

## **Red Sails Over The Estuary**

**Thames Sailing Barge Trust Exhibition in association with Southend Museums.**

**May 19th to August 15th Priory Visitor Centre, Priory park, Southend-on-Sea Southend**

### **Barge Operators Along The Estuary TSBT Exhibition – additional information**

It is difficult to find an historic postcard view of Southend beach without a Thames sailing barge appearing in it somewhere. This is not surprising since, between the late 1700s to the mid 1900s, more than 300 would have been owned in the vicinity, and numerous others from farther afield would have traded here.

In the early days of the development of Southend and the surrounding area, farming was the principal occupation in the area, and before roads and railways were very well developed, movement of goods by sea was very important. This area was very productive for farming, which provided, in particular, food and bedding for London horses, returning with manure for the fields.

Local tide mills at Rochford and Battlesbridge were important for milling the farm produce, and sailing barges were used to take the flour, hay and straw to market, returning with other cargoes.

Whilst farming would provide freights on a seasonal basis, local owners would be able to carry other goods, and maintain the profitability of their craft. Some operators developed regular trips From Southend to London and other ports, returning a few days later. This was known as a “hoy” service and would carry any type of goods, and occasionally passengers as well, to a regular timetable.

The Thames sailing barge was ideally suited for trading to the area as its flat bottomed form allowed the barges to come as close as possible to the shore as the high tide would allow, and take to the ground as the tide receded. Once the tide had gone out, cargoes could be loaded and unloaded over the side quite easily into horse and cart. There were not many wharfs in the area for loading and unloading, so being able to get as close as possible to where they were needed was a distinct advantage. The prospect of Southend pier being used for cargoes was an option early on, but objections to the tolls imposed led to the construction of other jetties for the use of local traders and the Gas Works.

Brickmaking was another occupation that developed in the area. Local clay was found to be suitable for bricks, and brickfields were set up

anywhere they clay was found. Workers moved into to the area, particularly from Kent, and Middlesex, and moved around as different brickfields were worked out. The largest local brickfields were in Woking, set up by D & C Rutter, who had already got interests to the West of London, and Crayford in Kent. Many smaller brickfields were worked from Woking though to Stanford-le-Hope, and sailing barges were busy providing transport, being able to carry 40,000-50,000 bricks at a time. Brickmaking often used clinker residue from domestic grates, so a common return cargo to the brickfield was rubbish (otherwise known as 'London mixture'). The clinker would be sorted from this, and combustible material used for fuel, and the remains dumped. Where wharfs were available, these would be convenient for loading and unloading, but at Thorpe Bay, for example, the barges were loaded 'over-side' on the beach.



East Beach Brickfield.

Sand from the Leigh sand-hill was found to be of a suitable consistency to spread on the brick moulder's table to prevent the newly moulded 'green' bricks sticking to it. Most of the brick companies used this sand, and a permit to load the sand had to be obtained from the owners of the foreshore, the Salvation Army, via the Port of London Authority. Fred Cooper once loaded his **Bassildon** single-handed, taking six tides to throw ninety tons of sand over her 5 feet 6 inches side into the hold. A steel-tipped wooden shovel was used, and the sand, spitted out as in digging an allotment, was thrown over the shoulder. If the barge had more than about five and a half feet of side, a hatch would be put down on a block of wood, and you had to run up this before each throw.

Coal and coke were vital sources of fuel in the area, not only for industrial use – i.e. the Gas Works, and transport, but also for domestic use.

Barges were used to supplement to sailing colliers in bringing coal from further up the East coast, and for distributing it to locations the colliers could not reach. Local coal merchants often mixed their trading with lime, hay and other cargoes.

As Southend developed and expanded, building materials for houses, roads, sea walls and other infrastructure were required, and again trade by sailing barges was an efficient and economical means of supplying demand and getting goods to where they were required.

Other local communities benefitted from regular hoy services, with local business men owning craft. These included Stanford-le-Hope, Pitsea, South Benfleet, Leigh, Shoebury, Wakering, Rochford, Burnham and Battlesbridge providing links with each other as well as to London, Maldon and other ports.

Southend had close links with Maldon, and it was a common place to obtain or register barges owned locally. In addition, the Thames and Medway estuaries were principal centres where sailing barges were built.

