

**SUTTON BRIDGE
and
LONG SUTTON
LINCOLNSHIRE
AN INDUSTRIAL HISTORY**

BY NEIL R. WRIGHT



SOCIETY FOR LINCOLNSHIRE HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

SUTTON BRIDGE
AND
LONG SUTTON
LINCOLNSHIRE
AN INDUSTRIAL HISTORY

by NEIL R. WRIGHT, D.M.A.

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LIST OF CONTENTS

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	(iii)
<i>Foreword</i>	(iv)
 SUTTON BRIDGE AND LONG SUTTON - AN INDUSTRIAL HISTORY	
<i>Boundaries</i>	1
<i>Windmills</i>	2
<i>Common and Marshes</i>	3
<i>Cross Keys Wash</i>	5
<i>Cross Keys Bridge</i>	7
<i>Cross Keys Embankment</i>	9
<i>Navvies</i>	10
<i>Port and Village of Sutton Bridge</i>	10
<i>Merchants of Sutton Bridge</i>	13
<i>Breweries</i>	15
<i>Railways</i>	15
<i>Sutton Bridge Dock</i>	18
<i>Other Industries</i>	23
<i>Bibliography</i>	24

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Cover *English Brothers 'Garland' loading with coal in Sutton Bridge Dock. May or June 1881.*

Page

- | | |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4 | <i>Map of River Nene Outfall in 1824.</i> |
| 11 | <i>Map of Industrial Sites in Sutton Bridge.</i> |
| 14 | <i>Map of Cross Keys Bridge area.</i> |
| 20 | <i>Second Cross Keys Bridge (1850-1897) designed by Robert Stephenson.</i> |
| 20 | <i>Basin of Sutton Bridge Dock after being abandoned.</i> |

Sources

The old photographs on the cover and on p.20 were kindly supplied by Mr. J. Richardson (Stephenson's bridge) and Mr. Paul Garner (two pictures of the Dock) who both live in Sutton Bridge.

The maps were drawn by Neil Wright.

FOREWORD

For a village of only 3,000 inhabitants, created as recently as 1830, Sutton Bridge has a fascinating and complex history involving transport by road, rail and water. It deserves to be better known than it presently is. Many people only know it, at best, as a bottleneck on the A.17 between Newark and King's Lynn but the present bridge replaces earlier ones built by such eminent engineers as John Rennie and Robert Stephenson to provide main road and rail routes across what had been a dangerous two-mile wide estuary. And in the same village is one of the shortest-lived and least known docks in Britain, still much as it was abandoned a century ago.

This booklet was originally published as notes for a tour by the Lincolnshire Local History Society in May 1970 to look at industrial archaeology in Sutton Bridge and the adjacent small town of Long Sutton. The Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, successor to the L.L.H.S., plans to make a return trip on 6 July 1980. These revised notes deal with the industrial and transport history of Sutton Bridge and Long Sutton and are drawn mainly from nineteenth century county directories and the books listed in the bibliography, supplemented by an examination of some primary sources in County Hall, Boston and information supplied by Norman Wills, Mr. J. Richardson of Sutton Bridge, Mr. Alan Tye of Grimsby and Mr. P.N. Skelton of Worthing. The publication of the 2nd edition has given an opportunity to revise the material, particularly with regard to the engineering works of 1827-31 and the railway proposals of 1845.

There are still gaps in our knowledge. For example, about the navvies who created Tycho Wing's Channel and the Cross Keys Embankment. But despite that I hope these notes will serve as an introduction to the industrial history of Sutton Bridge and perhaps stimulate further research into this little-known fenland village on the borders of Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire.

Yarborough Lodge,
32 Yarborough Road,
LINCOLN.

Neil R. Wright.
12 May 1980.

BOUNDARIES

In the remote south-east corner of Lincolnshire, where the county borders Norfolk and Cambridgeshire, are the parishes of Sutton Bridge, Long Sutton and Little Sutton. They were formerly part of the extensive fenland parish of Sutton St. Mary, which at an earlier period also included three chapelries, now the independent civil parishes of Sutton St. Edmund, Sutton St. James and Lutton. The present status of these villages in relation to each other is indicated by the following table of population:

	Sutton Bridge	Long Sutton	Lutton	Sutton St. James	Sutton St. Edmund	Little Sutton
1961	3,309	2,794	796	613	527	199
1971	3,113	2,819	855	693	471	145
1976 (estimate)	3,076	3,013	982	508	637	154

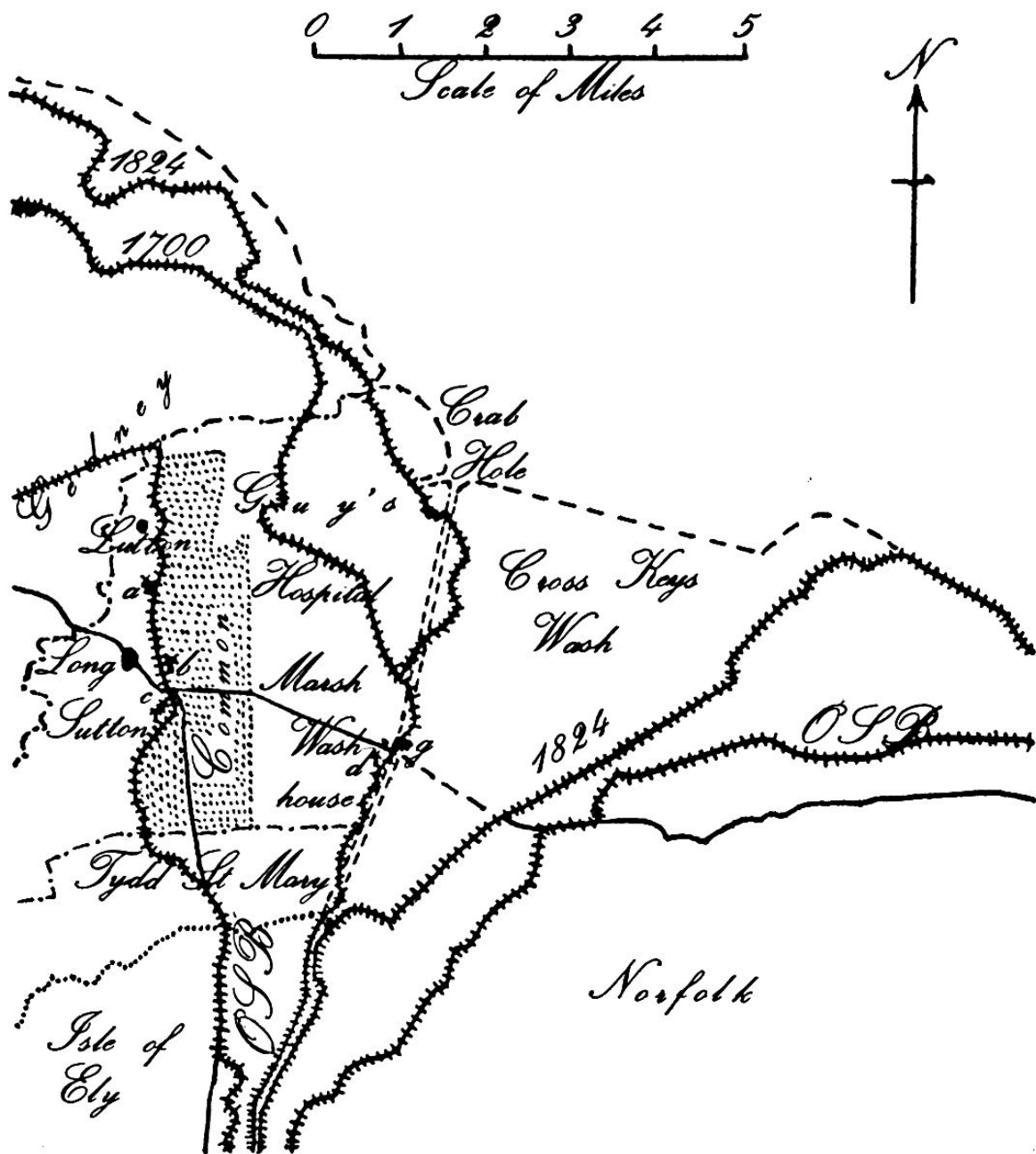
Each of these parishes, except Little Sutton, had declined in population between 1951 and 1961, but since then Long Sutton, Lutton and Sutton St. Edmund have revived. Much of Sutton St. James and Sutton St. Edmund has been reclaimed from the fens; much of Lutton, and all of Little Sutton and Sutton Bridge, has been reclaimed from the Wash and the Cross Keys Wash. The Nene estuary, or Cross Keys Wash, marked the eastern boundary of Lincolnshire.

