet Collection had already provided one example of this, however, the 1996 community play 'No Surrender!' constituted another, more inclusive and representative effort to articulate the story of life on and around the Hull docks. Thus a range of dissonant voices has been created that challenges exclusion and official representations in the city. Building upon these findings I also established that the docking community had, despite these popular articulations, still struggled to acquire a place in Hull's official heritage profile. This, I concluded, was primarily a result of the negative image of dockers in the city as well as the more dramatic memories of the distant-water trawling that Hull's fishing community have vociferously promoted. Thus, I provided an example of how popular memories often encounter competition from other rival heritages in the locality.

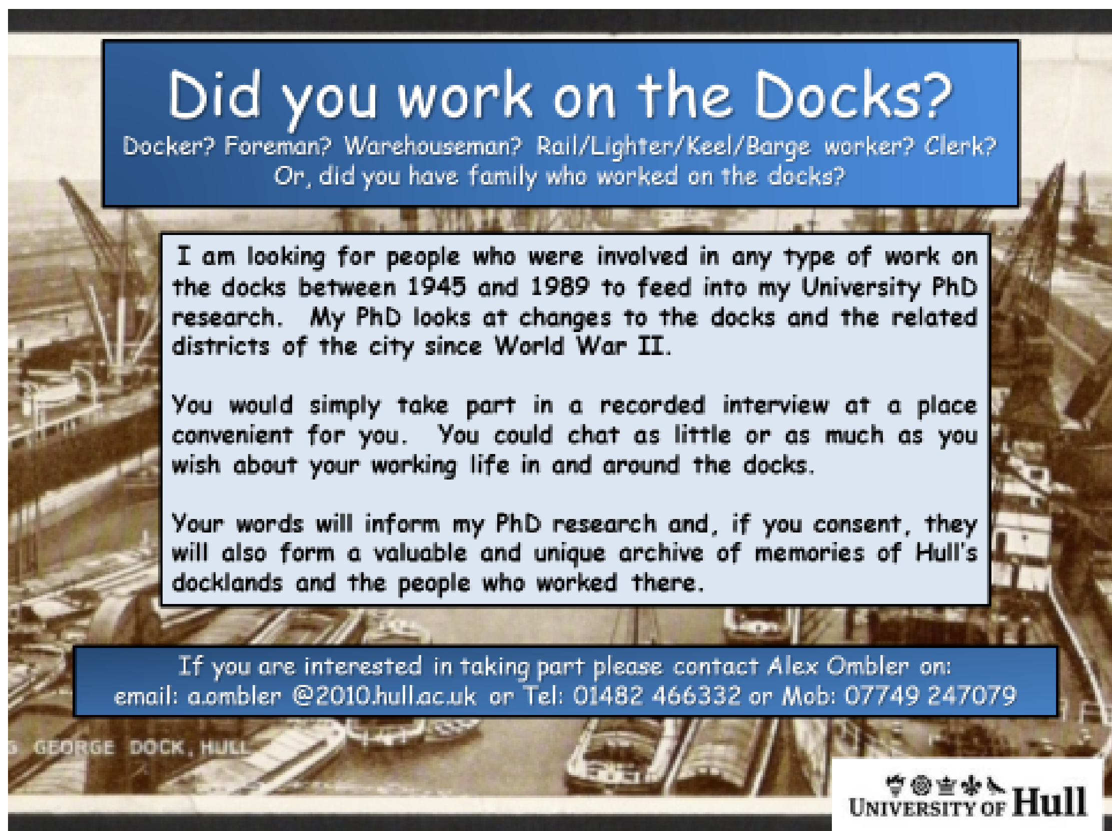
In this thesis I have attempted to make a significant contribution to the historical and geographical study of ports and their labouring populations. Yet there remains much scope for further study in this area. As established at the outset of this thesis, those who have previously studied ports during this period of immense change have tended to concentrate on large-scale developments across the industry in general: an approach that overlooks the local and regional contexts of individual ports. Furthermore, I highlighted our lack of knowledge about the human experience of economic, social and cultural change on the waterfront, particularly the perspectives of women and ethnic minority groups. By including and examining the memories and opinions of the wives and daughters of dock workers, as well as those of dock nurses and other female workers, this thesis has provided a slim but rare insight into the female experience of change on the industrial waterfront during this period. Admittedly, this dimension of the study is relatively small. This was primarily due to overall dominance of men in port life and work at Hull and my difficulty in locating women to take part in research interviews. The almost complete absence of primary and secondary materials relating to the female inhabitants of ports is also reflected by this study. There is, therefore, a clear need for further academic study in this area. While this research has attempted to redress these two key issues, more case studies of individual, or groups of, ports and their labouring populations are essential if we are to enhance our knowledge. Research of this type offers an increasing opportunity for comparison between ports and regions across the country. On this basis it would be possible to improve our understanding of the diversity of impact and change across port cities, the function and people of which have been, and remain, of integral importance to the nation's economy.