The first recorded barge built in Essex is considered to be the **Experiment** built by Samuel Horlock at Rettenden/Hockley in 1791. Samuel learned his trade in the family barge yard on the Thames. Not many barges were built in the Southend area. Edward Cook built **Shoebury** in 1879 at Shoeburyness for Howard and **Scud** in 1898 for Eastwoods. A couple of barges were built at Leigh by James Taylor (**British Oak** 1814 for Joseph Smith Hadleigh and **Betsey** 1819 for his own use). At Paglesham, Kemp built **Louisa** in 1855, **Ernest & Ada** in 1865, and **Paglesham** in 1876, and Shuttlewood built **Ethel Ada** 1903 for George and Albert Underwood. There may have been a few others built on the Crouch, but generally craft were obtained from builders in Maldon, further up the Thames, from the Medway, or Sittingbourne. In later years operators such as W.H. Theobald of Leigh were able to buy barges at reasonably low prices when companies merged, and the demand for some trades declined. His early barges were bought locally, but when the Kent cement companies merged to form the Associated Portland Cement Manufactures (A.P.C.M.) they became a major source for the barges he bought, particularly barges built by Smeed Dean. They were often sold on as house boats or lighters, once their useful life came to an end.

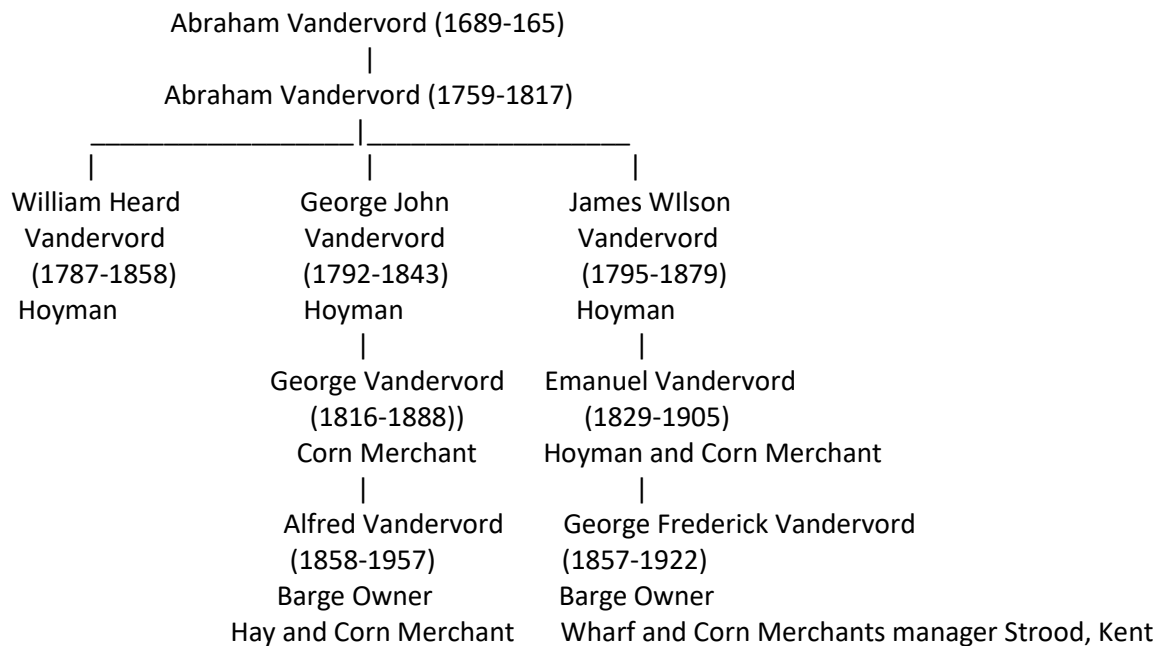
The ownership and operation of sailing barges in Southend and surrounding areas was mostly based on particular industries and families. Farming and the necessity to move and trade corn, hay and straw particularly to serve the needs of the many horses in London, and return with manure for fertiliser was extremely important. The Vandervords were significant operators for Southend, Howards for South Benfleet and Great Wakering, Ambrose Ellis for Stanford-le-Hope, W.H. Theobald for Leigh, Meesons for Rochford and Battlesbridge, with other smaller concerns working amongst them. Barges were often handed down through families through several generations, and in some cases siblings moved to other areas to expand their trading. In addition the larger barge fleets of Piper's of Greenwich, Goldsmiths of Grays and Francis and

Gilders, for example would have also been regular traders in the area.

### Vandervords of Southend

The Vandervord family played a very prominent role in the early days of the development of Southend, and sailing barges were a significant part of their business. With their family origins in the Netherlands, Abraham, born in 1689, appears to have acquired the first sailing vessel to be owned in the area - the Mary and Elizabeth in 1743. He had been master of the vessel and subsequently purchased it from George Richardson. He married several times, and his son Abraham (born in 1759) was one of twins born when he was 70 years of age. This son was master of the barge **Pitsea** at 18 years of age, owned by John Cousins - who was by this time his step-father - and made the first steps in developing the family barge business that continued through several generations.

### Family tree of the barge owning Vandervords:



In 1793 Abraham (1759-1817) built the Great House on the seafront at Southend, and this is still standing today. It had a variety of roles, being the basis for their business. It was also where Manorial Courts were held. It later became the Minerva Public House, named after a barge they owned.