Lutton, or Sutton St. Nicholas, was at the sea-ward end of the old parish and south of it was the small market town of Long Sutton on the main road between Lincolnshire and the counties of East Anglia. The village of Sutton Bridge did not exist until about 1830 and the civil parish of Little Sutton is an administrative area formed at the end of the nineteenth century.

For many years Long Sutton was only a large village but in the early years of the nineteenth century it started to grow into a small town. In 1801 and 1811 the population, excluding the three chapelries, remained at about 1,800, but by 1821 it had risen to 2,392. Discounting the inhabitants of Sutton Bridge, the population of Long Sutton was about 2,410 in 1831 and 2,944 in 1851. After lapsing for many years, its ancient market was revived on 26th September 1824 and is still held every Friday. In the 20th century Long Sutton gave place to Sutton Bridge as the main community in the old parish but it is now reasserting itself.

A quarter of a mile east of Long Sutton market place is the old sea bank, named "Roman Bank", beyond which were the Great Common and the marshes owned by Guy's Hospital, of which more anon. The Great Common was enclosed in 1790 and portions awarded to the three chapelries as well as Long Sutton. Since Sutton St. Edmund and Sutton St. James were to the

River Nene Outfall in 1824



KEY to Fig. 1 above - RIVER NENE OUTFALL IN 1824

- OSB Old Sea Bank
- 1700 Bank enclosing land reclaimed before 1700
- 1824 Banks enclosing land reclaimed before 1824
- - Modern Sea Bank and Nene Outfall
- Main Roads
- Windmills: a Sutton Bank Mill or Sneath's Mill (1779)
- b Harrison's Mill (1843)
- c Brunswick Mill or Dring's Mill (1817)
- d Sutton Bridge Mill (pre-1824)
- g Granary at Sutton Wash

In the early years of the nineteenth century Mr. Shearcroft, the resident Steward or Receiver of the Hospital estate, increased it by reclaiming further small areas of saltmarsh from the sea.

The village of Sutton Bridge later developed on a part of the estate, and the Hospital took a paternal interest, building the church and schools. The Steward of the Hospital estate lived in The Park, a mansion on the south side of Bridge Road. To the west of the house was the estate yard, which is now a builders yard. When the railway arrived in 1864 The Park was cut off from the fields to the south of it, and it is said that for this reason a new estate yard was developed at Peter's Point House (TF 475205).

In 1919 the Hospital estate was purchased by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries under the Smallholdings Colonies Acts of 1916 and 1917. Instead of a capital sum the Ministry paid an annual Rent Charge of £18,734. The Ministry later sold off their property in the village but still own the agricultural estate.

The Great Common, containing about 2,340 acres (excluding 112 acres in Hall Marsh), was enclosed in 1790. Before then, according to the 1892-3 edition of White's Directory, it was a tract without hedge or tree, entered into from Long Sutton by a series of gates. It was grass and nettles, grazed by horses, cattle, sheep, pigs and geese, some of the stockowners coming from considerable distances. Numerous squatters cottages were built alongside the old sea bank, on the edge of the Common.

CROSS KEYS WASH

Before 1830 travellers who had passed the two miles across the bleak tract of Common and marsh and had arrived at the Wash House, or Ship and Cross Keys Inn, (now the Bridge Hotel) on the bank of the Nene estuary, then had to cross the dangerous Cross Keys Wash or Sutton Wash, which was only fordable at low water. It was a mile and a half to the Cross Keys House on the Norfolk bank of the estuary. The Nene Outfall, or Wisbech River, did not fill all this width, but its channels were constantly changing their courses through banks of shifting sand and silt. Drovers with their cattle for Norwich Market, horses, vehicles and passengers of all kinds who wished to avoid the long detour through Wisbech, had to be piloted over the Wash by a guide, up to their middle in water. In Long Sutton churchyard is the tombstone of Charles Wigglesworth, who died in 1840 aged 85 and who for fifty two years was a guide for Sutton Wash. In fording this dangerous track it was not unusual for a carriage suddenly to sink in a quicksand, and many serious accidents occurred. It was here that, a few centuries earlier, King John reputedly lost his baggage train. In the early nineteenth century John Rennie the engineer nearly drowned here when his carriage was overtaken by the tide while he was crossing the Sutton Wash.

Before 1830 the village of Sutton Bridge did not exist. The only buildings there, apart from the Wash House, were scattered farmhouses and a few cottages built in the 1820's along the north side of the main road. Close to the Wash House, but just outside the bank, there was a granary (about TF 483213) on the edge of the high water mark. On the bank south of the Wash House there was the windmill already described. Travellers passed over the bank at each side of the Wash by means of slipways.

The river Nene is the main outfall for the North Level of the Bedford Level, draining the fens in the northern part of the Isle of Ely. The outfall is also the Lower Harbour of Wisbech, that Cambridgeshire port being about eight miles upstream from modern Sutton Bridge. In 1773 a portion of the river was improved when Kinderley's Cut was dug from Wisbech to Gunthorpe Sluice, where the river widened into the Cross Keys Wash. Forty years later the sandbanks in the Cross Keys Wash were impeding the drainage and navigation, large vessels having to transfer their cargoes into barges on the sands of the Wash. In a report published in 1814 John Rennie advised the Bedford Level Commissioners that, if the shifting sands of the Cross Keys Wash could be avoided by cutting a new channel from the end of Kinderley's Cut to low water at Crab Hole (see p.4), one of the main obstructions to the drainage would be removed. His proposal was deferred because of the expense.

In 1818 a separate project for a bridge across the Nene at this point was initiated by Lord William Bentinck, but was also deferred in the hope that it would be included in some general scheme for the improvement of the estuary. The river Welland had been bridged at Fosdyke and the Ouse at Lynn leaving the Nene as the only gap in a new route between the north and east of the kingdom. Several years of negotiations followed during which Wisbech Corporation, anxious to protect its road and river traffic, brought in another eminent engineer, Thomas Telford. He agreed with Rennie that the Nene outfall should be moved to a new cut entering the sea at Crab Hole.

In 1826 the Cross Keys Bridge Act was passed, forming a Company with authority to construct an embankment from Wash House to the opposite bank in Norfolk, with a bridge over the Nene built somewhere along its length. The Company was awarded land on each side of the embankment for the "support and repair" of it. The following year the Nene Outfall Act was passed, appointing Commissioners with authority to divert the Nene Outfall into a new channel and reclaim the land behind the proposed Cross Keys Embankment. The Commissioners were to build the Cross Keys Bridge according to the plan of Rennie and Telford, the Bridge Company paying them £3,000, the estimated cost.

The Nene Outfall Amendment Act 1829 authorised the Commissioners to erect lighthouses or beacons without the sanction of Trinity House. These lighthouses, which still stand, were more landmarks than lighthouses in the usual sense.

