CHAPTER 5

Dock Development, 1778-1914

Martin Wilcox

'Nothing has more contributed to the extension of commerce in Hull than the docks.'
White's Directory of Hull, 1882

Hull owes its existence to water transport. Located at the mouth of the River Hull, where the deep-water channel of the Humber sweeps along its north bank, it is a natural transhipment point, and although the town (as it is properly called until 1897, when Hull gained its city status) did become an industrial centre during the nineteenth century it was always first and foremost a port. Between 1778 and 1914 its scale and operations were revolutionised. At the beginning of the period it was simply a river port, exploiting the natural harbour of the River Hull, but thereafter the port was transformed, and with it the town. The growth of trade and the industries it fostered drove Hull's economic development, and with it the expansion of its population and thus its urban sprawl. Meanwhile, the location of the various docks shaped the centre of the town, led its expansion east and west along the Humber and north along the Hull, and determined the location of its key industries. Through their influence the medieval town became a modern city.

Causes and Influences

The development of Hull was driven fundamentally by the same factors as other major ports: the industrialisation of the British economy, the growth of seaborne trade and with it the emergence of new commodities and trade routes, and developments in shipping.[1] Yet every port is distinctive, and Hull's evolution was shaped its geography, by its pre-existing trade links both at home and overseas, and by the priorities and needs of its political and commercial communities.

All ports depend on their hinterland, from where goods for export are sourced and in which imported goods are sold. From medieval times Hull had reaped the benefits of being linked to inland Yorkshire and the Midlands via the Humber and its tributaries, such as the River Ouse, which was navigable as far as York and therefore saw much of the city's wool exports routed through Hull. During the eighteenth century major rivers were improved and linked to one another via the growing canal network, connecting ports more closely with the industrial areas of Britain.[2] Improvements to the Rivers Trent and Don linked Hull to Nottingham and Birmingham, whilst the Aire and Calder Navigation improved links with West Yorkshire. Later phases of canal-building, especially the Grand Trunk and Leeds and Liverpool Canals, added further linkages.[3] All of this

[1] G. Jackson, *The History and Archaeology of Ports* (Tadworth, 1983), p.31.
[2] W.R. Childs, *The Trade and Shipping of Hull 1300-1500* (Beverley, 1990), pp.5-7; P.S. Bagwell, *The Transport Revolution from 1770* (London, 1974), pp.14-7.
[3] G. Jackson, *Hull in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Economic and Social History* (Oxford, 1972), p.51; H. Calvert, *A History of Hull* (London and Chichester, 1978), p.315.

placed Hull in prime position to benefit from the rapid expansion of an array of industries across the north and Midlands. Hull also had a thriving coastal trade, mainly with London and other east coast ports, from whence Hull imported the goods from parts of the world with which its own ships did not trade and exported the foodstuffs and raw materials of Yorkshire and the Midlands.[4] The inland waterways continued to transport large quantities of goods into and out of Hull into the twentieth century, but by then the hinterland had been widened greatly by the railways.[5] An abortive scheme for a Hull-Leeds line was proposed as early as 1825, and although the railway did not actually reach Hull until 1840 it did exert an influence as riverboats from Hull connected with it at Selby. When the railway arrived it shared traffic in bulky goods with waterways and coastal shipping, but also allowed rapid transport of passengers and lighter cargoes, and perishable goods such as fresh fish.[6] Later, the railways played a vital role in fostering the coal trade.

The 'transport revolution' fed into wider industrialisation which saw Britain evolve from the agrarian society of the early eighteenth century to the urban, industrial one of the nineteenth. Many key industrial areas lay within Hull's hinterland, and it was their early development that caused trade through the port began to grow quickly from the mid-eighteenth century.[7] Then, as now, the principal business of Hull was trade with northern Europe, especially Scandinavia, Russia and the Baltic. Fundamentally, raw materials came in through the port, and finished goods were shipped out. The principal imports were of iron ore, wood and raw materials for the textile industry. Iron ore came mainly from mines in Sweden. Imports rose from around 6,000 tons per annum in the late 1760s to 8,000 at the turn of the nineteenth century, and then accelerated in line with industrialisation: imports through Hull stood at 39,000 tons in 1857, and more than doubled to 113,000 tons by 1900.[8] Wood came mainly from Russia and the Baltic, and at times also Canada. Imports here too boomed: 120,000 loads of deals were imported in 1857, and 613,000 by the turn of the twentieth century. Raw textile imports grew more slowly, but even here, for instance, raw wool imports doubled from 15,000 to 32,500lb during the second half of the nineteenth century.[9] Linseed and similar products were imported on a large scale, as at times in the later eighteenth century was wheat from Russia, Poland and Prussia, and sundry other consumables such as fruit, wine and tobacco.[10]

The most important exports in the late eighteenth century were the old staple: textiles. Shipments increased quickly as the West Yorkshire and Lancashire mills expanded, and continued to grow through the nineteenth century. Although exports of cotton yarn shrank, this was offset by an increase in manufactured cotton goods, which went up from 79.4 to 123.8 million yards between

[4] K.J. Allison (ed.), 'Hull, 1700-1835', in *A History of the County of York East Riding: Volume 1, the City of Kingston Upon Hull* (London, 1969), pp. 174-214. *British History Online* http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/yorks/east/vol1/pp174-214 [accessed 30 May 2016].
[5] *Port of Hull Annual* 1911, p.33.
[6] E. Gillett and K.A. MacMahon, *A History of Hull* (Hull and Oxford, 1980), p.271; G. Head, *A Home Tour through the Manufacturing Districts of England in the Summer of 1835* (London, 1836), p.211-3; J. Simmons, *The Victorian Railway* (London, 1991), pp.351-5.
[7] G. Jackson, *The Trade and Shipping of Eighteenth-Century Hull* (Beverley, 1975), pp.19-20.
[8] Jackson, *Trade and Shipping of Eighteenth-Century Hull*, Appendix 2; Annual Statement of Trade and Navigation of the United Kingdom, 1857; Annual Statement of Trade of the United Kingdom, 1900.
[9] J.M. Bellamy, 'Some Aspects of the Economy of Hull in the Nineteenth Century with Special Reference to Business History' (unpub. PhD thesis, University of Hull, 1965), Appendix B.
[10] Jackson, *Trade and Shipping of Eighteenth-Century Hull*, pp.23-4.