The Southend Vandervords were generally described as corn merchants and hoymen. ‘Hoymen’ was a term given to those providing a service for the transportation of goods and people, particularly to a regular timetable, and this fitted the Vandervords very well.

George John Vandervord and James Wilson Vandervord appear to have operated independently, and when George Vandervord (1792–1843) died, his son George (1816-1888) took over, with his mother Ann in the first instance, until he went into partnership with his brother Emanuel. George and Emanuel’s barges ran regular trips to Upper Pickle Herring Wharf, Tooley Street every Monday or Wednesday, whilst James Wilson’s service ran to Irongate Wharf every Saturday.

**Vessels owned by the Vandervords between 1743 and 1904**

Alma	Deerhound	Factor	Iona	Pitsea	Three Friends
Ann	Dispatch	Farmers Increase	Jane *	Rachel & Julia	Waterloo
Ashley	Effort	Four Sisters	John Evelyn	Rathbale	West Kent **
Assistance	Elizabeth	Gannet	Lord Palmerston	Rover	
Betsey	Emily	George & Alfred	Mary & Elizabeth	Royal Oak	
Ceres	Essex Farmer	George Canning	Minerva	Susannah	

\*This was Alfred Vandervord’s favourite barge, which he retained after selling the business to Goldsmiths.

\*\* Joshua Brand (1836-1936) of Southminster was master for 39 years. The barge drove through Southend Pier in the Great Gale of 1881.

The Business was eventually sold by Alfred Vandervord to Goldsmiths of Grays, but he did stay on as manager for them. George Vandervord managed a similar business in Kent.

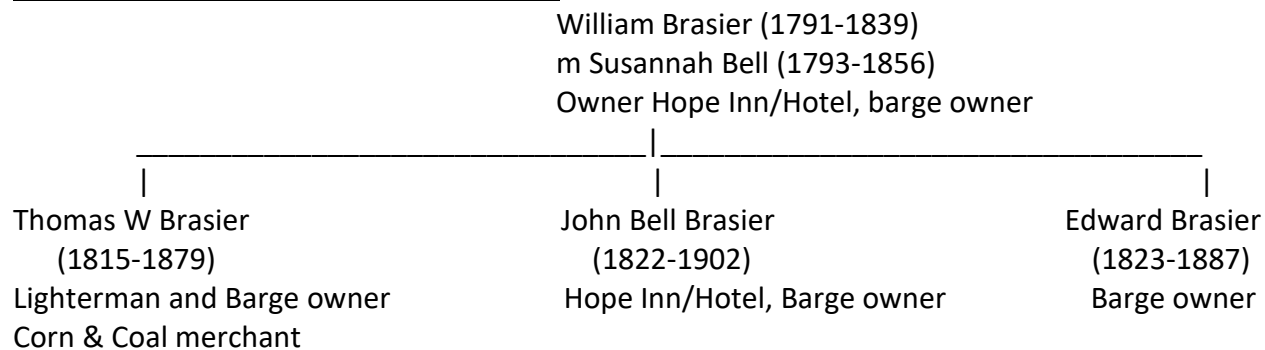
Goldsmiths had already had regular work to and from Southend-on-Sea, mostly with mineral products (chalk, whiting, sand, and other building products) from Dartford, and also coal for the gasworks or tramway depot. The consignments were taken to the Corporation loading jetty where they were discharged by grab, onto the tram network's own power station about a mile away. They set up their own offices in Southend, and added 'Corn Merchant' to their trading style. They continued regular trade to Southend with coal, coke and breeze up to and just beyond WWII when the Goldsmiths sailing fleet was disposed of.

When Southend Gas Company came into being in 1854, George Vandervord and John Bell Brasier were both on the board of directors, with the latter being company secretary for many years. Both owned sailing barges, and as the gasworks was dependent on coal and coke supplies, their barges may have been used for this purpose. In addition, Pipers of East Greenwich fleet delivered coal and took breeze way from the gasworks, and the **Ashingdon** owned locally by Samuel Peters was often seen at the gasworks jetty.

### Brasiers of Southend

William Brasier (1791-1839) owned the Hope Inn and Tavern on the seafront, and also owned the barges **Gregory, William & Mary** and a vessel called the **Gannet**. On his death in 1839, ownership passed to his widow Susan Brasier who, with the help of her son John Bell Brasier, continued to run the Inn, whilst she and her sons Thomas William, John Bell, and Edward, all continued to operate the barges, acquiring others, and co-owning some with the Vandervords.

### Family tree of the barge owning Brasiers:



The barges and Inn appear to have been handed on according to the wish of William Brasier's will, firstly to his widow and sons, and then on the death of Edward the youngest son, the sale of their remaining barges seems to mark the end of their association with them. George and Alfred Vandervoord were executors from Edward, suggesting a close link between the two families.