The work was started by cutting the new outfall from the end of Kinderley's Cut to deep water at Crab Hole. The contract was signed by Messrs. Jolliffe & Banks on 2nd July 1827 and soon between 1,200 and 1,500 men were at work. The new cut kept close to the former west bank, at the lower end cutting through land previously reclaimed. Whites 1892-3 edition said that it cost £200,716. While the work was in progress Telford and Sir John Rennie, son of the previous engineer, made frequent visits and on one occasion got thoroughly soaked. The cut was completed in 1830, the dam at the lower end being removed on 4th June and that at the upper end on 7th June. While the old channel remained open there was not enough force of water to scour the new channel to its full depth. As R.L. Hills says in "Machines, Mills and Uncountable Costly Necessities": "Three hundred workmen with one hundred carts were employed day and night to close up the old river, and performed this in six days, with the help of four or five barges or lighters which were sunk across the river course to accelerate the formation of a bank." Sir Edward Banks and the Rev. Mr. Jolliffe personally superintended the completion of the work and despite the rain they frequently applied their shoulders to the wheels of the carts. This work was completed on Monday, 14th June 1830.

On the evening of Saturday, 19th June 1830 the 170 ton brig 'Friends' belonging to Mr. Prest passed up the new river and was greeted by the inhabitants with three cheers as she was the first vessel of her class to navigate the Nene Outfall.

Once the river was confined to the new channel the water scoured out the bottom within a few months until there was deep water all the way up to Wisbech. Rennie and Telford, calculating upon the loose nature of the local soil and the effect the scour would have upon it, had deliberately excavated to less than the full depth necessary for navigation. When the scour reached the required depth 10,000 tons of stone were used to protect the new banks of the channel at a cost of £32,000.

The new cut is also known as Tycho Wing's Channel, after the then Agent to the Duke of Bedford who owned much land in the North Level and had encouraged the project. The opening of the new cut resulted in increased use of the navigation up to Wisbech, and also led to improvements in the drainage system of the North Level. But in later years similar difficulties with sand banks occurred beyond the end of the new Outfall.

CROSS KEYS BRIDGE

The Cross Keys Bridge was completed before the waters were turned into their new channel. The 'Stamford Mercury' had written of "the bridge itself being already perfected" on 16th April 1830. The first bridge, designed by Sir John Rennie, was built of oak and had a moveable cast iron centre of 52 feet span. The toll-house which stood at the east end of Rennie's bridge still survives as a private house. An old plan seems to show that there was also a toll-house at the west end. This was perhaps unlikely although in September 1830 the management committee said that a person would be stationed at each end of the bridge to direct passengers across the sands until the embankment was completed.

Miller and Skertchly, quoting from Walker and Craddock's History of Wisbech, say that the scouring of the water in the new channel was much greater than expected and there were fears for the bridge. Sir John Rennie in his autobiography recalls saying that if the bridge were built at the same time as the cut was made then it would be impossible to drive the piles forming the piers of the bridge sufficiently deep to be below the scour in the outfall. His suggestion that construction of the bridge be delayed until the outfall had been scoured to its full depth was overruled but in the end his opinion proved correct. Stones were thrown in around the piles and formed an underwater ridge across the channel with a fall of two or three feet. This caused eddies on each tide which made vessels almost unmanageable and it also had adverse effects on the drainage.

The bridge was in use for about a year before the embankment was completed and during this period travellers paid toll to use the bridge over the outfall channel but were still at danger from the tide when crossing the rest of the estuary. After crossing the bridge they descended to the level of the sands and then followed a route marked by poles or beacons with flags. In September 1830 the Commissioners decided to have boards placed at the Clenchwarton and Walpole toll-gates in Norfolk "to intimate to the public that the passage across the sands to the foot of the new bridge is safe at certain times of the tide, and that it will not be necessary to take any guide by daylight, as poles or beacons with flags are placed across the sand, and a person will be stationed at each end of the bridge, to give the necessary directions to passengers." At the same time they referred to a violent assault made on

their toll-gate keeper by a person who attempted to evade payment of the tolls, and indicated that a severe example would be made of the next person who should attempt to evade the tolls or obstruct the officer in the execution of his duty. Many travellers must have been exasperated at having to pay the Commissioners' toll at the bridge but then having still to take the dangerous journey across the tidal sands.

In 1850 various improvements were made to the Nene below Wisbech, and one of the main items was the replacement of Cross Keys Bridge. The second bridge was of cast and wrought iron and was erected in the autumn of 1850 at a cost of about £22,500. Designed by Robert Stephenson, it crossed the river about a hundred feet south of the previous one, and the roads were diverted at each end. According to the 'Stamford Mercury' of 6th September 1850 the moveable section, about 126 feet long and pivotted on the east pier, weighed about 80 tons and was to be turned by a crank operated by one man. (See p.20).

Another toll-house was built, this time at the west end, and this also still survives as a private house.

When the railway from Spalding was extended to King's Lynn in 1864 the railway company purchased the road bridge and used the southern half for their line, thus saving the cost of a separate bridge. They also bought the embankment and built their line along the southern side of it.

At the end of the nineteenth century the Midland and Great Northern Railway companies carried out many improvements to this line and Robert Stephenson's bridge was replaced during 1894-7 by a road and rail swing bridge, erected at a cost of £80,000 and worked by hydraulic power. The engine house providing the power to operate the bridge is located at TF 480209, at the south-eastern corner of the railway property around the station. For the convenience of the railway the third bridge, the present one, was constructed about 100 feet south of Stephenson's. On the west bank it crossed a site used by William Starling for boat repairs until that time; the business moved up the Nene to Stanground in Peterborough.

The engineer for the third bridge was J. Allen McDonald. A plaque on the bridge tells us that it was made and erected by A. Handyside & Co. Ltd. of Derby and London, with hydraulic power by Sir W.C. Armstrong, Whitworth & Co. Ltd. and steel for girders made by the Staffordshire Steel Co. of Bilston. It was opened for traffic on 25th July 1897.

In 1900 the Sutton Bridge Urban District Council raised with the Holland County Council the question of freeing the bridge from tolls. The M. & G.N. Joint Committee eventually agreed to give up the tolls for a payment of £7,000, the County Council agreeing to maintain the embankment and the road along it, while the M. & G.N. continued to own and maintain the bridge itself. £3,000 was paid by the U.D.C. and £4,000 by the County Council, and the agreement came into effect on 4th November 1903. Sutton Bridge U.D.C. was assisted in making its payment by contributions from the Office of Woods and Forests, the East Elloe Rural District Council, and various private owners in Wingland.

The eastern approach road to the bridge was diverted in September, 1957, cutting out the right-angled bend onto the bridge. Unfortunately it was no longer possible for vehicles on each side of the river to see the traffic on the other bank, which was inconvenient since there was only a single carriageway and no traffic lights.

The trunk road A.17 from Newark to King's Lynn is a main link between the northern and eastern parts of the kingdom and in the summer is a serious bottleneck. The railway closed on 28th February 1959 and the local authorities and inhabitants of the area hoped that the railway portion of the bridge would become a second carriageway for the A.17. Delay in reaching a satisfactory financial arrangement prevented the transfer of the railway portion from the British Transport Commission to the Ministry of Transport until 1st January 1963. Eventually a compromise was reached, and the second carriageway was built in the summer of 1963. For a short while, before the opening of the second carriageway, traffic lights were used to control traffic crossing the bridge.

Traffic had been diverted over a temporary carriageway of timber sleepers (!) for six days in September 1960 while the road portion was experimentally re-surfaced; the re-surfacing was to test materials for the then proposed bridges over the Severn and Forth.

Several sections of the A.17 through Lincolnshire have already been improved and in the early 1980's Long Sutton and Sutton Bridge will be by-passed and a new bridge constructed over the Nene some distance south of the present Cross Keys Bridge. The eventual fate of the M. & G.N.J.R. swing bridge is still uncertain.