7 Appendix

7.1 Appendix I: Oral History Interviewees

Name	Gender	Occupation/Role
Adamson, Les	M	Railway worker/road haulage driver
Akester, Richard	M	Barge owner/worker
Barker, Brian	M	Docker/Transport and General Workers Union official
Beecroft, Mick	M	Merchant seaman/docker
Brett, Andrew	M	BTDB and ABP management employee
Briggs, Dennis	M	Barge worker
Cheney, Barry	M	Docker/tallyman
Cook, Brian	M	Road haulage driver
Cooke, June	F	Daughter of Docker George Cooke
Cooke, Shirley	F	Wife of a docker
Coombes, Philip	M	Associated British Ports management employee
Dean, Mike	M	Merchant seaman
Dixie, Peter	M	Docks policeman
Fell, Mike	M	BTDB and ABP management employee
Freeman, Barry	M	Docker
Freeman, Paul	M	Docker
Galloway, Judy	F	Wife of docker
Galloway, Mike	M	Docker
Green, Trevor	M	Docker
Green, Valerie	F	Wife of docker
Hartley, David	M	Distribution worker
Marks, Gary	M	Road haulage manager
Mathers, Tom H.	M	Docks Policeman
Mayhew, Dennis 'Mick'	M	Docker
McNally, George 'Mac'	M	Barge worker
McNicoll, Colin	M	Docks fireman
Neal, Peter M.	M	Tallyman/docker/shipping Clerk
Prince, Olga.	F	Daughter of docker
Reader, George 'Keith'	M	Road haulage driver/owner
Robinson, George	M	BTDB and ABP management employee
Saxby, Dennis	M	Docker/road haulage driver
Len Scott	M	Docker/dock foreman
Simms, Ray	M	Docker
Sutton, Tom	M	Docker
Taylor, John S.	M	Welfare Officer, Hull and Goole Dock Labour Board
Whipp, Beryl	F	Docks nurse

7.2 Appendix II: Recruitment Poster



7.3 Appendix III: Oral History Interviewees' Introductory Letter

Date:

Dear

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of my research. Your contribution will form part of a PhD research project looking at change in the Port City of Hull since 1945.

My research has two main purposes. The first is to produce a PhD thesis. The second is to create a permanent project archive of recorded interviews of Hull people whose life was connected with the docks. With your agreement, this would eventually make your interview publically available, for example, in the Hull History Centre or the University archives. It is possible that extracts from your interview could also appear in publications, broadcasts, lectures or other public formats arising from my research.

Your interview contribution is a valuable resource and it is important that you are comfortable with the ways that it may be used. The 1988 Copyright Act states that I must seek your written permission to record and use the interview for my purposes. I also need to ask you to sign over the ownership or the copyright of the interview content (spoken or written) to me as the researcher. This would allow me to use the information without seeking permission each time I quoted, published or broadcast your words. You are able to withhold or put restrictions on such permission, although this may make it difficult for your contribution to be used. To clarify, you would be signing over to me only the copyright of the recorded interview that has taken place between us. This in no way limits any future use that you may wish to make of the stories you have supplied.

Enclosed with this letter is a permission and copyright clearance form. Before our interview, I will go through this and answer any questions that you have. After the interview I will send you a written transcript of the recording. When you have read this, there will a chance to make any alterations or clarifications that you feel are important and you may amend any of the original permissions that you granted. You are able to withdraw from the research at any point.