**Barges owned by the Brasiers between 1819 and 1888**

Factor	Honest Miller	Lord Palmerston	Runwell	William & Mary
Gannet	James	Perseverance	Three Friends	
Gregory	John & Jane	Royal William	Two Brothers	

Barges sold at Auction for the estate of Edward Brasier in 1888 - **Factor** (1833) £185, **Lord Palmerston** (1857) £295, **Royal William** (1833) £185, **Three Friends** (1830) £115

**Underwoods of Southend**

John Cremer Underwood (1805-1873) also seems to have close links with the Vandervords. He was a barge owner and operated principally as Hay and corn dealers – like the Vandervords, and later added coal merchant to his trade description. His son John Cremer Underwood (1828-1910) was a bargemaster on his father's barges and his two grandsons George and Arthur kept the barge interest going. One of his daughters Helena Mary married Alfred Vandervord (1858-1957). John Cremer Underwood (1805-1873) also co-owned the **Alma** with James and George Vandervord, with John Cremer jnr. as master.

**Barges owned by the Underwoods between 1865 and 1920**

Adeline	Ethel Ada	Landfield	Maid Of The Mill	Walter Hawthorn
Alma	George Canning	Lord Palmerston	Saucy Kent	

**Howards of Southend**

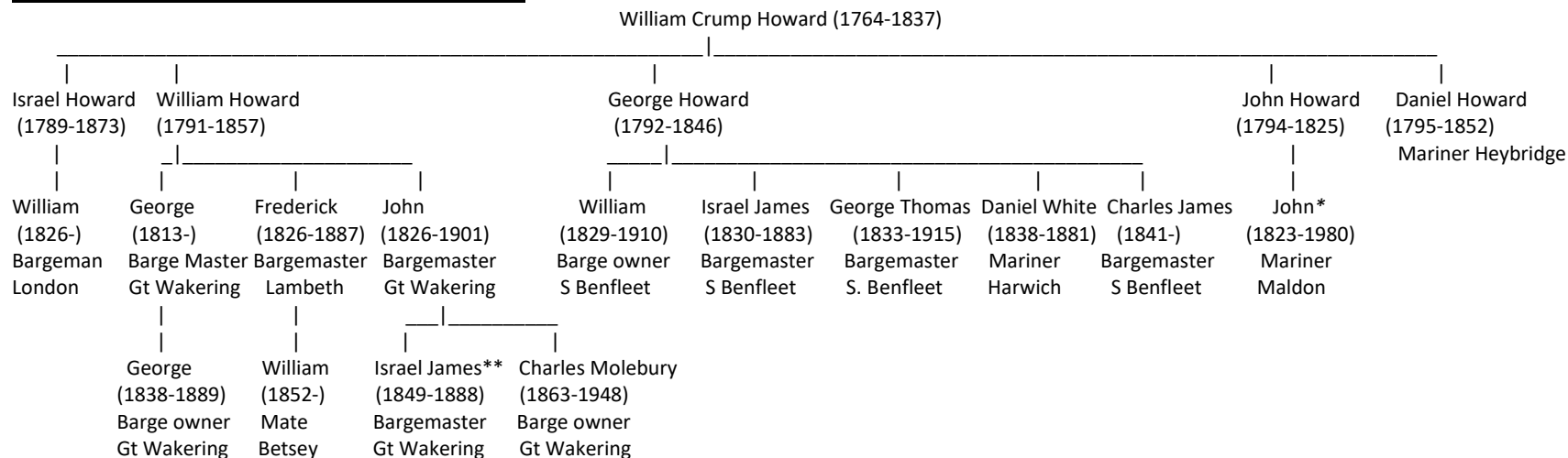
Working alongside the fleet of Rutters barges at Great Wakering, there were other barges owned and operated there, and the Howard family were the principal owners. They originated in Kent and William Crump Howard (1789-1873) came to Rochford in about 1890, settling in

Hockley shortly after the birth of his first son Israel. Of his 13 children, five of his sons worked with the sailing barges. Sons Israel (1789-1873) and William (1791-1857) made Great Wakering their base and they set up a regular hoy service to and from London

George (1792-1846) moved to South Benfleet, taking up residence in the Wharf House, and ran a similar hoy service from there. When he died, Mary Ann his widow took over ownership of the barges, and continued running them from South Benfleet with her sons William, Israel and George. The local brickfield was at its height around the time of the 1881 census, when the local population was significantly increased by workers for the brickfields. They came mostly from other brickfields in Kent, Middlesex and Essex, and there are no traces of them in either the 1871 or 1891 censuses. The Howard barges may well have been involved with transporting bricks during this time.

William Crump's son John (1794-1825) died age 31. The name John ran through this family, and they moved to Maldon where his grandson John (1823-1908) became a well-known boat and barge builder there. Other names ran through this family, and knowing exactly who was involved where can be confusing, for example, the name Israel Howard crops up a lot, but there are at least three of them.

