Lighterman

Book ~~I~~ Book 2

Second Series
Vol. ~~III~~ Part ~~IV~~
Chap. V: Merchant seamen
and lightermen

Index

not numbered

Non-Freemen of the River Thames.

Mr. Cunningham. General Sec. Feb 15/92 ~~Non Freem~~

The Non Freemen's Society consist of ~~the~~ men who ~~work~~ are engaged in the branches of Barge & lighter-work to which are not confined to the Freemen of the Watermen's Company.

They are not allowed to navigate craft on the River, but they

(1) navigate craft inside the Docks & Canals,

(2). look after craft in the River (but not navigate).

(3). Bring down barges from above Windsor (the upper limit of the Watermen's Company's privilege) as far as London Bridge, below which they must have one freeman on board.

(4). load barges lighters in the river, wharves & docks.

(5) include some "Contract-men." (see below).

They do not discharge barges, but superintend the work, load them.

The "Contract-men", ~~are~~ also called "two years" men, are men who instead of serving the full period

? watermen's

& getting the freedom of the Watermen's Company, serve only two years & get a license from Watermen's Hall to serve the master to whom they were contracted. This license is only supposed to permit them to serve this one master, & to be forfeited if they leave him, but this rule is broken through, and the contract men work on the river the same as the freemen.

The Non-Freemen's Society now numbers about 900. 100 have lately seceded (see below) & form the "United Watchmen's Society".

The Non-Freemen's Union was founded in 1889 during the Dock Strike. They came out on principle to help the dockers & immediately formed a Society & sent two delegates to the Wade's Arms Committee.

There are nine Branches. The Union extends to Brentford and down to Tilbury.

	members	
(1). Kingston.	10	Western Barges. Men live up at Oxford &c
(2) Brentford	105	
(3). Limehouse	440	S. & West India Docks, London & St. Kath. Docks
Forward	555	

Brought forward	555.	
(4). Paddington.	33.	Regent's Canal
(5). City Road.	77	ditto .. ..
(6). Poplar.	40.	E. India Dk. Poplar &c
(7). Canning Town.	122	Victoria & Albert.
(8). Deptford.	27.	Surrey Commercial & Wharves
(9) Tilbury.	30.	Tilbury.
	884	

Of these 774 are financial members.
Members live as a rule near their work.
The 100 seceders led by the former President of the Union (Bridge the Stevedore) seceded on the question of coming out ~~to help the~~ with the Federation at the Carron & Hermitage strike.

Organisation.
The funds are centralised. Each Branch accumulates its funds to the end of the quarter, and then hands them to Central fund deducting the purely Branch expenses.
The subscription is 2d a week, & levy at death of a member
Entrance fee. £ 1.

Branch Secretaries paid 2d per member per qr.
Asst ——————— 1d ———————
Dock Delegate 5s per qr.
The general secretary gives all his time.

Benefits. 10/- a week strike pay,
£10 at death of man, £5 death of wife.

The Executive Council consists of 23 members, i.e. one Branch Delegate (9 in all) from each branch, & one dock delegate from each dock, or place of work (14 in number). The dock delegates are elected by the Branches. e.g. There is one from London & St. Katharine's Dock, one from Regent's Canal, one from S. & W. Dock &c &c all elected ~~from~~ by the Limehouse Branch & so on.

The Business of the Dock Delegates is to look after the members to see that they keep up their payments. The Branch Secretaries merely receive the payments, enter them up &c. The Dock Delegates look after the members at their place of work. They do not call on them at their homes.

The Executive meets fortnightly on Sunday evenings. It may dismiss a Branch Secretary or any officers. The Rules can be

altered by the Annual General meeting in February of all the members. Some 400 or more came to the annual meeting which has just been held.

The Union is not affiliated to the Trades Council.

Relations with other Unions.

(i). Former Unions.

(a) There was a Non-Freemen's Accident & Relief Society in 1876, broken up in 1878 owing to slackness of membership & funds. It gave 12/- accident benefit, & £12 at death. Mr Cunningham was Secretary, & the Society once numbered 300.

(b) At the time of the formation of the present Union there was a Society among the Canal Boatmen, but there were no rules or Balance Sheet, & the members were disheartened & joined in forming the new Union. The Secretary of the old Society absconded & the Society is broken up.

(ii) Existing Unions.

The relations with the ~~[illegible]~~

Watermen & lightermen (freemen) sometimes a little strained, ~~sometimes~~ but less than formerly.

There is no overlapping the work of Stevedores & dockers. Now & then a few Stevedores & dockers will be in the Barges helping, the superintendence being done by non-freemen.

The only barges which they do not load are the Coal Barges, this work being done by Coal-porters, but here the non freemen superintend the work

~~Some of~~ The men who drive the horses drawing barges up the Canals & are eligible for the Carmen's Union or the Non Freemen's Society; most belong to the non-Freemen.

Sections of men & Systems of work

The only section who work piece-work are the Canal boat-men. They all came out at the time of the Dock Strike but did not get their wages raised. They are now trying for a Rise of Rates. (See the revised Rules of the Society). There are some thousands outside the Union.

The Canal-men ~~are the~~ who drive the horses

are nearly all Union men: they are the strongest section of the Union. Pay – 5/- a day.

Other sections get 4/6 a day & 3/6 a night, no extra for Sunday work. There is no hiring by the hour, & if a man works ~~beyond~~ beyond 6 o.clock he is paid for a full night's work. If he is out all night he gets no more.

The day is 7am – 6pm Before the Union the hours were 4 a.m – 10 p.m. (i.e. they could be employed for any time between those hours). and 4/- was pay for day & 3/- for night.

Orders for work are always given over-night. If the men are prevented from working by wet, they are paid all the same.

Travelling expenses are allowed; 3/- a week by some firms, others only what is actually laid out.

Work is very irregular. Average earnings at day-work about £1 a week.

A few are on constant work and some earn £2 or more a week.

Largest employers:- Humphreys,
Gray,
Tilbury Lighterage Company.

Rafters who navigate floating Timber are usually freemen.

The irregularities in their work follow those in Dock work, e.g. the Wool and Tea seasons.

The men are employed by Master Lightermen not by Dock Companies. One Contractor (Ryan) in Millwall Dock employs non freemen to load barges for company, and pays them 5/- a day. In all other docks the work is let out to master-lightermen. No difficulty with the employers who have always recognised the Union.

Lord Brassey's award did not touch the non-freemen; their dispute settled direct with employers.

There are from 3-400 non-Union men working on the rivers & in the docks (not including Canal-boat-men). The Union men will not work with non-unionist.

"Wood-monger" is name given to master-lightermen who have no license. They have no special privileges, but employ freemen. They may not navigate their own barges.

A good many members of the Non-Freemen's Society have been apprenticed but have not served their time on the River. E.g. Mr Cunningham himself. Others have been

About 100 members have worked in craft from boyhood; they have been mates of sailing barges &c. Many non-freemen navigate sailing barges below Gravesend.

apprenticed but have not taken up their freedom for some reason. Some are old sailors.

Mr. Cunningham considers the Watermen's Company's Examination to be a farce. Seven freemen must sign papers. £2 is paid for Freedom. Considers that Technical Education is required.

There have been the following strikes since Union formed.

(1). Question of working with non-Union men. Out one day. All the non-Union men took tickets, & the strike was won.

(2). To abolish piece-work. Men were often paid by the job before the Union. Out four hours. Strike won, but 9 men were left on the hands of the Union, & received 6 days' strike pay before they were taken back (in sympathy with other Unions).

(3). Sailors' & Firemen's Dispute in Spring 1891. Cost Union £10.

(4). Curron Wharf. Cost £5. One man lost his place, but got one elsewhere.

Amalgamated Society of Watermen & Lightermen of the River Thames.

(Notes from Rules 1890)

Founded June 1872.

This Society includes Watermen, Lightermen & Apprentices who have obtained licenses from the Watermen's Company.

The Union has 208 Branches,

	Meeting Place.	(See below)
No. 1.	Green Dragon, Charles Street, Stepney.	
" 2.	Captain Man o'War, High Street, Poplar.	
" 4.	Town of Leith, Wapping	?
" 5.	Royal Oak Emmett Street Limehouse.	
" 12.	City Arms Victoria Docks.	
" 17.	Cherry Tree Bromley E.	
" 21.	Refiners Arms, Burdas Street, Commercial Road E.	
" 22.	Queen's Head, York	

The funds are centralised.