CROSS KEYS EMBANKMENT

The embankment extends for nearly two miles across the former estuary from the Cross Keys Bridge to the Norfolk bank. Construction of the embankment, according to White's directory, had employed 900 men and 260 horses. It was finished about three and a half years after Jolliffe and Banks's men had started work in Cross Keys Wash but according to the 'Stamford Mercury' the embankment itself was erected from the bed of the sea in the space of just twenty-six weeks. On 4th July 1831 hundreds of spectators gathered to see the first vehicle, the Union Coach from Norwich to Newark, use the road built on top of the embankment. This coach service had started on 6th September 1830 but it is not clear whether it went via Wisbech before the bank was completed or risked the journey across the sands..

On the 4th July the coach was met at the Cross Keys tavern on the Norfolk side by many respectable gentlemen and after changing horses it made its way along the new bank. At several points it was greeted by large numbers of the workmen employed and at the point where the bank was finished, "by which the northern and eastern parts of the kingdom became united", they had hoisted seven handkerchiefs on a 20 foot staff to denote the seven great commercial towns which had been united with Norwich.

The weather was exceedingly fine with a gentle south-west wind. The bridge itself was decorated by colours belonging to the ships in the river and at the Bridge tavern were hundreds of spectators forming "the greatest display of beauty and fashion that perhaps ever congregated at one point in the parish of Long Sutton." The distant proprietors of the coach had gathered at the bridge and their Long Sutton partner treated all accompanying the coach to a stoup of wine. John Peele of Long Sutton treated the men employed on the bank to a barrel of beer, but that would not go far among so many.

The embankment cut the journey by several miles by avoiding Wisbech and also enabled about 1,322 fertile acres to be recovered from the sea. Since the erection of the Cross Keys Embankment other banks have been erected further out in the estuary, in 1847, 1861, 1867, 1873, 1910, 1917, 1927, 1956 and the latest one which is nearly four miles downstream from Sutton Bridge.

NAVVIES

During the construction of the channel, bridge and embankment the large number of navvies perhaps lived in temporary accommodation near the Wash House. Numbers of labourers would perhaps be recruited from the villages in the neighbourhood, but the toughest work would fall to navvies, mainly Irish, who travelled from site to site. Many would probably have worked for Jolliffe and Banks on other large contracts they had undertaken for John Rennie and his son Sir John.

Miles from the nearest village, the navvies were dependant on the contractors, their employers, for their food and lodging. But they were strong enough to help themselves to the produce of the isolated farms, and even of the Cross Keys Inn when they felt like it. One report was made that during this time about 1,000 sheep from neighbouring farms were stolen and slaughtered, and most of the respectable inhabitants were sworn in as special constables to protect each others property. The navvies also stole fowls, wheat and vegetables.

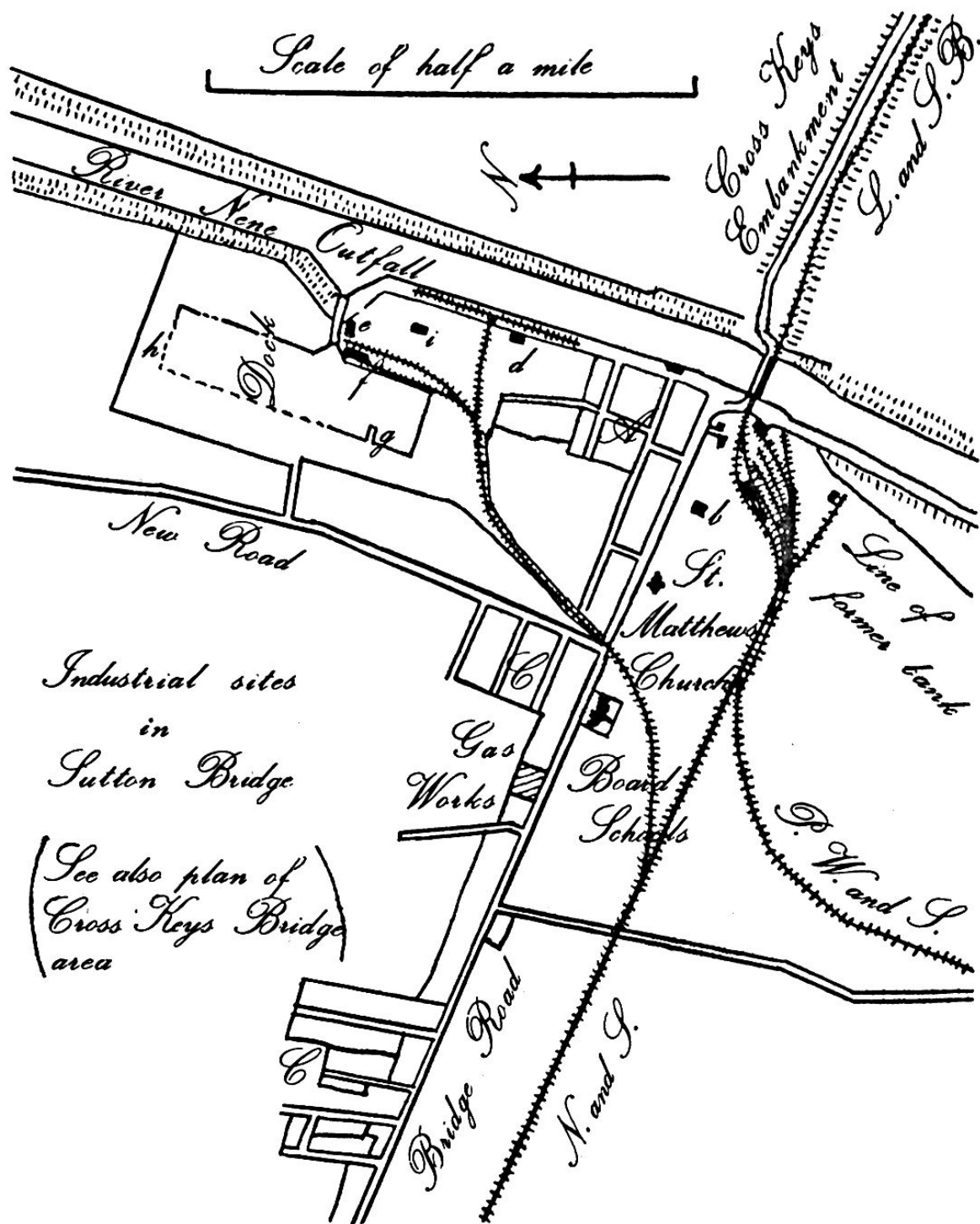
On Sundays crowds of strangers, eager to gaze on the fights which often occurred, gathered in front of the Cross Keys Inn. About this time the navvies were devastated by either cholera or smallpox; many of them were buried in a mass grave in Long Sutton churchyard.

In 1831 56 Long Sutton farmers petitioned for a 25 per cent reduction in their tithes, saying they were unable to pay the usual amount; was this caused by the depredations of the navvies?

PORT AND VILLAGE OF SUTTON BRIDGE

Even before the improvements there had been a granary here, on the water's edge outside the bank, but as the new channel was deeper and straighter the facilities at Sutton Bridge were increased as an outport of Wisbech and a village grew up here. The original granary, demolished to make way for the new channel, was replaced by the present three-storey granary set back from the water's edge, just north of Wharf Street.

While the outfall was being dug a pilot office and a look-out were constructed at Sutton Bridge. The old Pilot Office is a small building which still stands on the river bank, halfway between Wharf Street and Lime Street. The look-out was an enclosed hut at the top of a skeletal tower, about thirty feet high, abutting on the north wall of the three-storey granary, and can be seen in the centre of the illustration on p.20. This look-out was perhaps taken down about 1897, since the bridge completed that year incorporated a control-room and look-out above its centre. The pilot service for the port of Wisbech is now based at 1 Wharf Street, its boats moored near the Dock entrance, and makes contact with ships in the deeps by radio, not eyesight.