1850 and 1914. The late eighteenth century saw a boom in exports of earthenwares, heavy and fragile goods which came to Hull as the canals linked the potteries of Staffordshire to the port. Finally, iron and steel goods from the furnaces and forges of Sheffield and the Midlands saw a fivefold increase in the last decades of the eighteenth century. Hull is often thought of as a port based mainly on imports, but in fact exports were of greater value, although lesser weight.[11]

Most trades of the eighteenth century remained important throughout the nineteenth, but some previously small ones assumed large proportions. Among them were wheat imports, which grew from 242 quarters in 1840 to 4,300 in 1910, and livestock and foodstuffs such as butter, pork and beef became major imports for the first time.[12] Some completely new trades appeared too, among them petroleum and coal. Hull was insignificant as a coal port before the 1870s, but the development of the South Yorkshire coalfield, with excellent rail links to Hull, saw the town become the third biggest exporter of British coal by the outbreak of war in 1914.[13] Finally, the railway and the steamship made people a lot more mobile during the nineteenth century, and led to a boom in numbers travelling by sea. Hull was at the forefront of this, with the first river steamers entering service just after the end of the Napoleonic Wars and a large number of coastal and short-sea services being established in the following decade,[14] until by 1914 a network of steamship services connected Hull with ports around the UK and all over Europe, and the port's largest shipping firm, the Wilson Line, was running regular services to the United States, Australasia, India and North Africa.[15] Table 1 illustrates something of the scale of the port's growth.

Table 1: Average Annual Tonnage of Vessels on which Dock Dues Were Paid, 1810-1900 (000 tons)

1810-9	337
1820-9	351
1830-9	460
1840-9	725
1850-9	942
1860-9	1,233
1870-9	2,032
1880-9	2,568
1890-9	3,422

Source: Hull History Centre, C DPD 12/1/23, Notebook of W.H. Huffam.

Hull was also one of few major ports to combine seaborne trade with harvesting the sea's living resources. The ancient business of whaling was revived in the 1770s and grew to a peak in 1818, when 63 ships were sent out. Decline then set in due to heavy losses of ships, overfishing, and the substitution of coal for whale oil in gas production.[16] Some, too, felt the money invested in it could be better used. John Greenwood claimed in 1835 that it was 'greatly overdone and injurious to the

[11] Bellamy, 'Economy of Hull,' Appendix B; Jackson, *Hull in the Eighteenth Century*, Appendix 9; Jackson, *Trade and Shipping of Eighteenth-Century Hull*, p.20; Allison, 'Hull, 1700-1835,' [accessed 30 May 2016].
[12] Bellamy, 'Economy of Hull,' Appendix B.
[13] T. Sheppard*, City & County of Kingston upon Hull: the third port of the United Kingdom* (Hull, 1925), p.12; Bellamy, 'Economy of Hull,' p.89.
[14] F.H. Pearson, *The Early History of Hull Steam Shipping* (Hull, 1894), pp.2-5.
[15] *Kelly's Directory of the North and East Ridings of Yorkshire*, 1913.
[16] W. Gawtress, *A report of the inquiry into the existing state of the corporation of Hull* (Hull, 1834), p.382; A.G. Credland, *The Hull Whaling Trade: An Arctic Enterprise* (Beverley, 1995), pp.38-47

general trade of the port,' and blamed it for Hull's lack of trade to the Mediterranean. There was a short-lived revival in the 1840s, but by 1869 there was just one whaler left, the *Diana*, and with her grounding on the Lincolnshire coast whaling from Hull ended.[17] By then, however, fishing was growing rapidly. Trawlers from south-west England had been working seasonally in the North Sea since the 1820s, but began to settle permanently at Hull from around 1840, as the railways allowed fresh fish to reach the working class of Yorkshire and the Midlands in good condition and at a price they could afford.[18] Despite competition from Grimsby the fishing industry grew strongly between the 1840s and 1880s. There were just 21 trawlers in Hull in 1845, but 535 by 1881, employing more than 2,500 men. From 1883 steam trawlers began to replace the sailing vessels and the number of boats fell to 377 in 1901, but catching power and numbers employed continued to grow.[19]

All of this created demand for dock space, and throughout the period Hull, like all major ports, struggled to provide adequate facilities and reduce congestion. The crowded state of the River Hull provided part of the rationale for building the first dock, but within just fifteen years another was needed.[20] By the 1840s the river was again so crowded that it could reputedly take a ship as long to cover the mile from the dock entrance to the Humber as to sail to St Petersburg. Within the docks, too, there were problems. Stored bundles of timber created obstruction and hazards to shipping, whilst in its early years the fishing industry had space enough in Humber dock for just five trawlers to land, and many had to discharge their catches into boats in the Humber.[21] Developments in ships themselves also posed problems. The entrance to Humber Dock was built to accept a 50-gun warship, but was too narrow for many paddle steamers to pass through, whilst by the 1850s the Town Docks were too shallow for the newest and largest steamships. Later, the building of the large docks to the east was driven by the need to accommodate the 10,000-ton ships then coming into use.[22] Ships also became more specialised, and required facilities tailored to their needs. The Alexandra Dock was built for the coal trade and featured the latest in conveyor belts and cranes to handle it, whilst the Riverside Quay was built to provide quick turnaround times for passenger ships and those carrying perishable cargoes.[23]

Another spur was competition with other ports, and the persistent fear that Hull was losing out. Early in the nineteenth century contemporaries fretted about its ability to compete effectively with Liverpool, although such concerns ignored the fact that Liverpool was orientated towards Atlantic