**Family tree of the barge owning Howards:**



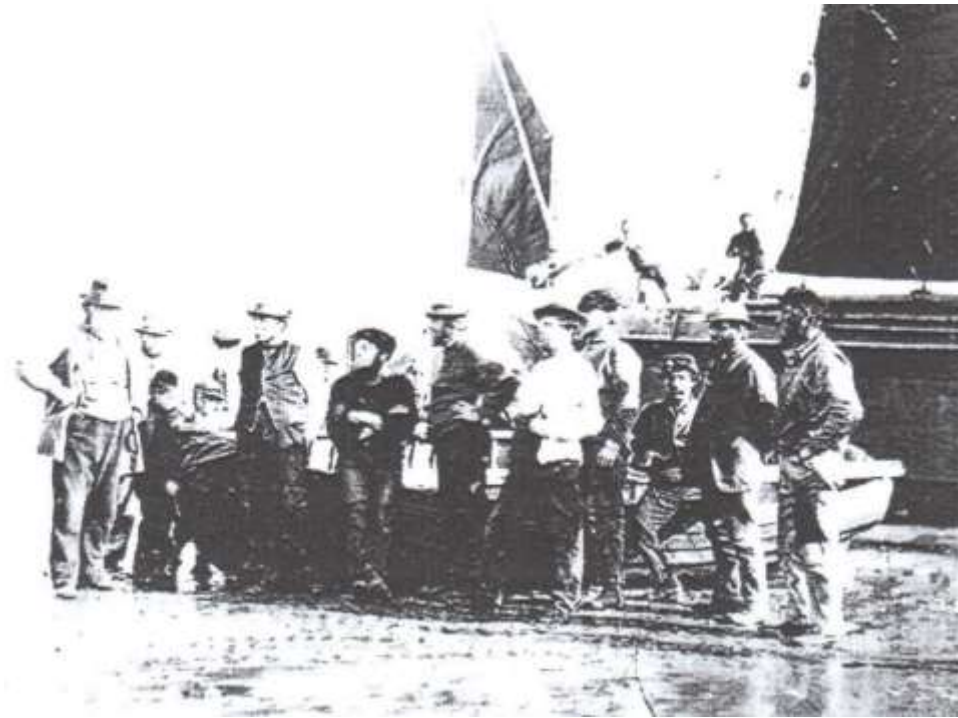
*\*Son of John Howard became well known barge/ship builder there*

*\*\* Wife Harriet took over barge ownership on his death.*



**Barges owned by the Howards between 1805 and 1888**

<b>Great Wakering</b>					
Alfred & Clara	Charles & Esther	Emma	Good Intent	John & Caroline	Rachel & Julia
British Oak	Earl Grey	Ernest & Ada	Harriet Howard	Joseph & John	Rawreth
Butterfly	Eliza	Flower Of Essex	Henry & Annie	Lapwing	Scarboro
Caroline	Elizabeth	Flower Of Kent	Invicta	Pride	Union
<b>South Benfleet</b>					
Catherine	George & Susannah	Pride	Queen		
Flower Of Kent	John & Isabella	Quartus	Sir Charles Napier		
<b>Unspecified</b>					
Alfred	Duke Kent	Shoebury			

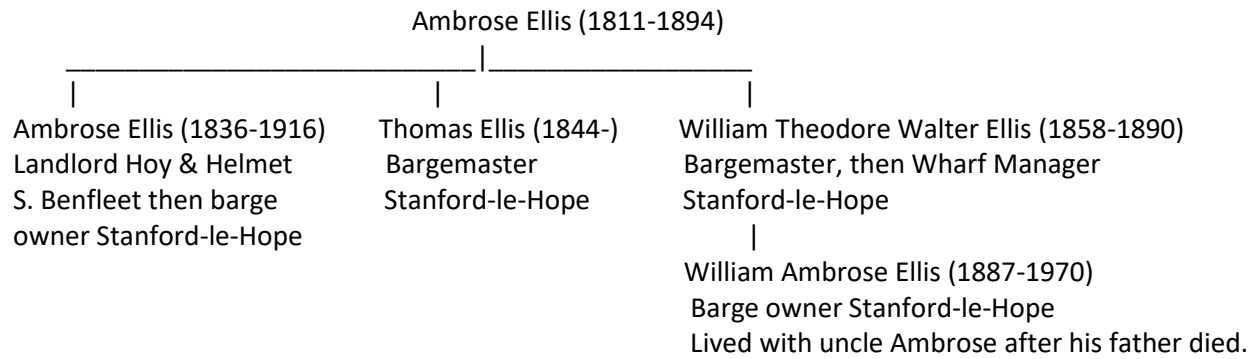


Local bargemen in 1869. Left to right, front row: S. Howard, J. Mead, T. Outram, T. White, R. Hallams, J. Howard, S. Howard, Jr., J. Prow, W. Bowman.