Entrance Fee { Freemen. 10/-
Licensed Apprentices 5/-

Weekly Contributions 3d, + Levies when ordered.

Members wanting help in "Law proceedings such as for illegal navigation, infringement of the laws of sculling, damage to sculler's boats, recovery of wages & watermen's fares, or any infringement of the Waterman's Acts (& byelaws) must state case to branch, if approved attend Genl Office & give Statement. If he obtain cost they must be paid into Society's fund. He is paid 6s a day & travelling fare for attendance

The Union presents a unique case of a Society confined to licensed persons (Rule III 1) i.e. to those who are freemen of the Watermen's Company or licensed apprentices. Thus it is a Society within a Society.

13 weeks in arrears = out of benefit,
26 weeks excluded.

~~The funds are centralised~~.

Rule VI, clause 1. "Any member of this Society wishing to take an apprentice must make an application to his branch, & with the consent of its members he may take one, but no member shall sign any apprentice's papers out of his Lodge." Clause 2. Apprenticeship must be at least for 5 years

<u>Benefits</u>: <u>Death</u> 7/0/0, half free member £3.10

<u>Law Expenses</u> (see opposite ~~next~~ page)

Sick benefit optional (for scale of payments & benefits see below).

~~Clause VIII~~. Rule viii clause 1. It provides that all disputes between Employer & workman must be reported at once to general office, if members take action "without consent of general president, Secretary & Executive Council they shall under no pretence whatever receive any support from the funds of this Society".

"§3. But if unfortunately the nature of the dispute be such of a character as not to be settled, (after an attempt at

Branches of 50–300 send 1 delegate
300 upwards — 2 delegates.

reconciliation proves ineffectual / the members so thrown out of employ~~ment~~ shall receive full support of the society."

XI. Clause 1. "No member of this Society will be allowed to turn out goods from one barge to another after his day's work is finished: for the first offence on being proved he shall be fined 5/-, second offence 10/-, & upon a repetition be suspended from this Society subject to the decision of the Executive Council."

Branch Officers. President: paid £1 a year
Secretary: { £5 per yr. for 100 members, 1s for each member over
Asst. Sec: { £1.13.4 for 150 members & 3d for each above

Delegates: (some branches send 2) to ~~General~~ Exec Council.

"In the event of a nominee not wishing to be elected, he must at once object or be fined 5s. Should there be any difficulty in getting officers on the night of election the roll shall be called & each member refusing to stand shall be fined 6d." (XV. Clause 4)

Branches confined to 500 members.

General president, paid £150 ayr. Among his duties is enumerated that of attending at Waterman's Hall on all days set apart for the hearing of summonses

The funds are divided into two separate funds: the Trades Union & the Sick benefit funds, each fund to shew its own profit & loss account.

Sick fund & Rules.

Those joining must be between 16 & 35, they pay entrance fee rising from 2/6 to 7/6 & contributions varying from 5d. to 6½ a week. besides 6d a quarter for Management fund.

Benefits = 12s a week for ~~six~~ 26 weeks, 6s a week for next 26 weeks. in sickness

Those permanently incapacitated by accident or illness ~~may~~ to receive (after full period sick pay) a pension of 3s a week or £30 down.

Visitors appointed to visit sick members once a week ~~they~~. For details see Rules p/p. 42 ff.

Subscribers to sick fund get £12 funeral benefit. & £6 on death of wife.

Amalg. Watermen & Lightermen.

Interview at with Mr. R. Fairbairn gen.l president, Mr. R. Dowling & the other members of the Parliamentary Sub-Committee of the Executive Council.

April 25/92

No. of Registered Members — 6000.
... Financial .... — 4500

There are about 10,000 men working at the trade on the river.

They consist of (1) Freemen,

(2). Licensed Apprentices. There are about 1500 of them, and the Union has an Apprentice Branch which meets at Headquarters of Union. There are about 150 apprentices in the Union

(3) "Contract" or two-year men, an indefinite number are working on the river (see below). They are admissible to the Union but only about 12 are as a matter of fact Union men. They are not mentioned by name as a class admissible to the Union,

in order that no encouragement of any kind may be given to their multiplication.

The absorbing question with the Lightermen's Union is to obtain representation on the Court of the Watermen's Company. They have a Bill for the purpose (of which we have a copy) introduced by Mr. Isaacson, providing that all the freemen shall have a vote for the election (1) of the Court of Assistants (2) ~~the clerk~~ out of the Court, of the Master & Wardens.
The Bill is blocked by Sir R. Hanson on behalf of Watermen's Hall, and the Union have got Mr. Kelly M.P. in return to block the Bill promoted by the Barge-owners (of which also we have a copy) for the purpose of limiting Bargeowners' liability for loss of goods & life, putting them on the same basis as Shipowners in these respects.

The great grievances against the present Court are (a) their alleged mal-administration of the funds of the Company, excessive expenditure on management

and salaries, & inefficient work of inspectors

(2) The excessive & alleged illegal licensing of two-year "contract" men ~~as~~ to manage barges (see below)

(3) The farcical nature of the Examination of Watermen's Hall before granting a ~~certif.~~ license

(4) The presence of Court of men with no practical knowledge of the river – merely barge-owners; & the absence of workmen. Of late vacancies have been filled by practical men owing to Report of Departmental Committee but through Court has thus been made more efficient, it has been exclusively recruited from Employers, & hence is unsympathetic

Contract-Men. Under the Act of 1864 power was given ~~to~~ the Court ~~[illegible]~~ to give licenses to men who had been contracted for 2 years to

§ 55 a employer to assist in navigating his barges; to act as a lighterman "according to the tenor of his contract", on the Court being satisfied of his efficiency. Under this clause contract

Fairbairn thinks that no man ought to be allowed to navigate a barge at night alone.

They prosecuted employers for breach of the Act & twice were successful; on other occasions they failed, & the prosecutions were expensive to the Union.

In 1870 or 71, there was a great strike of lighterman for a rise of wage from 5/- day & 3/6 night to 6/- & 5/-. In the end they returned to work for 5/6 and 4/-. This was the origin of the present Union. The strike was among the Quay lightermen

men receive licenses in large numbers, but the Union contends that the words "according to the tenor of their contract" imply that such men ought only to be licensed to assist in navigating. They also deny the competence of the members of the Court to tell if the applicant is competent.

In 1866 the first Union was formed, the Watermen & Lightermen's Protection Society. It grew up to protest against the irruption of contract men into the trade, & to secure representation of the Freemen on the Court. R. Fairbairn was ~~secretary~~ private secretary, and in 1870 they promoted a Bill to give representation on the Court. It failed, & all the funds being exhausted in its promotion (£600), the Union came to an end. Fairbairn says he was charged by some with absconding with the money.

In 1872 at the time of the great Union movement at the Waterside, the present Amalgamated Society of Watermen & Lightermen was founded, with a similar object. Since the last reorganisation The Union now no longer refuses to recognise Contract men, but admits them, lest

they should form a body of formidable competitors outside. Only about a dozen however belong, the majority belonging either to the Non-Freemen, or to no organisation.

The Union complain that Shipbrokers, Agents &c owning Barges but with no knowledge of navigation go into the ~~[illegible]~~ business of master lightermen, & they declare that ~~they~~ masters register the tonnage of their barges at Watermen's Hall falsely, so as to save labour &c. Some of the Branches have tried to get an account of the Registered tonnage from the authorities at Watermen's Hall, but without success.

They are watching to see if the Company spends any money in opposing their Bill, to get the Board of Trade to surcharge it.

The Company employs 4 boatmen & 8 inspectors, (all freemen), a beadle, cashier & clerk, & chief Clerk. The Union assert that the Inspectors only work 10 to 4, & consequently the River is uninspected for the whole of the night – the most dangerous time. They say

roundly that in spite of the expenditure, they (the Union) are left to do the work.

