

The Hobrough & May Gurney years, all images from the Hobrough collection

Courtesy of www.picture.norfolk.gov.uk

Maud was purchased by James Hobrough in 1918 and is believed to have been dis-masted soon after then. She remained in the Hobrough fleet until 1940 when the firm was taken over by May Gurney. Maud was “retired” in the mid-1960s. May Gurney was taken over by Kier in 2013.

Photo No 10

Hobrough’s tug “Terrible”, towing wherries



The fleet of old wherries was used for many varied tasks on the rivers. Some of them were fitted with engines, others just towed around. Maud certainly had an engine in the latter years of her working life.

Terrible was built in Limehouse in 1872. She was 40' long (12.2m) with 9' (2.7m) beam and was purchased by Hobrough in 1901. She was originally steam-powered and went out of use in the mid-1930's.

Photo No 11

Large scale dredging operations



A wonderful photo that shows many dis-masted wherries during dredging operations in Thorpe Old River. The dredger is seen on the right of the photo with a wherry alongside. Once loaded the wherry would be drifted across the river and unloaded by hand using barrows and planks as seen in the centre of the photo.

Photo No 12

Transporting dredgings to the bank



Mud was scooped out of the river and deposited onto the bank or carted away in old wherries to other places where the bank needed to be strengthened. Here the vessel in the centre of the photo, supporting the track on which the container of mud is carried ashore, is the last of the Norfolk Keels. These square sailed vessels predated the wherries.

Photo No 13

Salvaging a sunken wherry



If a wherry sank, with or without cargo on board, it had to be raised and repaired. Usually, heavy bulks of timber were laid across above the casualty, either between two other wherries or from a wherry to the bank as seen here, and crab winches were used to raise the wherry. Often, the cargo would have to be dug out as the wherry came up. Here the Lowestoft Trader is being raised at Berney Arms in 1910.

Photo No 14

Unloading clay



Records exist of large quantity of clay being excavated in pits at Hardley and loaded into wherries. These were then towed up to Norwich by tug (see photo No 10) and unloaded by steam crane on Riverside Rd. It is not known at present what this clay was used for. The vessel moored on the opposite bank is the former fishing vessel Elsie, then used as the training ship Lord Nelson and owned by the Norwich Sea Scouts.

Photo No 15

Unloading refuse



Norwich's rubbish was loaded into old wherries at chutes in the city and towed to the Kirby Bedon refuse tip on the Yare, where it was unloaded by another steam crane. The unloading jetty seen in this 1910 photo still exists.

Photo No 16

Rebuilding a bridge



Whitefriars Bridge in Norwich, 1925. The wherry on the left is fitted with a pile driver. The wherry on the right is a high stern-sheet wherry, one in which the wherryman stood on the deck at the stern to steer, rather than standing in a steering well. As you will see in the photo the wherry tiller curves upwards to enable him to steer in that position.

Photo No 17

Carrying materials to construction sites



Here sewerage pipes, brought along by wherry, are being laid at Oulton Lock. The wherry is on the left of the picture.
