

MEMORIES OF OTTERHAM QUAY

by F G Wilmott

Majestically ponderous and almost without sound were the spritsail rigged sailing barges. These were the forerunners of haulage transport and could be seen in large numbers on the Thames and the Medway. Crewed by a man, and often his wife, or a young lad, as mate, they carried cargoes of 100 tons capacity to Essex and London.

Many Rainham men, following the tradition of fathers and grandfathers, sailed on these barges. Captains Allworth, Cohen, Dennis, Hawks (whose family's sailing history goes back 200 years), Moore, Philpott, Wellard, Wheatley and Wickenden mostly sailed craft owned by Messrs Wakeley which worked out of Otterham. They sailed on barges like the "Bankside" and "Honduras" named after the London Hop Markets where so many of Wakeley's hops were taken and sold. Another of their craft was the "Marklands" after Mr William Wakeley's big house in Station Road, Rainham. Many of Wakeley's craft advertised "Wakeley's Hop Manure" on their main sails.

Otterham Quay has always been a busy place, and in the 1900s one could hear the banter of 10-20 craft coming and going on the tide. Some would take away flint, chalk, sand or hay and straw, others would bring in staves for barrel making, coal, clay and house refuse for brick making and manure or road sweepings for the land. Manure was big business in those days. Huge mounds, accompanied by myriads of flies, lay smouldering on the quay waiting to be collected by local farmers.

At Otterham Quay there were two pubs where men could quench their gigantic thirsts. One, fittingly called the "Anchor and Hope" was closed and demolished about 1921, the other, the "Lord Stanley" was closed as a pub in the 1930s, and is now a shop.