Classes of Work

There are several more or less distinct classes of Lightermen's work, - Quay Lightermen,
Coal Lightermen,
Corn ——
Timber ——
Sailing ——
Steamboat ——

The men who work at these various branches of work are interchangeable, though a man used to one branch would not be so handy at another, so that in ordinary times they keep a good deal distinct. The distinction of different lines of work used to be more marked in the pre-free trade times, since a lighterman had to have a knowledge of customs

Only a handful of the members belong to the Sick fund

Lightermen are an exceptionally healthy body of men, but a man after the age of 50 (according to the Committee) has not a great

chance of employment, & very few men of 60 or upwards are on the river. "They go to the Workhouse." They have an idea that if they could collar the funds of the Watermen's Company, they could give £1 a week to every lighterman over 60 & make them go away & live in the Country.

There is clearly a strong feeling against the non-freemen for encroaching on their rights, i.e. acting as watchmen in the river. I pressed for a definition of the line of demarcation but found it vague; probably it really changes as time passes, the Freemen first protesting & then at last recognising the facts of the case.

Freemen are employed to stow goods in barges, except coal which is shot into the barges from the tanks at the derricks, and "trimmed" by coal-porters.

Since the strike of 1889 ~~there~~ the market for the labour of freemen has been continually going down, partly through

encroachments from non freemen, partly from use of larger bages (registered below their actual tonnage). There are more goods carried, but a smaller share comes to the freemen. They assert that 40% of members of the Union are now idle, out of employment, and that while the owners get 60% more in freights, they only pay 30% more in wages under Lord Brassey's award.

The "Cooperative Lighterage Co" was started after the strike, the men subscribing about £3000 & the wharfingers (e.g. Lafone & Co) about same sum. The Union nominates 2 directors, the Capitalists 4. It is quite clear from our conversation that the men as a whole do not trust the directors much, & Dowling declares he was prevented from obtaining a position in the ~~Union~~ Company by backstairs influence. They say that the manager "has gone over to the Capitalist side".

The Union itself is divided into sections:—

The lightermen are being encroached upon by the former "Watermen" whose trade is gone.

the progressives & the reactionists. Fairbairn is regarded as leader of the progressives & is said to be "wearing himself out with work". He seems to me much the strongest man of them, but—

The members as a whole do not take much interest in the management of the Union. The Branch meetings are small; only about one in five of the Financial members voted last time for the election of president.

"The best part of our strength" said Mr. Dowling "is spent in fighting one another."

The "future" of the ~~non~~ Union is very much affected by the special legislation ~~at~~ which regulates the trade. Thus the questions discussed much more refer to the interpretation of documents, than to broad questions of ~~poli~~ economic relations. Trade Unions must have been like this in the days when their principal aim was to maintain the Statute of Apprentices.

As it is to all questions "~~Ha~~ Does the Union try to limit apprentices", "Does the

Union do this, that or the other, the usual reply is "We have no power" "it is regulated by § x of Act y", or "we should do that if we had representation on the Court."
~~I think that~~

Documents to be got:
Rules of Thames Conservancy,
Acts regulating Watermen 1864 (at Waterman's Hall, price 2/6.
Audited Accounts of Watermen's Company (From Board of Trade).

Documents supplied: —
(1) Present Rules.
(2) Rules of 1872 revised 1879.
~~(3) Last Report,~~
(4). Audited Accounts
(5) Lightermen's Bill to obtain representation on the Court of Watermen's Company
(6). Company's Bill to restrict liability.

Mr Dowling. Lighterman. One of Parliamentary Committee. Belonged to earlier Union. Then in 1870 went to Australia for a time. Is an "agitator", but reads & thinks, & is keenly interested in Education. goes to lectures at Toynbee Hall, & is a great advocate for technical Education. He has just joined the Lolesworth Club, & finding a Bill announcing technical Classes at the Whitechapel Craft-School he at once brought his son (a boy of 13) to be an Carpenter, as he wishes him to emigrate to Australia. He is desirous that he should not go into his own trade (lighterman) which is being so encroached upon.

Dowling was first attracted to the Lolesworth Club by a Socialistic lecture of Bernard Shaw. He is a keen radical-socialistic-progressive, and desires the L.C.C. to build dwellings & let them at 3s a week instead of 8s. He sees that nothing will come while workmen distrust each other & are so apathetic but has boundless confidence in what the L.C.C. & Parliament can do

if pressed & heckled by workmen.

He personally wishes Watermen's Hall to be swept away, & the Lightermen to be put under some public body, e.g. L.C.C. But as Mr Isaacson is introducing & paying expenses of the Lightermen's Bill, he goes to his meetings & cheers him, radical though he is.

During the great strike of 1889 he moved out to Leytonstone, & his wife set up a laundry, but he lost a lot of money thereby. He cannot afford to live so far from his work, & has had ~~more~~ often to sleep in a barge (more than one night the boy has slept there with him). He is now in Royal Mint Street. He asked for six copies of the Bill announcing Classes at Whitechapel School to put up in the block of buildings where he lives.

Ask him his earnings,
hours
out of nightwork,
irregularity.

Amalgamated Society of Engine Drivers & Firemen
(both Land & Marine).
Sec. Mr. Frank Thurston. (Feb. 1892)

Interview with Mr. Thurston.

This is a small Society, forming an oasis of organised labour in the midst of a desert of unorganised.

It comprises Engine Drivers & Firemen, whether on land, river or sea. It does not include railway-Engine drivers who are in the Amalg. Railway Servants. But it embraces locomotives in docks, collieries &c, & cranes (steam & hydraulic) at the docks, & engine drivers & firemen at sea.
The majority of the crane men at the docks belong to the Dockers' Union,
Some of the E. drivers & firemen on seagoing ships belong to Seamen & Firemen's Union.
There are also two Unions (see below) admitting same class of men as in this Union.
Hence it is a complete "Sectional" Union, every class of men in it being catered for by some one or more other organisations.

It was founded in 1889 in midst of ~~the~~ great Strike, but Thurston was not then a member. It sent a representative to Wades Arms, & remained represented on that Committee till it closed.

There are 3 London Branches

	No. of Financial members
Poplar	165
Battersea	28
Bermondsey	28
	231

There is outside London a Brentford Branch with 25 members.

About half the members are land-men, & half are river-men: a good many on tug-boats.

Contributions: are now graduated 1st class 8d.
2nd " 5d (no out-of-work pay)
3rd " 3d (dispute only)

Formerly there were only one set of contributions: viz. 6d a week. The Rules however have just been revised, & new system has just come in.

Benefits

Dispute Benefit	10s or more. (Executive has given up to 25s. for 10 weeks.	
Out of work.	6s.	
Sick.	10s	13 weeks.
accident	10s	
Death	£10	
Permanent Accident	£25	

179
129
173

Rate of pay: - All Day Work.

See on this subject Proceedings of Royal Commission on Labour, 16th Day.

The Record of out of work pay in the Accounts shews the irregularities of work.

E.g. the Poplar Branch (no. 1) in 1890 paid in out of work benefit

January	6.9.0	or an average of	21.5 out of work
Feb	8.19.0		30
March	4.13.0		15.5
April	2.13.0		9
May	2.16.0		9.5
June	2.3.0		7
July	2.16.0		9.5
Aug.	1.7.0		4.5
Sept.	3.7.0		11
Oct.	8.13.0		29
Nov.	2.13.0		9
Dec.	2.12.0		9.

out of a financial membership attend of years of 165.

49:1.0 @ 6/ = 163½ weeks

or say 1 week for each member.

6)981
163½

(Is this deduction correct?)

Government:- Under new Rules Executive is to be 1 from each Branch per 100 or part of 100 members.

Formerly No. 1 Branch elected 12 & each other Branch 1 member. The system worked badly, for often the No. 1 Branch members did not attend: something was done of which that Branch disapproved, and then the ~~Branch~~ members for that Branch would turn up in force & upset it again. Thus there was a stray & sometimes mutinous "imperium in imperio". In future the Executive will have full power of control.

A very great No. of non-union men work ~~with the Union~~ at the trade. The Unionists work with them - indeed are nothing like strong enough to refuse. The men are scattered & a particular grievance only affects a few; hence the strikes which have taken place have been small, & most difficulties have been settled by negotiation.