### **Ellis of Stanford-le-Hope**

Working closely with the Howards at South Benfleet were the Ellis family. Ambrose Ellis was a bargemaster for Howards at South Benfleet, before owning his own barges and he moved to Stanford-le-Hope to operate his barges from there. The name Ambrose passed through 3 generations. Their barges operated out of Mucking Creek, and worked principally for the explosives works of Kynochs on Curry Marsh as well as providing a general hoy service.

### **Family tree of the barge owning Ellises**



**Barges owned by the Ellises between 1867 and the 1930s**

Alaska	Clara	Jane	Minnie	Star
Bassildon	Denton	Joseph & John	Robert *	Three Friends
Caroline	Henry	Matilda & Amy	Sea Spray	



Sailing barge Alaska At Stanford-le-Hope

### Rutters and the Brickfields of Great Wakering

Brick making at Great Wakering probably started in Roman times, continuing at a low level with small family owned brickfields, until the late 1860s, when Frederick and Edward Rutter were looking to expand into this area. They already had interests in brickfields in Middlesex, and also in Crayford, Kent – on the other side of the estuary. They traded under D & C Rutter until the company eventually became known as the Wakering Brick Company around 1920. They opened up the Landwick, then the Millhead brickfields at Great Wakering and workers came from other brickfields in Kent and Middlesex.

The Rutters had a barge building yard at their Crayford works, and most of the barges operating at Great Wakering were built there. They were typically of the swim-head style, as opposed to the more recognisable round bowed style, and this seemed to suit the location well. They were mostly built almost entirely from pitch-pine. The swim-head tended to create a slamming noise in rough seas, so these barges were nicknamed ‘slammer-barges’.

Frederick and Edward Rutter owned their own barges, but having interests elsewhere, installed brickfield managers, and it is clear these individuals often owned their own barges too.

Henry Edward Juniper managed the brickfield for some time, retiring in 1911 age 80, and owned the **Juniper**. He was followed by Eustace Craig who came over from Kent, and was later replaced by Philip Tranter. The latter manager bought the barge **Viking**, but for use as a houseboat, rather than for carrying bricks.

### Wakering Brickfields barges 1877-1940

Anthony	Clyde	Gascoigne	K.C.	Nile	
Avon	Colne	George & John	Landwick	Rushley	
Brent	Darent	Havengore	Maplin	Shorne	
Butterfly	Garland	Juniper	Margaret	Wakering	

### W.H. (Billy) Theobald's (1870-1941)

Billy Theobald's connection with sailing barges was similar to that of many farmers of the Essex waterside; the transport of goods between his farms and London, and catering for the carriage of other farmers' goods. Billy started his barge business around the time other operators like the Vandervords were using them less, and he was able to take advantage of being able to buy barges that had already had a useful life, and reduced cost. Not surprising then that he had quite a turnover of barges due to losses, and selling them on for use as house barges in Leigh

Creek.

His family were famers with extensive properties around Canvey Island, Leigh, Benfleet and the Crouch marshlands. He soon realised the benefits of combining water transport with his other business interests. His home at Beltons farm, Leigh-on Sea stood on the waterside near the present site of the cockle sheds. He later sold the farm, and transportation of goods by sailing barge appears to become his main business interest.

The usual cargoes were hay, straw, mangolds, manure, bricks, timber and coal. He developed had an interest in the Leigh Building Supply Co. Ltd., and the barges began to engage in ballast and other trades such as cement and lime, etc. and to discharge at Theobalds Wharf, Leigh on Sea (Alley Dock) and what had been Woods Wharf at Benfleet. Ballast was freighted from the dredgers in the Thames (Lower Hope- off Canvey Island), bricks and lime from Medway and Swale, cement from Grays. The farm trade carried on, but was decreasing. Lime was brought to Leigh from the Surrey Commercial Dock in London and kept most of the Theobald fleet busy during the season. Chalk was also transported for the repair of the sea walls of Canvey Island, Leigh, Benfleet and Pitsea Creeks and the river Crouch.

The Second World War brought changes to the trades covered by the barges. Some of Theobalds barges were taken over by the government for the Dunkirk evacuation and suffered some damage. Towards the end of the war the cost or replacing rope and canvas was so high that Theobalds decided to strip the gear from some of the craft and install engines.

1948 the firm was taken over by the Leigh Building Supply Co

Well-known local barge skipper Fred Cooper was in Theobalds barges for 20 years, and was master of **Bassildon, Grace** and **Persevere**, the latter for 16 years.