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[17] J. Greenwood, *Picture of Hull* (Hull, 1835), pp.41-2; Credland, *Hull Whaling Trade*, pp.81-4.
[18] R.N. Robinson, *Trawling: The Rise and Fall of the British Trawl Fishery* (Exeter, 1996), pp.23-33.
[19] E.J. March, *Sailing Trawlers: The Story of Deep-Sea Fishing with Long-Line and Trawl* (Newton Abbot, 1970), p.177; British Parliamentary Papers (BPP) 1882 XVII, Report of Committee of Board of Trade relative to Sea Fishery Trade, and Relations between Masters and Crews of Fishing Vessels, Appendix 29; Annual Report of the Inspector of Sea Fisheries, 1901.
[20] T. Wood, *Tidal Harbours Commission: The Humber, its roads, shoals, and capabilities. Importance and improvement of the Port of Hull. A report of the proceedings at the Town Hall, Hull, on the 23d. day of October, 1845* (Hull, 1845), p.45.
[21] Wood, *Tidal Harbours Commission*, p.59; BPP 1841 IX, Committee on Kingston-upon-Hull Docks Bill: Minutes of Evidence, q.266; *Hull Packet and East Riding Times*, 20 December 1867; Robinson, *Trawling*, p.44.
[22] Wood, *Tidal Harbours Commission*, p.47; Allison (ed.), 'Modern Hull', in A History of the County of York East Riding: Volume 1, pp. 215-286. British History Online http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/yorks/east/vol1/pp215-286 [accessed 18 May 2016].
[23] *Port of Hull Annual* 1911, p.51; A.G. Credland, 'The Dock System of Hull: Eighteenth to Twentieth Centuries,' in D. and S. Neave, *An Historical Atlas of East Yorkshire* (Hull, 1996), p.90.

trade whereas Hull faced Europe.[24] More realistic were complaints that high dock charges were losing the port business, especially in the face of growing competition from other east coast ports. Goole, established by the Aire and Calder Navigation company in 1826, made inroads in Hull's coastal trade, as did Grimsby in both commodity trade and fishing once the railways reached it and gave it the hinterland it had previously lacked.[25] From 1912 Immingham represented another local competitor. Further north, Hartlepool was alleged to be creaming off trade that rightfully belonged to Hull.[26] Real or imagined, the threat from other ports was regularly invoked in campaigns for new and expanded port facilities, or used to justify investment

The course of development was also influenced by often fractious relationships between different interest groups within the town, each seeking to protect its own position and impose its own view of what would be best for the port. The Dock Company, which had a monopoly on dock provision until the 1880s, took a conservative approach to providing facilities and was frequently accused of neglecting the port and allowing it to lose ground to competitors.[27] Some of its shares were owned by Hull Corporation, which could put pressure on the company to improve its facilities and oppose plans it thought ill-advised, but was itself sometimes blamed for not working in the interests of the port.[28] Various private interest groups naturally sought to advance their own aims. On several occasions, such as in the later 1830s and 1850s, consortia of local interests were formed to promote rival dock schemes and break the Dock Company's monopoly.[29] None succeeded until the 1880s, when the Hull Barnsley & West Riding Junction Railway and Dock Company created not just the largest dock in the port, but an entirely new railway line. Part of the impetus for the venture came from opposition to another powerful interest, the North Eastern Railway, which monopolised rail services to Hull from the early 1870s. The interplay between these forces, and less prominent ones such as Trinity House, was central to how the port developed and why its facilities expanded where and when they did.

The Course of Development

The River Hull provided adequate space for trade and whaling from Hull for more than five centuries, but as a meeting organised by leading merchants put it as early as 1756:

[24] J.M. Bellamy, *The Trade and Shipping of Nineteenth-Century Hull* (Beverley, 1971), p.28.
[25] J.D. Porteous, 'The Company Town of Goole: An Essay in Urban Genesis,' *University of Hull Occasional Papers in Geography* 12 (1969); G. Jackson, 'Port Competition on the Humber: Docks, Railways and Steamships in the Nineteenth Century,' in E.M. Sigsworth (ed.), *Ports and Resorts in the Regions: Papers Submitted to the Conference of Regional History Tutors Held at Hull College of Higher Education in July 1980* (Hull, 1980), pp.45-58.
[26] *Hull Packet and East Riding Times*, 18 May 1855, 5 November 1858; *Port of Hull Annual* 1911, p.4.
[27] See for example HHC, C DPD/1/29, Second Report of the Committee Appointed to Obtain Additional Dock Room at the Port of Hull, 24 February 1820; Report of the Proceedings of the Committee of Owners of Property on Both Banks of the River Hull, 1836.
[28] BPP 1841 IX, Committee on Kingston-upon-Hull Docks Bill: Minutes of Evidence, q.1,590; Wood, *Tidal Harbours Commission*, p.18.
[29] HHC, C DPD/1/29, Fourth Report of the Proceedings of the Committee of Owners of Property on Both Banks of the River Hull, 1841; *Hull Packet and East Riding Times*, 4 May 1860.

> By the Increase of Trade the Present Harbour for Ships at this Port is become not large enough for the shipping and the want of sufficient room there in is found to be very detrimental and hazardous.[30]

The Seven Years War, which broke out that year, depressed trade and relieved the pressure, but the return of peace in 1763 saw the situation worsen again. Not only was this damaging to trade, but in the absence of a Legal Quay the Commissioners of Customs became concerned about the amount of smuggling being conducted in Hull. Leading merchants, operating from houses on the river, naturally rejected this, whilst the Corporation procrastinated, before beginning to consider proposals to build a dock in 1772. It was the Customs which brought matters to a head, by threatening to establish a port at Gainsborough and 'do such other things in the neighbourhood of Hull as for the trade of the country it appeared to them they ought to do.'[31] Faced with this threat, but also the offer of financial assistance and a grant of land on which to construct a dock, the Corporation gave in. Rather than construct the dock under its own auspices, as at Liverpool, it was turned over to a private company, a decision whose consequences would be felt for more than a century. Hull Corporation and Trinity House held ten of its 120 shares each, with the remainder distributed among merchants and other interests, mainly in Hull and London. In 1774 an Act of Parliament authorised the building of the first dock, which duly opened four years later. It was an immediate success: 88,000 tons of shipping used it in 1780 alone.[32] Yet within a decade of its opening it was inadequate.