I am looking forward to meeting you soon. In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Complaints Mechanism: Should you have any concerns about the conduct of this research project, please contact Dr Mitch Rose (Ethics Officer), Department of Geography, University of Hull, Cottingham Road, Hull, HU6 7RX; Tel: 01482 466536 or Email: M.Rose@hull.ac.uk

Kind Regards,

Alex Ombler
Human Geography PhD Researcher

7.4 Appendix IV: Interviewees' Consent Form

THE PORT OF HULL 1945-2000: Change, Adaptation and Memory.

PHD HISTORY RESEARCH PROJECT BY ALEX OMBLER

ORAL HISTORY RECORDING CONSENT AND COPYRIGHT FORM

NAME		
DATE OF RECORDING		
		COMMENTS OR RESTRICTIONS
I give my permission for the content of the recorded interview to be used in schools, universities, colleges and other education establishments, including use in a thesis or similar research.	YES/NO	
I give my permission for the content of the recorded interview to be used to create exhibitions, including museum displays.	YES/NO	
I give my permission for Hull Maritime Museum to access and use the content of the recorded interview for museum purposes, including display, publication and broadcast.	YES/NO	
I give my permission for the content of the recorded interview to be used in public performance, lectures or talks.	YES/NO	
I give my permission for the content of the recorded interview to be used in publications, including print, audio or video productions, internet or CD ROM.	YES/NO	
I give my permission for the recorded interview to be broadcast on radio, television or internet.	YES/NO	
I give my permission for the recorded interview and transcript to be deposited in a publically accessible archive. *	YES/NO	
I consent to my full name and age being mentioned in any of the above formats?	YES/NO	
I consent to my initials and age being used in any of the above formats?	YES/NO	
Please tick the box if you DO NOT wish your name to be revealed in association with the recorded interview, in any of the above formats?	☐	
I give my permission for a photograph of myself or other photographs that I have allowed the researcher to copy to be used in any of the above formats.	YES/NO	

** If you wish to specify a time restriction before the information is made publically available in an archive, please state this in the comments box.*

I, the interviewee, confirm that I have consented to take part in the recorded interview as part of this research. As the present owner of the contributor content (i.e. the words spoken by the interviewee), I hereby assign such copyright to the researcher, Alex Ombler at the University of Hull. I hereby waive any moral rights that I presently own in relation to this work on the understanding that the content will not be used in a derogatory manner and that the author of the contribution will be correctly identified in all uses of it (unless I have asked above for my name not to be used). I understand that no payment is due to me for this assignment and consent. In assigning my copyright, I understand that I am giving Alex Ombler the right to use and the right to make available for others to use, the content of the recorded interview in the ways specified above.

If you wish to limit the access and use of your contribution in any way not already specified, please state these conditions here:

……...

……...

……...

Data Protection: Your personal contact details will be held securely by the researcher and used only for the purpose of administration (i.e. to contact you with regard to the research), or for purposes of demonstrating ownership or the granting of consents. This form and the interview recording and transcript will only be deposited in a publically accessible archive if you have given your consent above. Your name, age and interview recording and transcript will only be used as consented above. All other personal data will be stored and used by the researcher only and will not be passed on to a third party without your consent.

By signing below, both parties accept this agreement.

Signed (Interviewee) ……………………………………………………………

Print Name ……………………………………………………………….

Date ……………………………………………………………….

Signed (Interviewer) ……………………………………………………………

Print Name ……………………………………………………………

Date ……………………………………………………………

7.5 Appendix V: Glossary of Cargo Handling Terms

Becket A device, such as a looped rope, hook and eye, strap, or grommet, used to hold or fasten loose ropes or wires in position.

Bogie Wheeled under-carriage on which a container or chassis may be placed.

Breakbulk Relating to dry cargo lifted on and off ships one piece or a bundle at a time by means of derricks but not shipped on trailers or in shipping containers.

Bulk cargo Homogenous unpacked cargo such as grain, iron ore or coal. A cargo shipped in this way is said to be *in bulk.*

Deal Carrier A category of dock worker who specialises in the manual discharge and movement of timber **deals:** sawn fir or pine lengths between seven and nine inches broad and six feet long.

Derrick Lifting equipment on board a ship that consists of an upright post attached to the deck and an inclined spar or boom.

Grab crane Type of crane equipped with a grab, a mechanical device which is lowered into a ship to grab or grip the cargo.

Hand hook Curved piece of steel with a point, held in the hand by a docker and used to attach to sacks of cargo for the purpose of moving them from place to place, both onshore and in the hold of a ship.