KEY to Fig. 2 above - INDUSTRIAL SITES IN SUTTON BRIDGE

A	First Growth Area, c.1830
B	The Park, home of the Steward of Guy's Hospital estate
N. and S.	Norwich & Spalding Railway
L. and S.B.	Lynn and Sutton Bridge Railway
P.W. and S.	Peterborough, Wisbech and Sutton Railway
C	Areas of Growth c.1880
<u>Dock Area</u>	
d	Dock Chambers (Offices)
e	Site of Hydraulic Engine House
f	Site of Wooden Warehouse
g	Site of Coal Hoist
h	Site of slope for unloading timber
i	Site of Acid Plant (1913-1918)

In May 1836 people in Holbeach considered building a short canal from their town to the sea but a correspondent from Long Sutton suggested in the 'Stamford Mercury' that a better idea would be a railway from Long Sutton to Spalding so that Holbeach could use the new port of Sutton Bridge. No railway was yet built, but neither was the canal. People were aware of the advantages of railways and in Lincolnshire the period for building short local canals had already passed.

Opposite the end of Wharf Street, close to the granary, is a two-storey warehouse erected by William and Spencer Skelton some time between 1836 and 1852, right on the water's edge. An archway through this warehouse gave access to a large wooden quay projecting into the river; the quay was swept away in floods in the early years of this century.

Both the granary and the warehouse were apparently owned by Guy's Hospital until about 1920. They are now occupied by Sidney Garner & Sons Ltd., corn and seed merchants, who purchased them in 1940. Previous owners were, in order, the Sutton Bridge Corn Co., Gregorys & Hampson Ltd. and Ellis & Everard Ltd.

In 1836 a meeting was held at the Bull Hotel in Long Sutton to promote steam navigation from Sutton Bridge to London. By 1842 regular trading vessels were sailing from the riverside to London every Thursday and to Hull and Newcastle about every ten days. The Hull service was provided by the steam schooner 'Forager' which had two large holds to carry sheep, wool, corn, timber and other goods as well as a small number of passengers. By 1842 a timber yard was established, apparently by George Prest, on the riverside north of the village, about TF 482215. Residents of Sutton Bridge in 1842 included a harbour master and a coast officer.

The 1856 directory also referred to George Moody & Son, patent rope makers.

After the completion of the works in the Cross Keys Wash a hamlet, which became known as Sutton Bridge, grew up in this part of Long Sutton at the western end of the bridge and extending westwards along the main road. If the proportions in White's directory are accepted then it would seem that from very few in 1821 the population of this part of the parish had risen to about 1,472 in 1851. There were about 800 in 1831 but most of those were perhaps navvies engaged on building the great embankment.

By February 1834 the Ship and Cross Keys Inn had been largely rebuilt to accommodate the great increase of travellers along the road and had been renamed the Bridge Hotel. New streets called Wharf Street and Lime Street were laid out north of the Bridge Hotel and houses were built there and along the north side of Bridge Road, all on land belonging to Guy's Hospital. From an old plan it seems that Custom House Street and the shops in High Street were built after 1852. These old shop fronts still survive though most are now private houses as the modern shopping centre is Bridge Street.

At first this village was only a part of Long Sutton, under the same overseers of the poor, churchwardens, surveyor of highways and parish constables, and without its own church. By 1842 there were three inns or taverns at Sutton Bridge, including the Bridge Hotel, and five beer-houses. The Methodists had opened a Chapel at Sutton Bridge in 1836, and by 1856 they had two, for Wesleyan Reformers and Independants.

The Governors of Guy's Hospital, through their resident Steward, William Skelton (1788-1869), took a paternal interest in the development of the village, since they owned all the land on which it was built. William Skelton became Steward about 1829 and during his term improved the estate by making roads, planting trees and laying drains. He was President of the Long Sutton Agricultural Association, which organised its own annual show until recently, Chairman of the Long Sutton Bench of magistrates, and also founded a private bank. In 1870 a stained glass window by Bell and Almond was inserted in Sutton Bridge Church in his memory. William's heir, his nephew Edward Dunkley Skelton, succeeded him as Steward of the Guy's Hospital estate. The private bank stood at the corner of High St. and Bridge Street, and was sold to the National Provincial Bank in 1905.

In 1841-2 the Hospital bore the cost of the erection of St. Matthew's Church; Sutton Bridge became a separate ecclesiastical parish in 1843, the first official recognition of its independence. When the Hospital estate was sold the models for the church roof were found in the carpenters shop of the adjacent Estate Yard.

In November 1858 the Hospital transferred two schools it had built, one before 1856, to the Vicar and Churchwardens of St. Matthews. One was a Boys School (TF 480212), with Master's House attached, in Wharf Street; this building was used as an infants' school from 1868 until 1959 and was demolished in 1969. The other was a smaller Girls School (TF 479212) in Church Street, and both were National Schools. The building now occupied by the Salvation Army in a lane opposite the Church was previously a Sunday School, and was apparently the original Girls School.

By 1856 Sutton Bridge had its own Post Office but it was reported in White's Directory that the port's trade had by then been injured by the railways.