By 1786 there was a consensus that 'from the great increase of trade at this place, an extension of the Dock, or a new Dock, is become absolutely necessary.'[33] There was no consensus, however, over what should be built or who should pay for it. In the ensuing pamphlet war the Dock Company was attacked for making large profits whilst having 'impeded the improvement of the trade … diminished the conveniences of the port, and … prevented the useful, as well as ornamental extension of the town.' For such 'high crimes and misdemeanours' some went as far as trying to 'annihilate' it via a Parliamentary Bill that would force it to sell off land, restrain its profits and dividend payments, fix its rates and provide for its transfer to public ownership.[34] This was never likely to succeed, and nor were the first proposals for an alternative company, which had no support from the Corporation.[35] It was true that the Dock Company had done little to plan for future growth, but the 1774 Act had made no provision for doing so and debate raged over whether the company had been granted the dues from the first dock as reward for its enterprise in building it or whether it was obliged to make

[30] Quoted in Jackson, *Hull in the Eighteenth Century*, p.238.
[31] HHC, C DPD/1/30, 'Free Thoughts on the present proposed Plan for Erecting a Quay at the Port of Kingston-upon-Hull, in a Letter offered to the consideration of Inhabitants, by a Well-wisher to the Prosperity of the said Town,' c.1773; C DPD/1/29, 'Remarks on a Publication Intitled the Case of the Merchants &c of the Town of Kingston-upon-Hull,' 1787; Jackson, *Trade and Shipping of Eighteenth-Century Hull*, p.52.
[32] Jackson, *Hull in the Eighteenth Century*, p.243; HHC, C DPD/1/29, 'Dock Company at Kingston-upon-Hull, 1789.' List of shareholders; Jackson, *Trade and Shipping of Eighteenth-Century Hull*, p.53.
[33] HHC, C DPD/1/29, 'Mercator,' 'To the Merchants, Ship-owners and Others of the town of Kingston upon Hull,' 9 March 1786.
[34] HHC, C DPD/1/29, 'Charges intended to be Exhibited in Parliament against the Dock-Company at Kingston-upon-Hull,' 5 January 1787; 'A Defence of the Rights of the Dock Company at Kingston-upon-Hull, 1787.
[35] HHC, C DPD/1/29, Public Notice by Hull Dock Company, 26 October 1787.

further provision for the good of the town.[36] This was unresolved when the French Revolutionary War broke out in 1793, as was the question of where a second dock should be sited, with some proposals favouring the west side of town and others, including the Dock Company itself, a site to the east of the Citadel.[37] The questions of where docks should be built, who should pay for them, and what the Dock Company should and should not do would flare up repeatedly during the nineteenth century. For now, though, they were resolved by the decision to build the Humber Dock, authorised by Act of Parliament in 1802. Half of the cost was borne by the Corporation, whilst the Company was allowed to increase its shares from 120 to 180.[38] Construction began in 1807, with the famed civil engineer John Rennie in charge, and it opened in 1809. The spoil was used to build up the foreshore on the south side of town, upon which Wellington Street and Nelson Street were laid out, and later a small dock and then a pier for the Humber ferries were added.[39]

The 1802 Act included provision for a third dock, once trade in the first two rose above a certain level. Although the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 saw a national economic depression, the tonnage of shipping entering Hull from overseas increased by 80 per cent between 1815 and 1818, sufficient to activate the clause allowing a third dock. A committee of shipowners and merchants was formed to press the Dock Company and Corporation to put it into effect.[40] The company's reluctance and a subsequent depression in trade postponed the issue, but when prosperity returned a new Committee was formed, and in 1824 persuaded the Dock Company to go ahead, this time financing the project entirely out of its own resources. The foundation stone was laid in 1826, and Junction Dock opened with great ceremony on 1 June 1829.[41] These three docks, collectively known as the Town Docks, circuited the Old Town, following the lines of and obliterating the remaining medieval fortifications. Thus, as James Sheahan wrote, 'have these formidable military walls and ditches … given way to industrious establishments of commercial appliances.' They were augmented in 1846 by Railway Dock, a westward arm of Humber Dock connected directly to the railway. Only two acres in area, some ridiculed it as a 'fish pond.'[42] Nevertheless, it represented a useful increase in space, and an invaluable inland link via the adjacent railway terminal.[43] Junction Dock and what was by then known as the 'Old Dock' were renamed Prince's Dock and Queen's Dock respectively in honour of Queen Victoria's visit to the town in 1854.

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[36] See for example HHC, C DPD/1/29, 'Publicola,' 'To the Right Worshipful the Mayor of Kingston-upon-Hull,' 15 Sept 1787.

[37] HHC, C DPD/1/29, Letter from the Principal Merchants at Hull to the Collector and Comptroller of His Majesty's Customs at Kingston upon Hull, 15 February 1793; Memorial Presented by the Dock Company at Kingston upon Hull to the Lords Commissioners of H.M. Treasury, 30 January 1793.

[38] 42 Geo. III, cap.xci; *Hull Packet and Humber Mercury*, 2 June 1829.

[39] J.J. Sheahan, *History of the Town and Port of Kingston-upon*-Hull, 2nd edition (Beverley, 1866), p.381; M.T. Wild, 'The geographical shaping of Hull,' in S. Ellis and D.R. Crowther (eds), *Humber Perspectives: A region Through the Ages* (Hull, 1990), p.254.

[40] HHC, C DPD/1/29, Letter to Thomas Thompson Esq. MP, Chairman of the Dock Company at Kingston-upon-Hull, on the subject of making a Junction-Dock at that Port, by John Wray Esq., 1814; First and Second Reports of the Committee Appointed to Obtain Additional Dock Room at the Port of Hull, 22 February 1819, 24 February 1820.

[41] HHC, C DPD/1/29, Report of the Committee for Obtaining Additional Dock Room, 30 March 1825; *Hull Packet and Humber Mercury*, 2 June 1829.

[42] Sheahan, *History*, p.373; *Hull Packet and East Riding Times*, 5 Feb 1847.

[43] G. Jackson, 'Shipowners and private dock companies: the case of Hull, 1770-1970,' in L.M. Akveld and J. R. Bruijn (eds), *Shipping Companies and Authorities in the 19th and 20th Centuries: Their Common Interest in the Development of Port Facilities* (Amsterdam, 1986), p.50.

Well before the foundation stone of Railway Dock had been laid it was clear that something separate and much larger than the Town Docks would soon be needed, and better facilities for steamships.[44] This sparked further debate over what should be done and by whom. The Dock Company initially denied the need for more space, and then in 1836 offered to sell the docks to the town, effectively washing its hands of the problem. This was rejected by ratepayers unwilling to shoulder the costs. Two years later a rival company was formed to promote a dock east of the Citadel. This failed for lack of support, but did provoke the Dock Company into developing a similar scheme, which it presented to Parliament in 1840.[45] Here it met the opposition of a committee of influential merchants with property on the River Hull, who in 1836 had formed a committee to advance plans to enclose the river and turn it into a dock, something which the company's chairman, Joseph Robinson Pease, argued would 'involve the company in ruin.' The committee succeeded in getting amendments made to the Bill, prompting the company to withdraw it. The company later considered suing a prominent member of the committee for the costs it had incurred.[46] Nor were these the only plans, for others still were advanced for a 'railway dock' to the south-west, sharing its basin with Humber Dock. These had no real financial support, however, and once the merchants' committee's opposition had been quieted the Dock Company returned to Parliament and in 1844 finally succeeded in obtaining an Act of Parliament which authorised both Railway Dock and its venture east of the river.[47] The foundation stone of what became Victoria Dock was laid in 1846, and it opened in 1850.