### **Billy Theobald's barges 1904-1950s**

Ada Mary	Derby	Gordon	Maid of Connaught	Russell	William & Arthur
Albion	East Kent	Grace	Maid of Munster	Scarboro	William Sankey
Alfred & Clara	Elizabeth & Mary	Henry & Eliza	Mary Ann	Shoebury	
Alfred & Elizabeth	Emma	Herbert & Harold	Paglesham	Spurgeon	
Bassildon	Eva Annie	James	Persevere	Thomas & Annie	

Burton	Faith	Josephine (ex W.H.D.)	Primrose	Unique	
Butterfly	Florence Myall	Kathleen	Rose	Waterloo	
Coombedale	Frank Lloyd	Louisa	Rover	Welsh Girl	

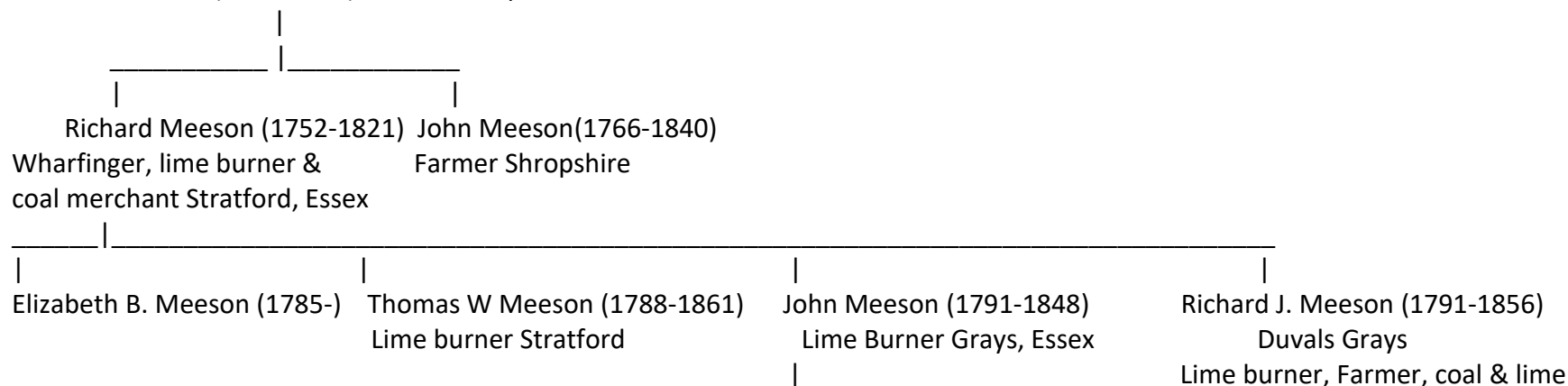
### **Rochford and Battlesbridge – Meesons and Rankins**

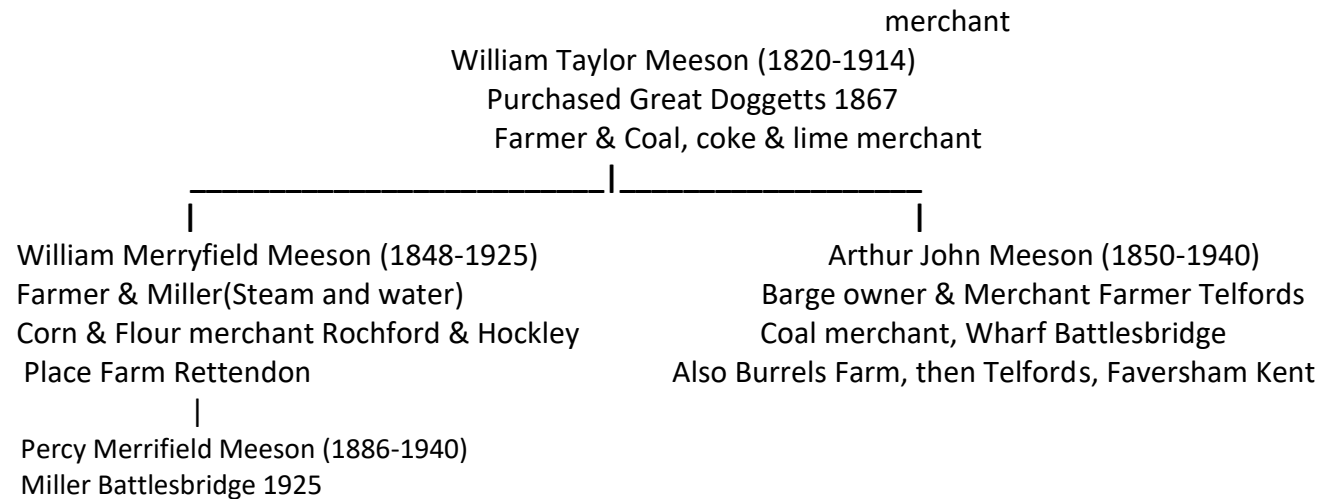
The areas to the north of Southend, and to the south of the River Crouch, were largely farmland, much of which was owned by the Meeson and Rankin families. Meesons also owned the tide mill at Battlesbridge and Rankins the mill at Stambridge. To support the transport of flour and other farm produce, together with coal and lime, they owned barges and schooners. Meeson also provided a hoy service, which included Battlesbridge and Rochford to Maldon. The larger vessels they owned were only able to come as far up the Crouch as Hullbridge, so some goods, especially coal, had to be distributed from here. Meeson had the Malvoisin built in 1883 by John Howard at Maldon. This was a ketch of 113 tons, much greater capacity than a sailing barge.