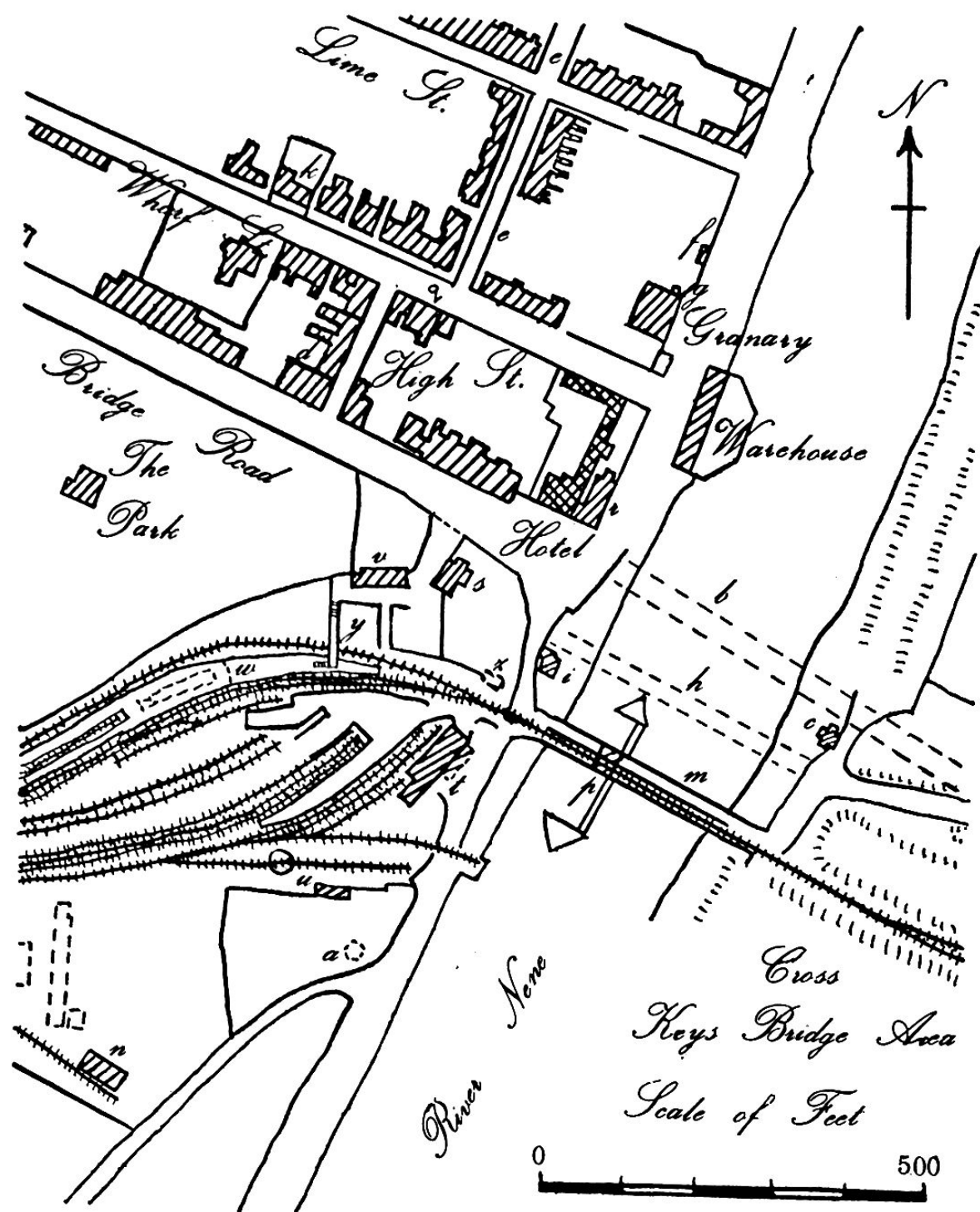
MERCHANTS OF SUTTON BRIDGE

The merchants of Sutton Bridge during the nineteenth century included George Prest, Thomas William Clarke and the Skelton family.

A Mr. Prest was the owner of the first vessel to sail up Tycho Wing's Channel and by 1842 George Prest was listed at Sutton Bridge as a corn, coal and timber merchant. In 1864 he was the lessee of the Sutton Bridge Mill and by 1872 was also a J.P. and a shipowner.

T.W. Clarke was a shipowner, corn and coal merchant and wharfinger in 1842 and 1866, and was joint Secretary of the Long Sutton Agricultural Association. In 1842 he was the Sutton Bridge agent to the 'Forager' steam schooner which sailed regularly to Hull. He was married to Susan Skelton, sister of the Steward.

But the principal merchants in this small port were apparently Spencer Skelton (1801-1868) and his son Spencer Ashlin Skelton (1832-1909). Spencer was the younger brother of the Steward, and by 1842 he was listed as a corn and coal merchant. When his sons Spencer Ashlin and William were old enough they became partners. They had branches in Wisbech and Wakefield, by 1856 were also described as shipowners and by 1866 were also dealing in oilcake. In 1872 Spencer Ashlin lived in Peterborough, but in 1892 he was still trading and then lived in The Park, formerly William's home in Sutton Bridge.



KEY to Fig. 3 above - CROSS KEYS BRIDGE AREA

- a Site of windmill
- b Site of 1831 Bridge (Rennie)
- c Surviving 1831 Toll-house
- d Early shops
- e Custom House Street
- f Pilot Office 1831
- g Look-out 1831

Railways

- s First Station (1862-64)
- t Goods Shed (1864-1965)
- u Stables
- v Second Station (1864) (Reading Room)

- h Site of 1850-51 Bridge (Stephenson)
- i Surviving 1851 Toll-house
- k Boys National School
- m 1894-7 Bridge (McDonald)
- n Hydraulic Engine House (still in use)
- p Bridge Control Room and former Look-out
- q Police Station, c.1880
- r Extension to Hotel, c.1880

- w Site of Third Station (island platform); factory built on site c.1974
- y Site of Footbridge
- z Site of Signal Box

BREWERIES

The main brewery in Long Sutton was the Brunswick Brewery (TF 429232), now occupied by W. Johnson & Son (Long Sutton) Ltd., seed and potato growers and merchants, in Gedney Road opposite the junction with Swapcoat Lane (formerly Brewery Lane). The main building is of four storeys, with various other buildings behind. This was occupied by John Dolton, brewer and maltster, from before 1826 until after 1842. It seems that by 1856 the occupier was Richard Blundy, who was a spirit merchant as well as a brewer and maltster. He was still the tenant in 1866, but by 1872 Spencer Ashlin Skelton and his younger brother William had taken it over as the Phoenix or Steam Brewery. They were also wine, spirit and hop merchants, leasing the riverside warehouse at Sutton Bridge.

The Skeltons gave up the Brewery after 1882; their descendants say it was because of the difficulty of keeping salt out of the local water at that time! The premises were successively occupied by F.G. Potter and W.H. Johnson before being let in 1887 to G.W. Mills of the Union Brewery, Wisbech. He did not stay long, and in 1890 it was offered for auction, but there were no bids for the house, brewery buildings or three-acre site. The machinery, fixtures, etc., previously valued at £2,000, realised less than £100.

Other nineteenth-century brewers in Long Sutton were John Hicks in 1826 and Edward Featherstone Cole in 1856 and 1858. In 1866 Mossop and Co. were brewers in High Street; in 1872 and 1882 Thomas Robinson Woolfield Mossop was a brewer and wine and spirit merchant at the Standard Brewery (TF 437224) at the corner of Roman Bank and London Road. By 1890 the Standard Brewery was owned by Edward Dawes, who sold it to the Burton and Lincoln Brewery Co., together with the tied houses attached to it, including the Bull of Long Sutton. The Standard Brewery was smaller than the Brunswick Brewery and the only remains are the apparent boundary wall, and a building said to have been the office.

RAILWAYS

The idea of a railway to Sutton Bridge had been mentioned in 1836 and nine years later the 'railway mania' produced schemes affecting the area but the first line to reach Long Sutton and Sutton Bridge was not opened until 1862.

In spring 1845 William Skelton, George Prest and others had a route from King's Lynn to Boston surveyed by Hamilton H. Fulton and they proposed an East Coast Railway Company to build this line together with an extension to Grimsby and a branch from Holbeach to Spalding. At several places this would join up with other proposed railways, and in August the section north of Boston was dropped from their plans as a separate East Lincolnshire Railway was being promoted on that route. The prospectus listed Sir John Rennie and H.H. Fulton as their engineers.

During 1845 many other railways were proposed to connect the Midlands to East Anglia but most were to go via Wisbech and would miss out Sutton Bridge. One of these was the proposed Grand Union Railway from Nottingham to King's Lynn with a branch to Boston. At a meeting in the Bull at Long Sutton on 10th September George Prest moved a successful resolution that the East Coast Railway should be merged with the Grand Union, although a public meeting in Holbeach on the following day supported the East Coast Railway. To counter the other schemes another company was proposed a few days later by William Skelton,

Richard Newcomb of Stamford and others. Its title, typical of the wild schemes of autumn 1845, was the 'Sutton Bridge Port, Stamford, Birmingham and Midlands Junction Railway'. The prospectus listed its engineers as Sir John Rennie, George Rennie, Hamilton H. Fulton and William Lewin, and declared that the Trustees of Guy's Hospital had decided to build a dock and slipway at Sutton Bridge. Before this a group of railway speculators from Lancashire and Yorkshire had proposed a line from Long Sutton via Wisbech to the Eastern Counties Railway at March, and this had borne the grand name of 'Isle of Ely, Wisbech and Lincolnshire Junction Railway'.

Soon the bubble burst, these paper companies collapsed and none of these early schemes affecting Sutton Bridge were carried out.

Railways reached King's Lynn in 1846, Wisbech in 1847 and Spalding in 1848 but it was not until 4th August 1853 that the Norwich and Spalding Railway was authorised to build a line from Spalding to Sutton Bridge, with a branch to Wisbech. The section from Spalding to Holbeach was opened in 1858 and the extension to Sutton Bridge was opened on 1st July 1862. The line was single track and was worked by the Great Northern Railway Company from the beginning. It was left to another company, the Lynn and Sutton Bridge Railway, to construct a line to King's Lynn, which was opened on 1st November 1864; this was also single-track. The engineer of the Lynn and Sutton Bridge Railway was James Brunlees.