Pease, who by then had stood down from the chairmanship of the Dock Company and whose opinion was perhaps coloured by desire to protect the value of his High Street property (the same motive animating the committee whose schemes he had opposed), felt that building docks east of the River Hull was 'a sad mistake.' In truth it was an essential addition, increasing the docks' area by nearly 50 per cent, and more when it was extended in 1863 and additional timber ponds added.[48] These also helped to alleviate the 'nuisance' of timber being stored in floating bundles in the other docks and on the river, which everyone had admitted was a problem. More importantly still, it provided facilities for the larger ships then coming into use.[49]

Victoria Dock quieted calls for additional accommodation, and for a few years in the mid-1850s the business of the port was also disrupted by the Crimean War. When normal conditions resumed, however, the port again came under pressure and old disputes flared up once more. In the 1840s the Dock Company had explored the possibility of purchasing the Citadel site, despite Pease's feeling it was 'all nonsense' and the government would never sell. When in 1858 it was put up for sale the

[44] HHC, C DPD/1/29, Report of the Proceedings of the Committee of Owners of Property on Both Sides of the River Hull, 1836.
[45] Sheahan, *History*, p.376; *The Civil Engineer and Architect's Journal*, vol. II (1839), p.16.
[46] HHC, C DPD/1/29, Fourth Report of the Proceedings of the Committee of Owners of Property on Both Banks of the River Hull, 1841; J.D. Hicks (ed.), *The Journal of Joseph Robinson Pease 1822-1865* (Beverley, 2000), p.110.
[47] HHC, C DPD/1/29, An Examination of the Report of the Proceedings of the Committee of Owners of Property on Both Sides of the River Hull, by 'Agathon,' 1836; *Hull Packet*, 23 December 1842; W. Wright, 'The Hull Docks,' in *Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers* XLI (1875), p.87.
[48] Hicks, *Journal of Joseph Robinson Pease*, pp.180 and 190; after Sheahan, *History*, p.377; E. Wrigglesworth, *Brown's Illustrated Guide to Hull* (1891, repub. Goole, 1992), p.209. Victoria Dock in its original form covered twelve acres: the combined area of the other enclosed docks was 25.75.
[49] *Hull Packet and East Riding Times*, 5 July 1850.

company moved to buy it, but on this occasion was opposed the Corporation, who wanted to redevelop the site as a public park for the crowded town.[50] Neither scheme came to pass. The Dock Company had never been very popular, and at a 'numerous and highly influential' meeting convened by the Corporation, one shipowner spoke for many when he lamented:

> the absence of any forecast for providing for the wants of their customers, and seeking only to realise large benefits for the monopolisers; it was in consequence of the delay on the part of the Hull Dock Company in providing the requirements of the trade of this port that Goole, Grimsby, and Hartlepool had arisen.[51]

The company had never been closely connected to the town's commercial community, and became more remote as the merchant dynasties of the eighteenth century – some of whom had invested and been involved in it – were supplanted by more specialist traders and shipowners. All too often it aggressively promoted its interests even when these were seemingly incompatible with those of the business community. The Bill it placed before Parliament for a dock on the Citadel site also included provision for extending its monopoly, due to end in 1865, for a further 21 years, a proposition decried by the *Hull Packet* as 'monstrous.'[52]

The alternative, once again, was for some the establishment of a rival, and during 1859 proposals circulated for a West Dock Company which would revive, in modified form, the plan for a south-western dock. This attracted promises of support from both Hull Corporation and the North Eastern Railway. The Dock Company countered with its own plan for the same site, and succeeded in obtaining the Hull Dock Act of 1861. This authorised the 'west dock' and extended the company's monopoly, but did acknowledge the opposition to it via the inclusion of clauses restricting its dividend payments (often attacked as excessive) and even making provision for the docks to be transferred to a public trust. Two unsuccessful attempts were made to do just that in 1865 and 1866, but foundered on the opposition of the North Eastern Railway, the parsimonious ratepayers, and of course the company itself.[53] By then construction of the dock was well under way, and it opened in 1869. Albert Dock, as it was named, began the port's sprawl to the west, but was far from an unqualified success. It was long and narrow, and its entrance too shallow for large ships to enter at most states of the tide. In that sense it was grist to the mill of those who argued that the Dock Company was building its facilities 'upon the same plan and in the same position as would have been provided fifty years ago, for the lumbering old ships which used to carry on the traffic of that day.'[54] On the other hand, it answered the fishing industry's demands for more space, especially after its westward extension, the William Wright Dock, opened in 1880, and for the first fifteen years of its existence it served well as the base for Hull's trawler fleet.[55]

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[50] Hicks, *Journal of Joseph Robinson Pease*, p.123; BPP 1859 XXV, Correspondence between Corporation of Kingston-upon-Hull, Treasury, Hull Dock Company, War Dept., and Office of Woods and Forests on Sale of Citadel Site, Hull.
[51] *Hull Packet and East Riding Times*, 5 November 1858.
[52] Bellamy, 'Economy of Hull,' pp.151-2; *Hull Packet and East Riding Times*, 24 September 1858.
[53] 24 & 25 Vict., cap.lxxxix; Bellamy, 'Economy of Hull,' p.152; Sheahan, *History*, p.767.
[54] *Hull Packet and East Riding Times*, 4 May 1860; G. Jackson, 'The Ports,' in M.J. Freeman and D.H. Aldcroft, *Transport in Victorian Britain* (Manchester, 1988), pp.228-9.
[55] C. Hellyer, 'The Fishing Trade from its Commencement at the Port of Hull,' in J. Franks (ed.), *Hull as a Fishing Port* (Hull, 1915), pp.49-53.