The Meeson family originated in Shropshire, but to Rochford/Battlesbridge from Grays, Essex, where some of the family remained to continue their lime burning business. The earlier barges were owned by the family at Grays, but as more were purchased, they had joint ownership until most of the later barges were owned by the family at Battlesbridge.

### **Family tree of the barge owning Meesons**

Thomas Meeson (1728-1798) Farmer Shropshire





**Meesons' vessels 1833-1912**

Assistance (ex Goode Hope)	Factor	Lord Roberts	Paglesham	Rawreth	Runwell
Charlotte	James	Malvoisin	Rainbow's	Roache	Sarah & Helen

The tide mill and post windmill at Stambridge was leased in 1882 by William Rankin and John Tabor, probably setting up their two sons William Hugh Rankin and Samuel Tabor, who went into partnership here in 1825. The River Roache provided a valuable means of transporting materials into and out supporting their farming, milling, corn and coal interests as well as providing a hoy service. In the early days there were two hoy barges **Hope** and **Four Brothers** operating here and it is unclear who owned them. William Taylor Meeson also had his hoy service calling here every Tuesday.

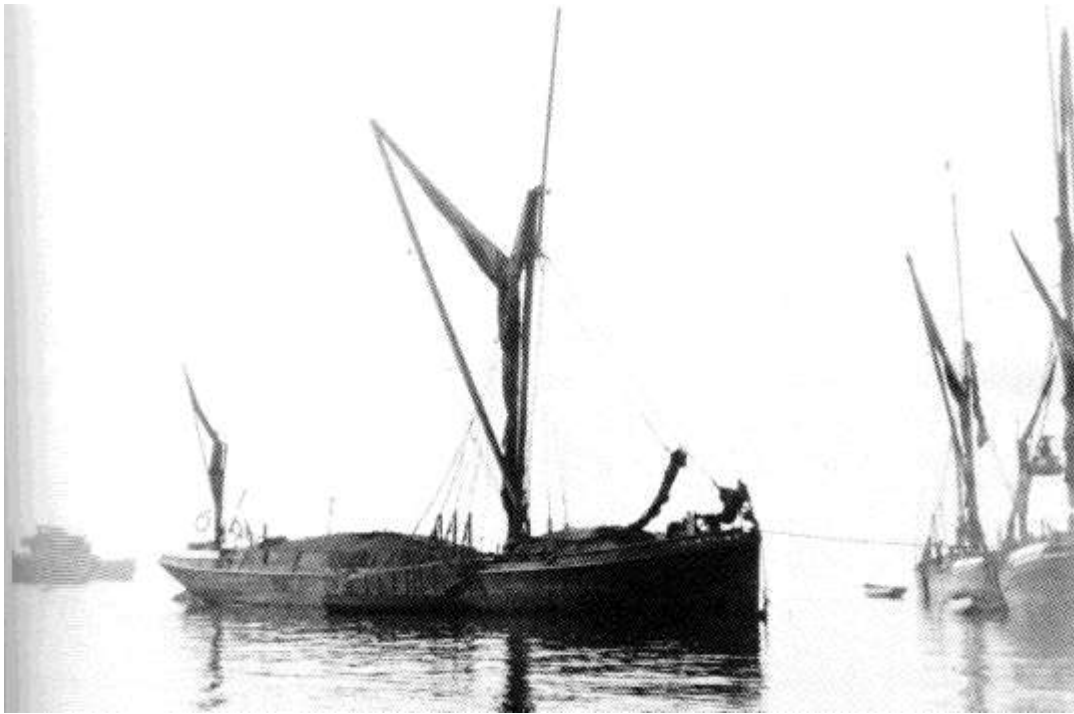
**Rankin barges 1836-1958**

Four Brothers	Hope	Joy	Lord Roberts	Surprise
---------------	------	-----	--------------	----------





Goldsmiths Esterel unloads whiting c 1905 into tumbrils on Southend beach, just a short cart drive from Goldsmith's office and Yard on East Parade.(from Goldsmith of Grays by Graham Dent)



Goldsmith's Senta awaits to discharge her cargo of coke, piled high above her hatchways onto her side decks, on a murky day at Southend-on-Sea. (from *Goldsmith of Grays* by Graham Dent)