As shown on p. 14, the line of the Norwich and Spalding Railway turned as it reached the river and the terminus (TF 481211) was behind the Station Master's house, close to the bridge; parallel to the bank and at right-angles to Bridge Road. Tickets were apparently issued from the brick porch at the side of the Station Master's house, which still stands. A room has since been built on top of the porch. The Goods Shed of 1862 is also still standing, at TF 481210.

In 1864, in addition to the Goods Shed and the Station Master's House, there was also a small building called an "Engine House", about the same size as and on the site of the present abandoned stables, and a small building between the "Engine House" and the Goods Shed.

The Lynn and Sutton Bridge Railway Co. did not build a railway bridge over the Nene but used half the width of the 1850 road bridge. The new line crossed the end of the first line, the Station Master's house being shortened to let it pass, and then swung round to join the Norwich and Spalding Railway at a point (TF 478210) several hundred yards below the terminus and the Goods Shed, which was left on a spur. A new station, which also still stands, was built due west of the first station, beside the curve between the bridge and the junction.

The N. & S. and the L. & S.B. formed part of a route between East Anglia and the Midlands, and were to become involved in the politics of the big railway companies, particularly the Midland, the Great Northern and the Great Eastern.

In 1866 the Lynn and Sutton Bridge Railway proposed to amalgamate with the Spalding and Bourne Railway, under the title of the Midlands and Eastern Company, to lease the Norwich and Spalding Co.'s line which lay between them, and to construct a line west from Bourne to join the Midland system at Saxby, in Leicestershire. The Midland Railway supported the scheme while the Great Northern opposed it, and the result was a compromise.

The Midlands and Eastern came into existence on 23rd July 1866 but did not build its western extension, instead being granted running powers over part of the Great Northern's lines. The M. & E. was to be worked jointly by the Great Northern and the Midland Companies, and also had running powers over the Peterborough, Wisbech and Sutton Railway. The P.W. & S.R., opened on 1st August 1866, was a single-track line worked by the Midland Railway between the three places in its title.

The village of Sutton Bridge had been born out of the engineering works in the Cross Keys Wash, and the arrival of the railway stimulated other developments. The Sutton Bridge Gas Co. was formed in 1864 and opened its Gas Works, on the north side of Bridge Road (TF 475214) in 1866. They cost £2,400 and the only remains now are a house occupied by the Post Master and a few pieces of walls. A small gasholder remained until the 1970's. Long Sutton had its own Gas Works, erected in 1853, of which nothing remains except one storage gas holder. (TF 436224).

The Reading Room and Library, called the Working Men's Institute, was opened in 1862. It was supported by subscription. It seems that after the construction of the third station in 1897, part of the Second station building was used as the Reading Room, for it is so marked on the O.S. plan.

The Methodists built two new chapels in 1865, for Free Church and Primitive Methodists, in addition to the original Wesleyan Chapel of 1836. In 1868 the British School was commenced, on account of a disagreement at the Boys' National School, which then became the Infant School. However by 1872 both of these, as well as the Girls National School, had been taken over by the Long Sutton School Board, who in 1879 replaced the Boys' and Girls' Schools by new Schools in Bridge Road.

On 1st January 1883 the Midlands and Eastern Railway amalgamated with the Peterborough, Wisbech and Sutton Railway, and three small independent companies east of Kings Lynn, to form the Eastern and Midlands Railway Company. In 1889 the western section of the E. & M. was acquired jointly by the Great Northern and the Midland Companies, and on 1st July 1893 they also acquired the eastern section, both sections being vested in the Midland and Great Northern Joint Committee, which held them until the grouping of 1926. In 1898 the M. & G.N., having reached agreements to increase their traffic in Norfolk, decided to convert their main line from Peterborough to Norfolk from a single to a double track. Not all of this was done, and near Sutton Bridge only the line east of the river was doubled.

In 1926 the railway became the L.M.S. & L.N.E. Joint and its passenger and goods traffic was controlled from offices in Kings Lynn until 1936. It was nationalised in 1948 and on 28th February 1959 was closed for passenger traffic. The passenger service was steam operated until the end and after the closure the Spalding locomotive shed soon closed down.

The section from Sutton Bridge to Spalding was retained as a goods line until 2nd April 1965, being operated by diesels. At the end there was a five day week, one train a day. The normal load was then about 14 or 15 wagons but at times during the Scotch seed traffic period there were as many as 30 or 40 wagons.

The rails have now been lifted, but, as already indicated, about half the buildings at Sutton Bridge Station still survive. The island platform buildings (built of brick and wood with a nice wooden canopy), the signal box, and buildings (perhaps wooden workshops) near the Engine House, have been demolished, but the platforms, First and Second Stations, Goods Shed, and Stables still remain.

SUTTON BRIDGE DOCK

Since the construction of the Cross Keys Bridge and Embankment, and then the arrival of the railways, the main event in the history of Sutton Bridge was the construction, soon followed by the collapse, of the Dock. The instigator of the project was a young man in his twenties, George Frederick Young of Osborne House, Wisbech, who in 1875 secured the Act of Parliament creating the Sutton Bridge Dock Company.

The ports trade had revived after the arrival of the railway and by 1872 a railway siding had been extended north of the station for about a quarter of a mile along the river bank. In 1871 eighty vessels inwards and twenty-five outwards were registered there, and in 1872 there were a steam tug and several mussel and shrimp fishing vessels based at Sutton Bridge. In 1872 the timber trade especially was being developed, and it was expected that a good export trade in grain and coal would be secured.

Timber was a commodity handled from the first days of Sutton Bridge. By 1882 the Steam Saw Mills of Messrs. Sharp and Hiscox had been established beside the river bank, perhaps on the site of George Prest's timber yard, and gave employment to a large number of men. By 1892 they were owned by Smith's Timber Co. Ltd., timber and slate merchants, with steam sawing, planing and moulding mills at Sutton Bridge, and with branches at Leicester and Nottingham. Despite the failure of the Dock, timber continued to be imported, vessels anchoring in the river and discharging onto the bank. In 1892 it was stated that the timber imports reached their highest figure in the previous year. The Saw Mills were burnt down in 1938 and the site is now a timber yard owned by Travis & Arnold.

English Brothers, shipowners and timber importers of Wisbech and Peterborough, were interested in the Dock but do not seem to have established saw mills at Sutton Bridge, and later gave up their interest in the Dock.

The Board of Directors of the Dock Company was chaired by the Marquis of Huntly (1847-1937), premier Marquis of Scotland, who resided at Orton Longueville, Peterborough; the other Directors represented those chiefly interested. The Great Northern Railway Company, which would provide Derbyshire Coal for export, was initially represented by Robert Tennant, M.P., of Leeds. Henry H. English of Westwood House, Peterborough, represented English Brothers, who provided much of the initial capital and would be one of the main users of the port for inward traffic. About 1876 English & Son purchased 60 to 70 acres adjoining the Dock from Guys Hospital for about £10,000. The Governors of Guys Hospital, who owned most of the land concerned and had invested £5,000, were represented by their Sutton Bridge agent, Michael R. Thorold. The fifth Director was G.F. Young, instigator of the project, but he resigned before the work was completed.

The Dock was intended to cater not only for vessels too large to proceed upriver to Wisbech, thus creating new trade, but also to take some of that port's existing trade. Consequently Wisbech maintained powerful opposition to the scheme. The trade that the Dock Co. hoped to get into was that between the north of Europe and "the central manufacturing and midland colliery districts of England". In their prospectus they stated that: "The custom of vessels frequenting the above named ports (Harwich, Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Ipswich, Lynn and Wisbech) from the Continent has been, and still is, to take in ballast and proceed to one of the northern coal ports for a return cargo. By taking their return cargo at Sutton Bridge (where it is proposed in the first instance to erect three coal staiths on the most approved system, each capable of discharging into vessels 1000 tons of coal per day) vessels would save considerably both in time and money."