Until the 1860s the town's business and shipowning interests had tended to treat the railway companies as allies against the Dock Company, but as the North Eastern Railway's influence grew attitudes hardened. In 1865 it attempted unsuccessfully to buy out the docks, which is why it then found itself opposing the counter-proposal to transfer them to public trust. Thereafter it began to work more closely with the Dock Company, placing them on the same side in forthcoming struggles over future provision. Its acquisition of the remaining independent railway line into Hull in 1872 gave it a monopoly on railway services. This did not work in the port's favour, given that the railway's heartlands were to the north whilst Hull mainly shipped goods to and from the south and west. At a time of rising inter-port competition it fuelled allegations that Hull was losing out, especially to Hartlepool. 'You only have to unfurl a flag with "Hartlepool" on it,' noted one local dignitary, 'and Hull takes fire immediately.'[56] Nor was the North Eastern's reputation enhanced locally when its overstretched services 'completely broke down' in 1872, creating 'a state of block and confusion … seldom, if ever, witnessed in the history of a major trading port.'[57]

The idea of building a new railway to serve Hull had been floated periodically since the 'railway mania' of the 1840s in a variety of more or less realistic schemes. During the 1870s these crystallised into a plan for a railway to connect Hull to the developing south Yorkshire coalfield, provide an alternative route to the Midlands, and break the monopolies of both Dock Company and North Eastern Railway. Combined with this was a deep-water dock to accommodate the coal trade and other large ships. The venture had financial support from prominent shipowners, bankers and businessmen, and also the Corporation and Trinity House.[58] The Hull Barnsley & West Riding Junction Railway and Dock Company, as it had become, got the necessary Bill through Parliament in 1880, and its Alexandra Dock opened in 1885. It was the largest and most modern in Hull, and at 46 acres four times the size of the Dock Company's latest venture, St Andrew's Dock, opened in 1883. This had initially been intended for the coal trade, but by 1882 the decision had been made to turn it over instead to fishing, answering renewed demands from what was by then a large and influential interest for better facilities. This did not pass without some resistance, both from those reluctant to uproot their businesses around Albert Dock, and others who attempted to promote a controversial and ultimately unrealistic venture for a new facility at Saltend.[59]

Despite the complex manoeuvring and often unedifying conflict, Hull had done well in the preceding twenty years. The tonnage of shipping using the port rose by 130 per cent between 1862 and 1882, much faster than at either Liverpool (97 per cent) or London (83 per cent), and the value of its trade had increased. During this period, too, Hull's steamship services to Europe and beyond had flourished, and a series of new trades developed, especially in foodstuffs and petroleum. This expansion, periodic depressions excepted, continued until the First World War.[60] But although the local economy was doing well, the future for both dock companies was not so bright. Hull Dock Company had often struggled to raise capital, and now its income had been cut by the need to

[56] Jackson, 'Shipowners and private dock companies,' p.54; *Hull Packet and East Riding Times*, 26 May 1865; W.W. Tomlinson, *The North Eastern Railway: Its Rise and Development* (Newcastle and London, 1915), p.705.
[57] G.G. MacTurk, rev. K. Hoole, *A History of the Hull Railways* (Hull, 1880; repub. Knaresborough, 1970), p.151.
[58] Bellamy, 'Economy of Hull,' pp.153-4; J. Simmons, *The Railway in Town and Country 1830-1914* (Newton Abbot, 1986), pp.204-7.
[59] *Hull Packet and East Riding Times*, 22 February, 1 March 1878.
[60] 'The Humber' in E. Rowland Jones (ed.), *Industrial Rivers of the United Kingdom* (London, 1891), p.198; Bellamy, 'Economy of Hull,' Appendix B.

reduce dock dues in the face of competition from the Hull and Barnsley. As the need for another large dock became more pressing the company's inability to finance it became increasingly obvious. The North Eastern Railway, too, had reacted to competition by slashing charges, triggering a rate war which the Hull and Barnsley did not have the financial resources to win. Within a decade of opening Alexandra Dock was handling half as much traffic as the other docks in Hull combined, but both dock companies were showing signs of financial strain and began to look for allies, triggering off another round of manoeuvring between interest groups. The Hull and Barnsley's negotiations with first the Midland and then the North Eastern Railways came to nothing as the Corporation fought to maintain its independence, and nor did a subsequent attempt by the Corporation to create a public trust to take over both companies and pay off the Hull and Barnsley's debts. The Corporation was fighting old battles, and the shipowning interest was tired of being caught in the crossfire. Led by Charles Wilson, shipowners supported a renewed attempt by the North Eastern to take over the Dock Company. After two years of negotiation this was finally agreed in 1893.[61]

The Act of Parliament that authorised it ended the rate war by forbidding the North Eastern from reducing dues below those of the Hull and Barnsley, and opened up the way for the firms to co-operate in future on a new eastern dock.[62] Neither the Corporation nor many in the town's business community were happy with the deal, and their continuing suspicion of the North Eastern saw the former veto its plans to improve the Town and Victoria Docks, although they did allow it to extend St Andrew's. Such attitudes even surfaced when it produced a collaborative scheme with the Hull and Barnsley for an eastern dock, the need for which was increasingly urgent as ships grew larger and rising timber imports and coal exports put pressure on Victoria and Alexandra Docks. A Corporation representative insisted before the Parliamentary Committee that the 'freedom' given to the town by the Hull and Barnsley had allowed hull to 'advance by leaps and bounds.'[63] 'Freedom' did not provide the capital to build docks on the scale that were now needed, however, and both shipowners and the North Eastern ridiculed the Corporation's parochial attitude. The Bill passed, and the dock was duly built, although it was delayed by difficulties in construction and the concerns of the Humber Conservancy Commission about its effect on the deep-water channel in the Humber. Nevertheless, the King George Dock finally opened in June 1914. It was the largest dock in north-eastern England, and the first with machinery powered wholly by electricity. In its original form it was 53 acres in area, with the potential for further expansion with arms to the south-west and south-east.[64] Alongside its protracted construction went less spectacular developments. Cargo-handling facilities were steadily updated across the port. The Riverside Quay was built along the southern wall of Albert Dock, to allow North Sea passenger and cargo steamers to make quick turnarounds and to berth at any state of the tide.[65] Finally, petroleum had been imported in bulk since the early 1890s via a depot at the eastern end of St Andrew's Dock, which was augmented in 1914 by a large storage facility and jetties at Saltend.[66]

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[61] Jackson, 'Shipowners and private dock companies,' p.55; Bellamy, 'Economy of Hull,' p.165.
[62] Tomlinson, *North Eastern Railway*, pp.712-6.
[63] Quoted in Jackson, 'Shipowners and private dock companies,' p.56
[64] *The Engineer*, 19 and 26 June 1914; M. Thompson, *Hull Docklands: An Illustrated History of the Port of Hull* (Beverley, 1990), p.62.
[65] *Port of Hull Annual* 1911, pp.17-29; *The Engineer*, 1 July 1910; Thompson, *Hull Docklands*, p.58.
[66] HHC, C DPD/12/1/4, Hull Dock Company: Extracts of Minutes of the Board and Committees, 1888-93, undated entry c. July 1889; *The Engineer*, 26 June 1914.