The relations with other Unions are on the whole harmonious. There is a transferable

Federation of all Trades - ~~Industries~~ Unions
Contribution 5s per 1000 members per year.
It frees ticket throughout the Unions included, and each Union undertakes ~~to~~ not to "Blackleg" in case of strike.

Letchford the Secretary is general Sec. of the Hammermen's Union. Beale, the president, is of London & Counties Labour League (agricultural)

ticket to the "Federation of all trades, ~~Industries~~ Unions" in East India Dock Road (of which I have a Bill). They do not belong to Clem Edwards's Federation.
~~They have~~ The "Federation of all trades &c" is a sleepy affair
They have a working agreement with the "Amalgamated Protective Union of Engine Drivers &c" a Union covering the same body of men, & also with the "Farringdon Street Amalg. Soc. of Engine Drivers & Stokers - an older society 18 years old.
(The first of these agreements is in my possession).

Difficulties have arisen with a Union called the Tugboatmen's Union, which was a secession from the Seamen & Firemen, (Donaldson Sec) It stepped in between lightermen & Engineman. It was intended for all men on tug boats whether deck-hands,
Captain's mates,
Engine Drivers
Firemen.
This clashed with no less than Three

Unions, (1) Amalg. Lightermen & Watermen
(2) Non-Freemen,
(3) Land & Marine Engine Drivers.

Thurston thinks the Union is now nearly defunct

The hours of labour are very long. About 65% of tug-boat men work 12 hours shift – 2 crews on a boat. Remainder work all round the clock, sleeping while lying at piers &c, meals as best they can.

The Union policy is to have two shifts on ~~every~~ boat.

One crew on a boat get no more money than if there are two.

Earnings: Drivers £2.0.0 to £2.5.0
Firemen 1.6.0 to 1.8.0

Some employers pay driver 2 to 4s and fireman 2 to 3s extra for <u>night</u>. Some employers pay no over-pay.

A few men on small screw-boats are both engine drivers & firemen.

There is a constant complaint among engine-drivers as to difficulty of meal hours. This affects

to Engines in factories as well as on boats. Thurston was in a factory 30 years, & never got a meal in meal hours. The difficulty could not be met without putting in some one else to look after the Engines, which ~~they dis~~ the engine drivers dislike.

The men on boats take meals on board with them: nothing is provided on board.

Men employed by Victoria Steamboat Association incompetent. "Ass" very lucky in having no accidents.

Training. No apprenticeship. Anyone put in as fireman, then picks up a little & comes out as driver. A fireman rises to be an Engine driver without any interference

Between Poplar & Battersea there are probably 400 or more Engine & firemen (excluding penny-boats)

Disputes. The union has had no disputes of its own; but it assisted Dockers at time

of Carron Strike (cost a few pounds only). Since Union started, wages have risen but how much Thurston does not know. (He has only been Secretary a short time).

[Enter into office red faced man sunburnt, has grievance against Union that they did not back him up when he lost a situation through being drunk on Sat. night when orders came to him to turn up at a certain hour on Sunday. As Sat night was "his own time", orders should have been given earlier, thinks it very hard to be punished for being drunk. Tells story of a man just put on a tug at 50s a week, but only one crew, the master saying that "if too hard he can have two crews". To which Thurston says "Then all he has to do is to make it too hard - he may get rather less money but it will be best in the end".

May, 1895.

Amalgamated Society of Watermen & Lightermen.

Interview with Mr. Gosling, Genl Secy.

Since the date of our previous interview & summary of rules (1892 - See p. 11 & 15) considerable changes have been made in the constitution & management of the Society.

The system of Centralization has been largely done away, the paid presidency abolished, & the status of General Secretary greatly altered. The Society is now divided into 3 districts, viz:

North district (North side below London Bridge)
South -"- (South -"- -"-
Upper -"- (both sides above -"- -"-

Each district has an Officer, elected by the members of the branches in the district, & paid £126 a-year each. (£100 salary & £26 expenses) From these the general conference selects one to act as General Secretary, & he receives a small extra

salary for doing such business as it is necessary to do from the Central office.

The General Conference consists of delegates from each District Council & the District Officers. The District Councils are composed of delegates from the branches.

These changes have been brought about (Gosling says) in order to give the outlying branches a fair voice in the management. Formerly one or two large central branches used to practically monopolise the control of the Society.

<u>Entrance Fee</u>. – This has now been reduced to :- Freemen, 5/- ; licensed apprentices, 2/6. Subscription 3d wk. (as before)

<u>Disputes</u>. – Members must have the sanction of the District officer or Council before taking action.

Branch Officers Salaries. – The scale of salaries (as per p. 13) has now been altered. Each member pays 6d a quarter for management, &c, & from this the members of the branch vote their officials such salaries as they thinks fit, & any balance goes to a benevolent fund.

No. of branches : 21

Membership:

Financial – 3000 (about)
On books – 4000 –"–

There are on the river about
6000 licensed freemen
1500 –"– apprentices

The Apprenticeship System. – The Society complain strongly of the loose way in wh. indentures are granted for apprenticing boys. Any freeman of the Company

may take an apprentice, & altho' the indentures bind him to feed, clothe & train the boy, he as a matter of fact very rarely does anything of the sort. Men take apprentices for the sake of the small premium (often only a few shillings) & the lad is at once turned adrift to get his own living, wh., owing to the encouragement given to boy labour because of its cheapness, he has not much difficulty in doing. He obtains employment with some firm & works under some freeman or apprentice who happens to be in the employ of that firm, or knocks about the river as a casual hand.

After 2 years he is examined by the Company (a merely nominal affair it is said) & his master is granted a license to allow the boy "to take sole charge of any boat, barge, &c., from time to time as he may deem him competent to do, but subject at all times to

his control & direction." Of course, this "control & direction" being a dead letter, the apprentice goes about navigating barges & generally doing men's work, being ~~of course~~ paid much below the freemen's rate of wage, but still earning very good money for a lad.

The Company declines to interfere in any way, on the ground (it is said) that neither of the parties to the contract ~~are~~ (master or apprentice) complains to them. "If they are satisfied, so ~~are~~ must we be"

The Act of Parliament states that barges must be taken charge of by "able & skilful persons," & the regulations of the Thames Conservancy* say that a barge of less than 50 tons burden may be navigated by one person, but if it is more than 50 tons there must be an assistant on board. The duty of saying what is an "able &

* The Thames Conservancy fixes the number of men to be employed according to size, &c., of craft.

The Watermen's Company are responsible for properly licensed men only being employed, & for proper navigation & order on the river.

⊗ The Society recently brought an action to test the legality of this, but were defeated, the [illegible] being pronounced to be good in law.

skilful person" rests, of course, with the Watermen's Coy, who grant the licence, & they so interpret their bye-laws that not only is the licensed apprentice of 16 declared a competent lighterman, but the new apprentice of 14 is a qualified assistant, so that a large barge may be in sole charge of 2 lads of 16 & 14⊗ — a state of things which is aggravated by the existing state of the river, & by long hours & night work, concerning which there is no regulation at all.

In order to obtain a full licence as lighterman & waterman, from 5 to 7 years must have been served & an examination undergone, & there must be a certificate of practical knowledge signed by 6 freemen.

Other Complaints against Watermen's Coy. — Of the other grievances mentioned in interview with Fairbairn,

the one regarding false registration of tonnage has been remedied by the Watermans & Lightermans Amendment Act of 1893, wh. provides for proper registration of tonnage of craft by measurement & capacity.

There is still however the same inefficiency of inspection. There are 8 inspectors, each of whom has his own district, & does his own clerical work. Consequently there is little inspection by day & none whatever at night, whilst there is a good deal of navigation at night on the river, caused by the fact that barges will be loaded at one point during the day & are required to be at their destination for unloading the next morning. As a result, a good deal of illegal navigation (such as overcrowding, under staffing, or putting too great a load to a tug) is alleged to go on. These matters, being under the jurisdiction of the Watermans

Company, are not interfered with by the Thames police.

Other complaints were made of the laxity of the Company in enforcing the bye laws. For instance one bye-law says that in all vessels a "look out must be kept from the bows." This was systematically evaded, & the Company wd. take no action. The men's society therefore brought a case agst. the Thames Steamboat Company, & got a decision in the High Court in their favour, with the result that the bye-law was more generally observed.