Hold Space below the deck of a ship, used to carry cargo.

Lighter Type of barge used to carry to a port part of a cargo of an ocean ship. This operation is carried out, for example, when the draught of a ship is too deep to reach the ship, sufficient cargo being discharged to lighters to reduce the draught.

Roll-on/roll-off System of loading and discharging a ship whereby the cargo is driven on and off on ramps. A ship designed to handle cargo in this way is known as a roll-on/roll-off ship or ro-ro ship**.**

Tomahawk A hand held axe-like implement used widely by dock workers at Hull to pick up planks or timber.

Unit load Method of presenting goods for shipment such that they are in lifts of uniform size or weight, for example, goods shipped on pallets or pre-slung. To group goods together in this way is to unitise them: the grouping is termed unitisation.

Winch Piece of machinery consisting mainly of a revolving device which is bolted to the deck of a ship. It has various uses: to raiser and lower derrick ropes, to open and close hatches and to moor the ship.

7.6 Appendix VI: The Port of Hull's Trade: Commodities, 1963 and 1981 (Thousand Tonnes)

1963		1981	
Inwards		**Inwards**	
Grain and Flour	866	Cereals (Including Flour)	5
Fish	201	Fish	32
Other Food and Provisions	586	Other Food and Provisions	354
Iron and Other Ores	173	Iron and Other Ores	15
Petroleum	2,471	Petroleum (And Products)	307
Timber	757	Timber	110
Chemicals and Fertilisers	133	Fertilisers and Minerals (Crude)	9
Other Commodities	1,205	Other Commodities	1,560
Total:	**6,391**	**Total:**	**2,392**
Outwards		**Outwards**	
Coal and Coke	1,350	Coal and Coke	1
Petroleum	984	Petroleum (Includes Bunker Fuel)	13
Grain and Flour	13	Food Stuffs (Including Cereals)	709
Building Materials	61	Raw Materials (Including Scrap)	158
Iron and Steel	176	Iron and Steel	109
Machinery and Vehicles	152	Chemicals and Fertilisers	454
Chemicals and Fertilisers	84	Other Manufactured Goods	510
Other Commodities	265	Other Commodities	405
Total:	**3,085**	**Total:**	**2,359**
Grand Total:	**9,476**	**Grand Total:**	**4,751**

Source: British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts,* 1963 and 1981

7.7 Appendix VII: Tonnage of Vessels Entering and Leaving Hull, 1962-1981 (Excluding Fishing Vessels)

Year	No. of Vessels	Net Register Tonnage 000s
1962	8,556	12,012
1963	8,933	12,702
1964	9,454	12,917
1965	9,171	12,918
1966	9,125	13,398
1967	9,181	14,024
1968	8,392	12,654
1969	7,887	12,043
1970	7,359	11,212
1971	7,523	10,265
1972	7,113	9,522
1973	7,281	9,137
1974	6,952	10,009
1975	6,392	12,807
1976	5,754	12,671
1977	5,923	12,611
1978	5,145	12,208
1979	5,188	11,793
1980	5,293	11,846
1981	4,862	11,642

Source: British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts,* 1963-1981

7.8 **Appendix VIII: Container and Roll-on/Roll-off Units handled at the Port of Hull, 1969-1981**

*Includes Import/Export Vehicles (Ro/Ro Services)

Year	Units
1969	127,022*
1970	119,293*
1971	133,518*
1972	82,854
1973	134,651
1974	142,717
1975	131,191
1976	142,012
1977	148,067
1978	130,698
1980	148,128
1981	165,613

Source: British Transport Docks Board, *Annual Reports and Accounts,* 1969-1970

7.9 Appendix IX: Ownership of the Port of Hull, 1945 to 2000

Transport Act 1947, nationalised the London and North Eastern Railway Company and transferred ownership of the Company's docks to the Docks and Inland Waterways Executive of the British Transport Commission on 1 January 1949.

Transport Act 1953, abolished the Docks and Inland Waterways Executive and placed the port under the direct control of the Docks Division of the British Transport Commission.

Transport Act 1962, dissolved the British Transport Commission and passed ownership of the port to the newly formed British Transport Docks Board on 1 January 1963.

Transport Act 1981, reconstituted the British Transport Docks Board as Associated British Ports Holdings PLC which was then privatised in 1983.

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