Hull in the 1770s had conducted most of its business along a one-mile stretch of a narrow river. By 1914 the port stretched for seven miles along the Humber. Its eleven docks covered 247 acres, with a total quay length of around fourteen miles. The port's steamship fleets traded all around Europe and further afield, whilst the size of its first-class trawler fleet made it the second fishing port in the country. Only London and Liverpool handled more cargo than Hull, which thus ranked as 'the world's gateway to the manufacturing centres of England,' and Britain's third port.[67]

The Effects of Dock Development

The port was, and remains, Hull's *raison d'être*, and its transformation inevitably shaped the town. Firstly, and most visibly, it did so in geographical terms. Hull in the early eighteenth century had been an 'exceeding close built' place confined within its defensive walls.[68] Some limited development had taken place beyond them by the 1770s but it was the docks that released the town from its medieval confines. On land to the north of the first dock the Dock Company laid out a series of streets known as the New Town, which started the process of urban expansion to the north.[69] Along the river, the whaling yards and some shipyards had long been sited to the north of the town walls on the west bank of the river, but the late eighteenth century saw ribbon development intensify on both banks, in the form of ship- and boatyards, timber storage, roperies and similar industrial developments. The docks also provided the early stimulus to development to westward, once the walls on that side of town had been demolished to make way for the Humber Dock. By 1817 the Beast Market, which had lain just outside the walls to the north-west, was surrounded by buildings. A decade later the market area was cleared for Junction Dock.[70] Subsequently the docks supported and sometimes led expansion east and westwards along the Humber. To the west of the Humber Dock there was little in 1817 beyond garden plots and small potteries, and, some distance away, the fashionable residential suburb around St Mark Square. Urban development had extended this far by the 1850s, and speeded up further with the opening of the Albert Dock. Fifteen years later St Andrew's Dock was added to the west. The need to house the thousands of dock workers, seamen, fishermen and others led to intensive residential development all along the Hessle Road, and further north towards Anlaby Road.[71]

Before 1800 Hull had been confined to the west side of the River Hull, and on the east side there was little apart from the Citadel and the small village of Drypool. The development of the docks from 1850 seems to have had relatively little effect on residential development, for Drypool and Witham, just to the north, had grown into residential suburbs by the 1840s, and for the rest of the century most housing was built further to the north around the Holderness Road.[72] South-eastern Hull

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[67] Sheppard, *City and County of Kingston upon Hull*, p.21; *Annual Report on Sea Fisheries*, 1914; *Port of Hull Annual* 1911, p.11.

[68] Daniel Defoe, A *Tour Through* the Whole Island of *Great Britain*, 4th edn. (London, 1748), p.198.

[69] I. & E. Hall, *A New Picture of Georgian Hull* (Hull, 1978), p.19; J. Markham, *The Book of Hull: Evolution of a Great Northern City* (Hull, 1989), p.19.

[70] J. Craggs, Craggs's Guide to Hull: a Description, Historical and Topographical, of the Town, County, and Vicinity of the Town of Kingston-Upon-Hull (London and York, 1817), pp.38-9.

[71] *White's General Directory and Topography of Kingston upon Hull and the City of York*, 1851; A. Gill, *Village Within A City The Hessle Road Fishing Community Of Hull* (Hull, 1986), pp.5-6; J. Watts, 'Hessle Road: A History' (Hull, 1984).

[72] Wild, 'Geographical Shaping of Hull,' p.259.

developed instead as a mainly industrial area. During the 1870s some of the vacant land was used for the sort of municipal establishments the Corporation preferred to keep out of town, such as a new cemetery, the sanatorium and the new prison. By 1914 these were surrounded by industrial and some residential development as the town expanded west towards the new King George Dock.[73]

'Nothing,' noted a directory in 1882, 'has more contributed to the extension of commerce in Hull than the docks.' Their influence was felt throughout the local economy. Hull in the eighteenth century was a commercial centre and it remained so, but during the nineteenth century also grew into a sprawling industrial city, an outlier of the West Riding industrial conurbation. The port shaped its economic geography, determining the location of many of the industries that grew up around it.[74]

There had always been some industrial activity in and around the town, most notably shipbuilding. Hull was the third largest shipbuilding centre in the country in the eighteenth century, and in 1820 produced 6.1% of total shipbuilding output. By 1913 this had slipped to 2.1%, but Hull retained one of the few large steamship-building firms outside the giant clusters that had developed around the Clyde and Tyne.[75] Earle's Shipbuilding and Engineering Co, originally C&W Earle, was founded in 1853, and gained a reputation for turning out fine steamships. In peak years it was one of Hull's largest employers, but later ran into financial difficulties and in 1901 was purchased by the Wilson Line, who needed to maintain facilities for servicing large steamships, although it continued to build for other owners. As with Hull's smaller shipbuilders, Earle's main customers were local shipping firms, but it also built for owners elsewhere in Britain and overseas, and continued the tradition of building warships for the Royal Navy.[76]

Much of the rest of Hull's industrial sector processed the goods brought into the docks.[77] Whaling had long supported some processing industries that died out with the catching sector, but the growth of fishing provided raw material for a whole new cluster of smokehouses, filleters and fishmeal plants, mainly concentrated around Hessle Road. There were 55 curing firms alone in 1897. Every man employed on trawlers supported several more jobs ashore, and by 1915 it was estimated that one sixth of the city's population depended directly or indirectly on fishing for their livelihoods.[78] More important still were the manufacturing industries whose raw materials came in through the docks. Timber went through a network of timber yards and sawmills, and a thriving furniture-making industry, seeds supported a cluster of oil-extraction businesses and paint manufacturers, whilst some of the imported wheat was milled into flour by several local firms, most prominently Joseph Rank & Co.[79]