Similarly, the Company are not strict in carrying out the law as to the amount of tonnage wh. may be navigated by one man. 50 tons is the limit, but if the amount is only 2 or 3 tons over this, the Company will not insist on an assistant being engaged, as the men's Society wd. like.

The Society frankly admit that

their main object in desiring to strictly enforce the bye laws is in order to provide more work for the men. The unemployed problem is so pressing with them that they can afford to neglect no means wh. will assist in its solution.

It is for the exactly opposite reason, the men assert, that the Company does not enforce the law. The Court of the Company consists almost entirely of Master Lighterman & Waterman actually in business, & whose pockets may be materially affected by the proper adherence to the bye-laws.

The Court of the Company is self-elected – once appointed, a member retains his position for life (subject only, of course, to offences against the Common Law), & vacancies are filled up by the Court itself.

The Court has of late made some sort of concession to the repeated agitation of the men for representation by selecting

3 members of the Society to sit on their Court, ~~of the~~ but have selected those in least sympathy with the aims of the men – they are small masters or foremen, – quite as bad as the others, Mr. Gosling thinks.

The Society have not been keeping up their agitation lately, owing to want of funds, & Mr. Gosling fears they will never be successful in obtaining proper representation. When they reach that point, he thinks public opinion will be ripe for doing away with the present system altogether, & the freemen's privileges may probably go with it. He therefore does not seem anxious to bring about a crisis, & rather agrees with the adage "Best endure the evils that we have, &c."

Mr. Gosling says that his Society spent over £100 in law expenses last year wh. shd. properly have been borne

by the Watermen's Company. (Gave me copies of bills issued by them (the society) of warning vessels as to keeping a proper "look out" in accordance with bye laws)

When taked on some of the points complained of, the officials deny that illegal practices go on to any extent & say that there is little night work, whilst the members of the Court (as men actually engaged in the trade) at once take the charges as personal to themselves, & proceed to indignantly deny that they are guilty of any such practices.

Non-Freemen

These will work for 1/6 a day less than freemen, & consequently they do nearly all the work in the docks, & freemen are confined to the river.

Non-Freemen may do anything except navigate craft in the river. Thus they may act as watchmen, but in

this work they are in turn being cut out by the licensed apprentices, who now do most of the watching.

Tug boat work.

The extending use of steam tugs on the river has led to a considerable decrease of employment for lightermen. The men who manage these tugs must be licensed freemen, but a couple of hands on a tug will shift 5 or 6 barges & so do the work of 8 or 10 men. There are now firms of tug owners, who will tow barges from any point at very brief notice.

Steam Boat men.

Better conditions of labour, including a 6 day week, instead of 7 days as before, have been obtained for these men, by the Union (See agreement of 1894. at end of rules)

Co-operative Lighterage Company

Now fallen into the hands of the employees, but is fairly successful as a business concern. No benefit to the men.

Sick Benefit.

Only about 60 members now belong to this, & it will probably be wound up very soon. Most of the men belong to one of the large benefit societies.

A philanthropic society has been started for the purpose of relieving old members or widows of members, &c., & so avoiding subscription lists, friendly lads, &c. It is of course quite voluntary, but about 250 members subscribe small annual sums, & a few employers contribute. The Soc'y spent £53 in relief grants last year, & has over £80 in hand. All service is voluntary.

(See over - c/c of long hours, night work &c.

LONDON'S WATERWAY

MIDNIGHT ON THE THAMES

AN INVESTIGATION BY A "SUN" REPRESENTATIVE.

ARTICLE II.

There was not much imagination about the jolly young waterman and the staid old lighterman, who selected Billingsgate for the starting point of a midnight expedition on the Thames; and there was more risk than romance in jumping from a barge down to a black spot some 4ft. below, which I was assured was a boat. However, nothing worse happened to me than an abrasure of the skin and a scar, which I shall always regard as a trophy earned in a good cause. The city clocks were striking eight as our skiff shot out from the shore into the silent water highway, and glided almost noiselessly upon the ebb tide toward the red signal lights of the Tower Bridge. Fortunately the night was fine though cloudy; the water well nigh rippleless.

Past the bridge and out in mid-stream the shore on either side seems to recede, and the river gains an unwonted breadth, whilst into the darkness peer occasional lights from out the deeper darkness of the shore. As we proceed dim shapes loom upon either hand, starting into black distinctness for a moment, with silhouetted figures

TUGGING AND STRAINING

at gigantic oars, and are lost to sight again in the gloom.

Passing through the pool we sighted a large barge with two figures on board, and at a word from one of my guides the boat shot alongside, and one of our crew climbed into the head sheets.

"Got your license?" "Yes."—There is a rule on the river that every licensed man must show his license to any freeman who demands it, under penalty of a fine. The man's license was produced, but the boy proved to be only an apprentice in his tenth month, although under the 30th bye-law of the company an "able and skilful person," because he had a freeman with him. The union intends to prosecute in one of these cases with a view of getting the bye-law upset. After taking the name and address of this "able and skilful" lad we got under way again and rowed on down through the Lower Pool and Limehouse Reach. When we reached Limehouse Cut, where

THE BOY SALMONS LOST HIS LIFE

a few weeks ago the men rested on their oars for a moment while one of them told me the sad story of the boy's death. He had been working for six days and six nights—a common thing for lads to do, as his foreman averred—and was then told off to do work that ought to have been done by a freeman. He was bringing a barge out of the cut in the darkness of the night. There was a scream, a splash, a death stillness for a moment—then the hurrying of feet and shouting of excited voices on shore, a fruitless attempt at rescue—and long afterwards a body found at Fulham, miles up the river.

The sad silence which fell upon us at this melancholy recital was suddenly broken by a rapid succession of howls, rising higher and higher, like the

CRIES OF GIGANTIC DOGS IN PAIN.

It was the warning voice of the syren of the Thames signalling the approach of a big steamer—sounds harrowing enough by day, but under these circumstances weird and awe-inspiring. With nerves painfully ajar, we gave way once more, and the boat shot on between the distant lines of dark warehouses on either side, and with always a similar line in front where the river turned to the right or left.

It must have been close on ten o'clock when we ran alongside the craft that were lying outside the Victoria Dock lock-gates, and my companions scrambled on board a barge and pulled me up after them. It was my first practical acquaintance with a barge, and I do not pretend to have enjoyed the sensation. To begin with, to get from the head-sheets (the fore part of the barge) to the cabin-top in the stern, one has to walk along the gunwale plank, which is frequently not a foot wide. In the iron barges the gunwale plank is a good deal higher from the water at the bow and stern than it is amidships, so that one walks down hill and up again in going the length of the barge. To perform this feat with absolutely nothing to catch hold of requires care when the barge is moored, but what it is like on a winter's night when the wood or iron is

COVERED WITH A SHEET OF ICE,

and the barge is rocking on the back-wash of a large steamer, is not a pleasant thing to think of. Imagine a man—or maybe a mere boy of 16—alone—*alone* on an ice-covered unwieldy barge of 50 tons burden—in the blackness of a mid-winter's night—in choppy water, and pacing a strong keen wind; imagine him thus, tugging at a huge oar, and anon pacing its narrow treacherous ledge from end to end—a slight collision, a false or careless step, and he may be struggling in the turgid waters. Imagine this, and you have a faithful picture of what labour on the Thames means during the long winter nights.

The craft at the lock-gates were moored so close together that it was easy to step from one to another. I traversed a good many in this way, and standing on the cabin-top looked

DOWN THROUGH THE SCUTTLE

into the cabin beneath. The only light, as a rule, came from a little stove, the pipe of which was carried through the cabin-top, and which was hardly two feet away from the bare wooden benches on which the men lay sleeping. In one or two instances the men were lounging about the deck, and I asked permission to visit their cabins. It was something of an athletic feat to get into these cabins, because there was neither ladder nor step, and I had to lower myself by my arms. The rooms were always squalid, often with yawning rents in the plank floor through which the foul-smelling bilge-water was plainly seen. The space available for locomotion in one cabin—which I was assured was a good one as cabins go—was 12ft. by 3ft. 3in., which was narrowed to 2ft. by the stove. The height here was 4ft. 7in., diminishing to nothing at the stern of the boat, and the length from the stern to the hold was 8ft. The woodwork of these cabins is sometimes so damp that a kind of white

P.t.o

FUNGUS GROWS UPON THE BEAMS.

On cold nights the only means of free ventilation—the scuttle—must be closed for the sake of warmth; and if a cabin happens to have been unused for a day or two, the kindling of a fire will draw out the damp and fill this black hole with mephitic vapours, in which the unhappy lighterman—or boy—must take his few hours of sleep. No wonder that Mr. Gosling, the secretary of the Watermen's and Lightermen's Union, complains that the men die early of chest diseases!

While we awaited for the turn of the tide which was to release the laden barges in the docks, I spent my time in questioning the men as to their hours of work and the nature of their employment. Amongst other startling facts I found that it was usual for a man who was in ordinary work to work

OVER 100 HOURS A WEEK,

and a lad who had not served a year upon the water, assured me that it was customary for him to work six days and four nights. These inhuman hours, indeed, seem to be the rule, for the skipper of a tug averred that he generally had his boots on for from 36 to 48 hours at a stretch.

Nor is the length of hours compensated for by lightness of occupation. The work is extremely arduous. One man will sometimes be called upon to stow 800 sacks of grain in a day, each sack, weighing from 1½ to 2½ cwt., being picked up from the gunwale plank, where it is dropped by the crane and carried by the man on his back to its place in the hold. Sometimes the weight of a bag of nitre amounts to 3¼ cwt., and if a man carrying such a load slips his foot or makes a false step he is bound to injure himself, even if he does not fall. The man who has done this amount of work may then have to take his barge up-stream and discharge her at a wharf, or perhaps watch over the goods all night. One man whom I had questioned on the subject of boy labour told me that a large firm, for which he had worked for many years, was now employing as weekly servants three firemen and

EIGHTEEN APPRENTICES.

My informant, who is well known on the river as a steady, hard-working man, cannot get work from his firm because he is undercut by the boys. One of the partners, by the way, holds a high position in the Watermen's Company, but no one of his apprentices is bound to any freeman in his employ!

We have had plenty of leisure and a profound quiet for our investigations. Save for the occasional passing of a steamer or tug the silence of the night has been broken only by the sound of our own voices. But just before midnight there is a stirring within the dock and the sound of rushing waters, and from the deep darkness of the walled-in lock float out a fleet of barges upon the now flowing tide. Then there is silence no more, but splashing, and bumping, and shouting, and much language—running largely on adjectives. The river is alive with dark moving masses, mounted by

BLACK HUMAN SHAPES,

who strain at invisible oars. We follow in their wake, boarding some, and continuing to add to our store of facts. Scarcely a barge had more than one "hand," and in every case save one, the second "hand" might be more fully described as a thumb, so diminutive was the supplemementary "able and skilful person."

"Sun," Oct 8. 94

London Watermen & Lightermen.

(Notes from Mr. Le. Smith's paper)

In quite early times, when London was intersected by streams, & there were few bridges, & Hackney carriages were unknown, the Watermen's trade was far more important than it is to-day; but the London men do not appear to have come under any systematic regulation until 1514, when the customary fares wh. had prevailed on the river "time out of mind" were confirmed by statute. This was followed in 1555 by the first step in the formation of a permanent organization, an act being passed directing that "eight of the most wise, discreet, & best sort of watermen, being householders" shd. be chosen annually by the Lord Mayor & aldermen of the City, to be called "overseers & rulers of all the wherrymen & watermen." They were empowered to keep a register of watermen, & to draw up a list of fares & prices, to be afterwards sanctioned by Parliament. It

is to this Court of "overseers & rulers" that the Watermen's Company owes its origin.

This method of government does not appear to have for very long suited the general body of watermen, & a struggle for self government began. In 1621 they promoted a Bill in Parliament reciting that "The Lord Mayor & Aldermen do usually choose such Watermen to be rulers who are not fit to govern themselves, much less to take upon them the charge of so great a company." The Bill was dropped, but

Twenty years later they obtained some measure of representation, being allowed to nominate 20 persons, out of whom (together with some other persons nominated by themselves) the ~~rulers~~ Ld. Mayor & Aldermen shd. select 8 rulers.

The 20 watermen ~~from~~ whom the rulers were to be chosen were selected by a body of 55 electors representing the 55 towns & stairs where watermen plied between Windsor & Gravesend. These electors had no permanent status, but

? were the rulers still selected by L.M. mayor

? did assistants & rulers become one court

aided probably by the distracted state of the times & by the apathy of the bulk of the watermen, they quietly established themselves as a bogus "court of assistants". This position they or their nominees & successors held, & abroad until 1691, when, as the result of a Committee of inquiry appointed by the corporation they were dismissed, & a new arrangement made by wh. each town & stairs chose two persons, out of whom the rulers selected one to act on a Court of assistants. Thus this Court took ~~[illegible]~~ definite shape as a federal organization representing all the watermen plying places. To them were afterwards added the Lightermen, who chose by popular election 9 assistants to represent them on the Court of the combined Company, whilst the Court of the L.M. mayor selected 3 rulers to represent the Lightermen

Gradually, however, as a result of disputes & arbitrary measures, the system

of popular election broke down, & was finally ended in 1827, when the Company was incorporated for the first time under the title of "Master, Wardens & Commonalty of Watermen & Lightermen on the Thames," vacancies thereafter being filled up by the nomination of 3 candidates by the Court, from whom one was chosen by the Lord Mayor's Court.

In 1845 an Act was passed giving the Company considerable powers in regulating the trade, & since then the members at large have been more active in trying to get their ancient rights of representation restored.

In 1850 a "Watermen's Protection Soty" was in existence to resist ~~the~~ encroachments on the rights of freemen – partly no doubt owing to the rise of a large body of non-freemen who were working in the newly-constructed

docks. A similar soc^y in 1866 was succeeded in 1872 by the present Amalg. Soc^y of Watermen & Lightermen, wh: came into existence on the crest of a great wave of trade activity. One of the chief objects of this soc^y is to obtain representation for the freemen on the Court of the Comp^y. Last year (?) a House of Commons Comt reported in favour of popular representation. As the Union includes the majority of the freemen, this will practically mean representation of that body. Thus we may possibly have the curious spectacle of a modern trade union electing part of the governing body of a City Comp^y.

May 30. 95

Mr. L. White, clerk to Watermen's Coy.
18 St. Mary at Hill, E.C.

The power of Lord Mayor's Court in regarding to elections to Court of Watermen's Company was abolished in 1859, & the Court has now sole power in filling up vacancies in its own number.

The ancient right of popular election was taken away in consequence of disorder & disturbance at elections. This took place when the Company was incorporated (1827). By the act of incorporation the old Courts of Rulers & of assistants became one body.

The Court consists almost entirely of practical Watermen & Lightermen (employers), & they have lately introduced representation of the employees interests by selecting 3 members of the men's union to sit on the Court.

The Company is really a very

powerful legalised trade union, having a monopoly of the work of the river. It has about 7500 names of freemen on the books & 1500 apprentices.

System of Apprenticeship.-

Lads may be apprenticed from the age of 14, but as a matter of fact are usually considerably older, & the Court exercises discretion, in granting indentures, as to applicants' physical capability for the work. The average age on apprenticeship is between 16 & 17.

After 2 years the lad comes up for his certificate, & is put through an oral examination by members of the Court, while the inspectors who have seen the boy at work, report as to his practical experience. The extent of the exam. depends on what is known about the lad. About 10% fail to pass.

The time for wh. the lad is bound

depends on his age. If only 14 he will serve 7 years; if over 16, only 5 years.

Having got his certificate (2 years) he is competent to do men's work. As a rule he is 18 or more when he gets this.

At the end of his term of indenture he comes up again & obtains his freedom & his lightermen's licence.

The extent of this licence depends on the lad's experience. Sometimes it will ~~be both~~ entitle him to act both as waterman & lighterman, & sometimes only as one or the other of these. About 600 hold a waterman's license only.