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[73] *Port of Hull Annual* 1914, p.55; Markham, *Book of Hull*, p.95.
[74] *White's General and Commercial Directory of Hull*, 1882; G. De Boer, 'The Evolution of Kingston upon Hull,' in *Geography* 31 (1946), pp.145-6; W.G. East, 'The Port of Kingston-upon-Hull during the Industrial Revolution,' in *Economica* 32 (1931), p.191.
[75] A. Slaven, *British Shipbuilding 1500-2010* (Lancaster, 2013), pp.19-20, 51; Allison, 'Hull, 1700-1835,' [accessed 30 May 2016].
[76] J.M. Bellamy, 'A Hull Shipbuilding Firm,' in *Business History* 6 (1963), pp.27-47; A.G. Credland, *The Gibsons: A shipbuilding family of the 18th and 19th centuries* (Beverley, 2006), pp.9-10.
[77] S.R. Palmer, 'The Ports,' in M. Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain Volume 3: 1840–1950* (Cambridge, 2001), p.144.
[78] J.H. Hargreaves, 'Introduction,' in Franks (ed.), *Hull as a Fishing Port*, p.9.
[79] A.G. Credland, *Artists and Crasftsmen of Hull and East Yorkshire* (Hull, 2000), pp.82-128; Bellamy, 'Economy of Hull,' pp.244-5, 317-20, 323-5.

The port also supported many of the town's service industries, most prominent among which was shipping. Hull was the fourth largest shipowning centre in Britain in 1790, with just under 55,000 tons registered.[80] Its relative position declined during the nineteenth century, and by 1913 it was the eighth largest, albeit with a registered fleet of over 283,000 tons. Of this, just under 238,000 tons consisted of steamships operated by nineteen firms, down from 72 in 1878, and the majority of the largest and most modern ships were owned by just one firm, the Wilson Line. Wilson's dominated the port, operating almost all of the long-distance liner services from the port as well as numerous European routes, and also had interests in fishing and, after 1901, shipbuilding.[81] They and other large steamship operators were complemented by a plethora of companies operating river and coastal services, and the ubiquitous keels which carried goods around the east coast and down the inland waterways as far as Sheffield and even Nottingham.[82] All of these supported a dense network of shipbrokers, freight forwarders, agents and dealers in the commodities arriving in the port.

Economic and industrial growth fostered rapid population growth. Hull had just 19,500 inhabitants in 1780, but 95,000 in 1851 and 297,000 by 1911. During the 1860s and 1870s booming manufacturing industries and fishing drew in migrants, and Hull grew twice as fast as Liverpool, Leeds and Manchester.[83] Where these people lived – Hull's social geography – was shaped partly by the docks. This began right at the start of the period, when the Dock Company's land north of the dock was developed into a fashionable residential suburb. This triggered the decline of the High Street as a residential area, as many of the merchant dynasties moved their town residences to the New Town, leaving the High Street to assume a mainly commercial function.[84] Some of the town's later middle-class suburbs were also linked directly to the port, such as the large houses along the Boulevard that housed trawler owners and successful skippers. At the other end of the social scale the docks, mainly built on the edge of town or on land reclaimed from the Humber, did not entail the clearance of swathes of working-class housing in the way the railways often did. Rather, they tended to call for its construction, especially in the developing suburbs of south-west Hull, whose close-packed terraces housed thousands of fishermen and seamen, and many who worked in related industries.[85]

Many of the older working-class suburbs in southern Hull also had a strongly maritime character, none more so than the crowded courts of the Old Town, inhabited in large measure by sailors, dockers and their families, and the area just to the west of Humber Dock around Waterhouse Lane.[86] These maritime suburbs were poor areas, often with a reputation for squalor and vice. Hull did not

[80] Jackson, *Hull in the Eighteenth Century*, p.136.
[81] D.J. Starkey, 'Ownership Structures in the British Shipping Industry: The Case of Hull, 1820-1916,' in *International Journal of Maritime History* VII (1996), 73; M.G. Barnard and D.J. Starkey, 'Private Companies, Culture and Place in the Development of Hull's Maritime Business Sector, c.1860-1914,' in G. Harlaftis, S. Tenold and J.M. Valdalaiso *The World's Key Industry: History and Economics of International Shipping* (Basingstoke, 2012), p.205.
[82] See F. Schofield, *Humber Keels and Keelmen* (Lavenham, 1988).
[83] Allison, 'Modern Hull;' Bellamy, 'Economy of Hull,' pp.49-52.
[84] Markham, *Book of Hull*, pp.61-2.
[85] S. Capes, 'The Contribution Made By Devonian and Kentish Migrants to the Fishing Industry and Community of Hull during the Late Nineteenth Century,' in *Maritime South West* 18 (2005), pp.33-60.
[86] BPP 1882 XVII, Sea Fishing Trade Committee, Minutes of Evidence, q.26 & 248; R. Gurnham, *The Story of Hull* (Stroud, 2011), p.99.

possess the classic 'sailortown' areas, into which young men came ashore from long-distance sailing ships with several months' pay in their pockets and where crimps, lodging-house keepers, pubs and brothels sought to relieve them of it.[87] Most of Hull's seafarers worked in European shipping and the fishing industry, and came home regularly. Nevertheless, its maritime suburbs offered some of the same attractions and many of the pubs, music halls and brothels of southern Hull catered at least in part to the seafaring population, as did many of the town's churches.[88] At the other end of the social scale, figures from the maritime industries featured prominently among Hull's elites, and served as councillors, aldermen, mayors and, in the case of Charles Wilson, its most prominent MP.

Maritime trade and its related industries had always dominated the economy, society and politics of Hull. In this sense the period between the opening of the first dock and the outbreak of war in 1914 was no different. Yet this period did see unprecedented changes in the scale of Hull's trade and shipping, and with it qualitative change in the town's economy. This was led and shaped by the port, which between 1778 and 1914 played the most important part in creating the modern city of Hull.

[87] See S. Hugill, *Sailortown* (London and New York, 1967).
[88] J. Tickell, *History of the Town and County of Kingston upon Hull to the present Time* (Hull, 1798), p.737.