Mr. White admits that inexperienced men take apprentices & do not afterwards employ them, but says the law stipulates for this. Such lads are most generally the sons or near relations of the men, have been brought

up-bringing as it were - to waterside work, & take to it quite naturally. The watermen are a clannish set, & outsiders seldom enter the trade. Quite 80 % of the apprentices are sons or near relatives of the freemen.

Men over 20 years of age may serve a 2 years apprenticeship & get a licence, but they do not get the freedom of the Company.

Mr. W. also admits that a ~~certif~~ certificated lad of 16 cd. legally take charge of a barge, but seldom does so -

First, because few are anticipated.

Second, because it wd. be contrary to interests of employers to have barges in incompetent hands

The contention of employers is that they can very well look after themselves in the matter of obtaining competent men, & for this reason they would like

the river made free, & the privileges of the Company abolished.

It is also true that a boy of 14 wd. be allowed legally to act as assistant on a large barge, under a lad of 16.

The Company's Duties

The work of the Company is:

1. To provide a proper & efficient supply of skilled labour for navigation of river between Teddington Lock & Lower Hope Point (near Gravesend) - the limit of their jurisdiction.

2. To measure & register all craft plying on the river between above points, & ascertain their tonnage, in order that those over 50 tons burden may be required to carry a second hand. This duty is imposed by a recent Act of Parliament.

The Thames Conservancy have the right to board vessels & see that

they are properly manned.

An Act has recently been passed wh. makes changes in the constitution of the Conservancy or is said to amalgamate the various statutes under wh. they previously acted. A new code of rules is being framed in accordance with this Act.

Waterman & Lightermen's Asylum.

A large & handsome building at Penge, ~~near~~ in Kent, built & maintained by voluntary subscription. It consists of 41 houses, for the accommodation of aged & poor freemen of the Watermen's Co. with their wives or widows. Management is by a committee under the control of the Court of the Company, & admission is by ballot usually, but in a few cases by presentation.

Married couples receive 9/- a wk & single inmates 6/-, with 2 tons of coal a year, in addition to house accommodation & medical attendance.

LABOUR COMMISSION, 1891-2.

Extract from *Shipping Gazette and Lloyd's List*, Friday, February 19th, 1892.

Mr. Louis Stephen White was next called and examined.

Lord Derby: I believe you represent the Watermen and Lightermen's Hall?—Yes, I do.

And you come here to give evidence chiefly, I understand, in reference to the evidence given by Mr. Fairbairn?—I do.

The first question to which you wish to call attention, as I understand, is the question of apprenticeship?—Yes.

What have you to tell us upon that?—With reference to apprenticeship, in answer to Questions Nos. 7,474 to 7,480, the indentures of apprenticeship are in the form of a contract between the master and the lad, and the Watermen and Lightermen's Act, 1859, provides either party with remedies in the event of the terms thereof not being fulfilled. Mr. Fairbairn has always contended that the court should only permit an apprentice to work for his master, but the Act of 1859 specifically states in section 46 "that every freeman, or widow of a freeman, may take such apprentices, as he or she thinks fit, for the purpose of having them instructed," &c. In the case of "Smith *v.* Francis" (Court of Queen's Bench, 1891), which turned on the legality of an apprentice working with a man not his master, and which was taken up by Mr. Fairbairn and his society as a test case, the judges heard the arguments of Mr. Fairbairn's counsel, but dismissed the case without calling on the defendant's (Francis') counsel. The Act provides for the supply of skilled labour, not for its restriction.

Now you have something that you wish to put before us in regard to licenses, will you say what that is?—These are granted either to the master of an apprentice after a period of not less than two years' service on the part of an apprentice, or to the freeman on the completion of his apprenticeship. In either case the applicant has to pass through an examination which is of such a character that nearly 10 per cent. of the applicants are refused the lightermen's license. The court would here mention that apprentices only do a very small proportion of their work in the docks.

Can you tell us anything as to the number of licenses, and also as to the casualties by drowning?—The present number of licensed lightermen (freemen) is under 5,500, and the number of apprentices is 1,493. There are also 275 contract lightermen (non-freemen). The percentage of deaths by drowning is remarkably small, considering the character of the work of a lighterman, and the court is of opinion that this is due to the present system of apprenticeship, whereby a lad cannot work craft alone until he has served two years at least; also to the fact that under the present system he learns his profession at an early age, and thereby attains a proficiency which he would not attain if he learnt it later in life. The court has obtained a report from each of its inspectors as to the number of deaths by drowning during the last five years, and the following is a summary of such reports:—

Inspector.	District.	Number of Free Men Drowned.	Number of Free Men in District.
Simmonds	Gravesend, &c.	6	835
Showell ..	Greenwich, Poplar, &c. ..	5*	1,543
Blackmore	Above London Bridge ..	6	1,197
King ..	Rotherhithe, Deptford, &c.	7	1,217
Facey ..	Wapping, Limehouse, &c.	14	1,064
		38	5,856

*One whilst bathing.

The above may be taken as a correct record of the cases that have occurred during that period, as each inspector has to render a quarterly report with reference to the freemen in his district.

Now, I understand, you wish to tell us something about the constitution of the court?—Yes. I have sent in a list of the members of the court, 23 of whom are, or have been, duly licensed lightermen, and the remaining three have large interests in the lighterage trade of the port of London. In 1870 Mr. Fairbairn and the Thames Working Lightermen and Watermen's Protection Society presented a petition against the transfer of the powers of the court to the Thames Conservancy, in which petition they stated "that its board (*i.e.* the court of the company) consists principally of gentlemen of practical knowledge and ability, who are at all times interested in the good regulation and government of the Thames." Again, "And the public at large are greatly benefited by such control being vested in the hands of practical men of whom the Watermen's Company consist." The court at the present day consists of the same class of men. In 1871 Mr. Fairnbairn, and the society he then represented, introduced a Bill to alter the mode of electing the court, by giving all the freemen the right of voting for the election of members, but such Bill, after both parties were heard before a Committee of the House of Commons, was unanimously thrown out. On that occasion Mr. Fairbairn's society obtained the signatures of about 600 freemen in favour of the Bill, whereas the court obtained over 4,100 against. The recommendations of the Committee of the House of Commons on the Thames Watermen's Bill, 1890, with reference to the constitution of the court were made without any evidence being heard on the matter, as the question was not before the Committee, and the Court at the time, through its agents, entered a strong protest against the injustice rendered to it by such report. Notice was given in November last by Mr. Fairbairn's society of its intention to introduce a private Bill to alter the constitution of the court, but such Bill has been dropped owing, as the court understands, to the watermen and lightermen refusing to support it.

Now, will you tell us how the accounts of the company are audited?—The accounts of the company are audited by an auditor appointed by the Thames Conservancy Board, and copies of the balance-sheet are given to all freemen applying for the same in writing. A copy is also hung up in the public office, so that all freemen may be able to examine the same. The amount of quarterage paid by the working lightermen amounts to an average of £900 per annum.

I think you have some other comments to offer upon the evidence given by Mr. Fairbairn?—Mr. Fairbairn, in answer to Questions 8,039 and 8,226, states that his society spent £1,000 in legal expenses in 1891, whereas in his society's balance-sheet the amount appears as £168 2s. With reference to the answer to Question 8,045, the court has an inspector's time-book kept, and such book shows that Mr. Fairbairn is entirely wrong.

Will you tell us, before yon go on, what that Question No. 8,045 refers to?—He states that the inspectors were never doing their duty, and that they were always in the office, and if he were on the court it would be otherwise. With reference to the answer to Question 8,046, the court has not any jurisdiction in the question of lights on craft. With reference to the answer to Question 7,997, the court can show, by its register, that there has not been at any time any registration as mentioned by Mr. Fairbairn.

Extracts from Fairbairn's evidence before Labour Commission. (Group B - 14th & 15th Days)

Unemployed.

30 % or 40 % of the members of the Lighterman & Watermen's Society are idle.

This is partly owing to employment of steam tugs.

Work is found to be irregular to some extent, because of ships being weid-bound.

Wages.

These were improved by the 1889 strike, wh. led to the Brassey award, but there is now a downward tendency because of slackness

If lighterman earns £3 a-week it is really for a fortnight's work. The pay is really the "docker's tanner".

It is true the lighterman are not actually at work all the 12 hrs., but they must be there.

Previous to the strike it was a usual thing for men not to see their homes from Monday morning to Saturday night. They slept on the barges in their clothes – often on deck because of bad state of the cabins.

Night Work.

This is sometimes necessary, but there might be less of it.

It is infinitely more risky than day work & shd. be much better paid.

On account of the danger, all barges at night shd. have 2 hands.

Definitions.

Watermen are those employed in rowing passenger boats. There are about 500 of them in the Union (out of 4000 members). They have v^ry greatly reduced in numbers owing to the ferries.

Lighterman navigate barges & lighters.

Barges are flat-bottomed, & are mainly used.

Lighters have an oval keel.

average tonnage of barges & lighters now used is about 80 to 100. They have got much larger of late years.

Pilots.

There are 4 branches of them working at Gravesend.

They are originally watermen & have the waterman's license, but when they get their pilots' license from the Thames Conservancy they usual drop the other.

Licenses.

Lightermen pay 5/- for their license & 3/- a year for its renewal.

Watermen's Hall gets about £4000 a year from licence & registration fees.

Barges coming from a distance must take on a licensed man when they get within the jurisdiction of the Watermen's Coy.

Non freemen

There are about 3000 of these.

From Thurston's Evidence before Labour Commission. (16th day)

Victoria Steamboats.

average hours of engine drivers - 96 a-wk.
— " — firemen - 105 - " -
— " — pay of engine drivers - £2. 10
(pair over 6d hour)
— " — " firemen - £1. 13
(under 4d hour)

The Company employ about 80 men in Summer, & 14 in Winter.

The firemen employed have no previous training.

Men in charge of engines or machinery shd. undergo an examination.

Tugs

60 % of the men work under favourable conditions: 12 hour shifts
40 % work 18 to 20 hours a day.
average wage for drivers £2. 2 to £2. 5
— " — firemen 35/-

Hours shorter in winter than summer.
depend on the light & state of
weather.

June 14. 95

Mr. L. White, Watermen's Compy
(2nd interview)

Membership.

The Compy has about 7500 members, & there are 26 on the Court.

95 % of the members are duly qualified lightermen or watermen; the rest have been admitted on a/c of their being barge owners, &c.

The Court is elected entirely from the freemen, & all the members are practical men. There has been only one case of an unlicensed man being on the Court. Half of them are or have been working lightermen.

Income.

The ordinary income of the Compy is about £3000 a year, a sixth of wh. is obtained from property, but the greater part from fees.

The fee for apprenticeship, including

5/- stamp, is 28/-, & on taking up the freedom £2. 6. 5/- is paid on the first issue of licence, & a renewal fee of 3/- a year. Bargemasters pay a registration fee of 6/- a year for each vessel. The men manage to pay the fee for the freedom without any apparent difficulty. There are one or two charities wh. help in this.

The expenses of administration – salaries, office, &c. – are nearly equal to income.

There is also a Poor's Fund of £50,000, yielding an annual income of about £1500. This is spent in small pensions to poor aged freemen, about 500 are benefited, most getting £2 a year, & others larger sums, rising to £10, according to length of membership.

<u>Pilots</u>. – These are licensed by Trinity

House, & are not under jurisdiction of Company. Those, however, who navigate the river within the Company's area must hold the watermen's license in addition to that of pilot. These are both sea & river pilots. Other pilots coming in with vessels must give over the charge to river pilots on reaching Gravesend.

There are one or two exceptions to the general rule of licenses. Thus ~~[illegible]~~ men not licensed by Trinity House, may bring sailing barges up the river from Rochester, but must take a "buffler" on board when they reach Tower Bridge. The "buffler" is a licensed waterman who works out for this class of work.

Steamboats.

A steamboat license must be obtained by all vessels carrying more than 12 passengers.

Mr. Gosling, Waterman & Lighterman's Soly.
(2nd interview).

Boy Labour.

There are few actual cases of 2 boys being in charge of a large barge, to navigate it. But boys only just apprenticed are frequently employed to watch such barges all night. Gave several instances of this. He thinks this unsafe, besides depriving men of their work.

He agrees with Mr. White that the lads are generally about 16 when apprenticed, & that the majority are the sons or near relations of lightermen. Does not think there wd be so large a proportion as 80%, but quite 60%. These certainly have some hereditary knowledge of the work.

Examination.

He believes the Court is competent,

but the lads are often not properly examined, owing to personal & private influence.

When a lad comes up for the exam. either at end of 2 years or of apprenticeship term he has to produce papers signed by 6 freemen, certifying that he is competent. This is often a farce; impecunious men sign for a consideration. He complains that the Court are perfectly aware of these things & take no steps to remedy them. The Court ought to have practical tests of efficiency, & this could be very easily arranged by the masters who apply for the boys certificates

Accidents.

He believes there are not many accidents on the river, & is prepared to take Mr. White's figures.

But this is because of the great skill & care exercised by the men, & is in spite of inadequate examination & supervision.

Earnings.

These he estimates roughly as follows:

60 % average £2.2 a week, earned irregularly – £4 one week, & nothing another.

20 % quite precarious, & earnings much less than above.

10 % foremen or highly paid men – £3 & over.

10 % unemployed.

Amount of Work.

The amount of work to be done on the river increases, but improved methods & machinery more than keep pace with the increase, & consequently there is less employment for the men.

Seasons.

There are different seasons for different kinds of work, & the men can turn from one kind to another.

On the whole, employment is most brisk in winter. — There is more work to do, & it takes longer to do it, owing to bad weather, &c.

The coal trade, of course, makes a considerable difference, altho' the fos Co's get in their stocks in the summer.

Men employed on the Victoria Steam Boats get work in the coal trade in winter.

The Brassey Award.

The great point gained by the men in this award was the principle laid down that one job shd. constitute a nights work. This has since been strictly adhered to, & is so beneficial because jobs may be sometimes quite short, &

a man get 4 hours pay for 1 hours work, but of course as a rule the work is so regulated as to avoid this. There is a necessary give & take.

The award as to overtime is not so well kept, but the men do not mind giving a little time in.

The practice is gradually getting to be 6/- a day & 6/- a night, with 1 job as a night's work.

Watermen.

Owing to ferries & bridges, these are greatly declining. There are a few about the docks & lower parts of the river, but most of those remaining are pleasure-boat men at Richmond & Twickenham, or are on the steamboats.

No Leisure.

Mr. G. thinks the men's principal grievance is want of proper leisure.

They must wait about until 8 o'clk at night in City & neighbourhood on chance of being wanted, & so can never make arrangements to go anywhere. So they get into the habit of stopping at the public-houses.

Lighterman's Work.

In regard to the loading of barges the custom varies according to the nature of the goods.

In the case of Corn the sacks are brought to side of barge & lighterman stows them. If in bulk, the corn is shot into barge & lighterman has to trim it.

Timber is stowed by the lumpers who bring it to the vessel, & who are employed by the master stevedore. It is really the duty of the man in charge of barge, but an arrangement is made between the barge owner & the master stevedore, by wh. the latter does it for a

small sum. This is a mutual convenience, as the work is done much quicker.

Coals are usually trimmed by coal porters.

Quay work consists of general merchandise. The lightermen does the stowing in this case.

In all cases the receiver of the cargo is responsible for the unloading.

Rafting timber is a special branch of lightermen's work. The timber is formed into a raft, & towed to its destination.

Age capacity.

There is a tendency to reduce the age to wh men can work, owing largely to use of steam.

Elderly men are not really worth

out, but they cannot get employment.

Pilots

See article in Strand Mag. early this year.

There are several classes of pilots – North channel, south channel, mud (or river) pilots, &c.

Pilots are a very well paid body of men, & have a strong organization & profession.

They pay a certain % of their earnings to ~~Trinity~~ Trinity House.

(? What are conditions under wh. a pilot must be taken.)

? Attempts made to defeat the provision as to capacity by raising floor of barges, & so increasing storage power.

Non-Freemen.

The Soc. of Non-freemen is dead, or the Ang. Soc. of Lightermen are considering advisability (footing says) of themselves organising the non-freemen. It is thought it will be to their interest in limiting, regulating supply of labour.