The Company was authorised to make and maintain a dock and other works, and a short line of railway along the river bank to connect the dock with the goods lines at the Sutton Bridge Railway Station. For most of its length this replaced the siding constructed by the M. & G.N. before 1872. In 1876 the Dock Company obtained another Act which allowed them to build a railway line half-a-mile long, from the west side of the dock to join the Spalding line just west of the junction with the Wisbech line. The new railway junction was to be constructed and maintained by the M. & G.N. at the expense of the Dock Co. One siding of the dock railway terminated at the riverside, and a turn-table gave access for wagons onto the river siding. A short while later the riverside siding was cut off from the goods sheds when the rails across the bridge approach were lifted. (See the plan on p.11).

The Dock was built in quick silt on the west side of the Nene, due north of the Saw Mills, about half-a-mile downstream from the Bridge, as shown on p.11. The engineers were Messrs. Brunlees and McKerrow of Westminster. The rectangular Dock Basin was connected to the Nene by a lock about halfway down its long side.

The original proposal as indicated on the deposited plans for the 1875 Act was for the lock to enter directly into the river at right-angles, but when construction started the Dock and lock were set further back from the river. A triangular area with the lock entrance at its apex, was cut out of the bank to give ships room to swing round. Although there was a swing bridge over the east end of the lock, New Road was constructed to the west of the Dock area for the convenience of farm vehicles which had previously used the highway along the river bank.

The contract for the Docks was given to Mr. Webster, but he relinquished it and the work was undertaken by Messrs. Benton and Woodiwiss of Derby who employed Philip Ayes as their local manager. The first sod of the Dock was turned by the Marquis of Huntly on 1st January 1878.

The 1875 Act had authorised the Dock to have eight acres of water but in 1880, while it was under construction, the Company confidently obtained a further Act to increase it to thirteen acres; this was six acres larger than the Lynn Dock. In the preamble to the 1880 Act the Dock Company stated that they had made considerable progress with the works, including opening for goods traffic the railway authorised by the 1876 Act, and had altogether spent £93,772. The 1880 Act authorised the G.N.R. (which had already subscribed £20,000 under the 1875 Act) to lend on mortgage up to a further £35,000, and also authorised it and the Dock Company to enter into working traffic arrangements.

As work on the Dock proceeded it stimulated improvements to shops and the construction of rows of cottages in Long Sutton and new streets in Sutton Bridge. Custom House Street was extended beyond Lime Street, and a new police station, with accommodation for a sergeant and six constables, was built in Wharf Street, opposite the end of Custom House Street. The police station is now divided into two private houses.

In April 1881 when the work was approaching completion, there were reported to be some fifty horses and carts engaged, with barges and other craft, and over 100 men, as well as a steam dredger taking up the bottom below the water mark. Buoys for the purpose of mooring ships had been placed in position. Steam pile drivers and cranes were busy at work completing the staging.



PICTURES ABOVE

Top: Stephenson's Bridge (1850-1897). Beyond it can be seen, from left to right, 1850 toll-house, Hotel with extension, Granary with look-out behind it, and roof of warehouse.

Bottom: Dock Basin, with Coal Hoist, Wooden Warehouse, and wooden wharves on each side of lock.

The Dock was 1,415 ft. long and 400 ft. wide, the depth at ordinary spring tides being 25 ft. and at neap tides 18 ft. The walls were of unfaced concrete, sloping inwards, as can still be seen. The quays were 33 ft. above the floor of the basin, which was quick silt. The total length of the quays was 3,630 ft., including on the east side timber jetties 750 ft. long, on each side of the point where the lock entered the basin (see p.20). Part of the timber jetty south of the lock still survives. Behind it was a three-storey warehouse for grain. Built of timber, this was 225 ft. by 50 ft., and had a railway siding on each side of it. On the west side of the Dock was a coal jetty, built of concrete faced with blue brick and fitted with Sir William Armstrong's hydraulic machinery, constructed to lift trucks 20 ft. into the air and tip coal into vessels. It is illustrated on the cover and p.20. The north end of the Dock had a flat slope six feet below the quay level, of an inclination of 1 in 10, for the purpose of unloading timber.

The lock, 200 ft. long between the gates and 50 ft. wide, had been the most expensive part of the work. The foundations were laid between rows of pitch-pine timber 20 ft. in length and 12 inches square, driven eight feet below the foundation. Nearly 40,000 cubic feet of timber was used for this purpose, three-quarters of which was left in. Cross rows were driven in at intervals; the earth was removed from within and replaced by concrete of the same proportions as the Dock sides. The whole of the work was in concrete, faced by blue bricks, and still survives. The gate posts were of greenheart from Demerara, a very hard wood, and durable in water. They were 34 ft. in length and 2 ft. square. The ribs or cross bars and plankings were of pitch pine of large dimensions. Each gate weighed 35 tons, but there are now no visible remains of them. At first they were worked by manual labour, but were intended to be opened and closed by hydraulic power. The Engine House for the hydraulic plant was situated on the south side of the lock. Across the east end of the lock was a swing bridge, which cost £2,000 and is still in position, although it cannot move.

It was said that 1½ million red and blue bricks were used, set in cement, the blue brick making a very substantial facing. A slow setting Portland cement was used instead of lime, as for water work it was much more durable.

The river walls or pier heads were carried for a considerable distance outside the lock, forming the sides to the entrance, and these also still survive. Beyond them for some 600 ft. up and down the river substantial timber staging was erected with planking upon the top to form a very useful quay for many purposes. The northern of these has gone but the southern is still maintained for the convenience of the pilots boats. Bollards or mooring posts were placed at intervals on the north river wall for the convenience of vessels passing in and out of the lock. A 3-ton capstan was placed for winding ships into the lock, and a similar one at the opposite end for winding them into the Dock, and vice versa.

On the river bank at the extreme south-east corner of the property a two-storey brick office building was erected, known as the Dock Chambers. It accommodated the Dockmaster and the Secretary of the Dock Company, and also served English Brothers and "Pendennis Co. ship brokers and steam tug owners."

The first ship entered the Dock on Saturday 14th May 1881 in the presence of several hundred visitors from Long Sutton, Wisbech, Lynn and other places. It was the 'Garland', chief ship of English Brothers, which brought a cargo of 1,150 tons of pitch pine from Norway. As the lock entrance had not been completed, with almost five feet of mud still to remove, 300 to 400 tons of cargo was removed from the gaily-decked 'Garland' to enable her to enter the Dock, towed by Messrs. English's 'Pendennis' and accompanied by the little steam tug 'Isle of Ely'.

As she sailed through the open lock the Eastfield (Wisbech) Drum and Fife Band played 'Rule Britannia' and when she came to a stop the vicar of Sutton Bridge made a few remarks and offered prayers. She then proceeded to unload before taking on a return cargo of Derbyshire coal which the G.N.R. had brought to the Dockside. The cover picture shows the 'Garland' being loaded with coal.

In the following weeks several vessels came through the Dock, one bringing maize for Mr. Skelton, and most leaving with cargoes of coal. The official opening with a dinner and other celebrations, including aquatic and field sports, fireworks, tea for 1,200, a Flower Show and the Band of the Grenadier Guards, was planned for 29th June 1881 but never took place.

The difficulty was that the Dock was built in quick silt, with no firm soil between it and the river. The weakest point was apparently through the soil on each side of the lock and from the second day of working it was clear that there was a leak.

About 2.00 p.m. on Sunday 9th June 1881 the soil on both sides of the lock started to subside, although the brick and concrete structure remained firm. Two traction engines on the north side of the lock sank about ten feet into the ground and in about half-an-hour there was an opening some 12 ft. deep, about 20 or 30 ft. wide, and of some considerable length. Soon a second fissure appeared on the south side of the lock, adjoining the basin. By Monday afternoon a large bank of silt was deposited at the lock entrance. About 1,500 bags of silt, sand and gravel and tons of clay and rocks, urgently brought by special trains from various parts of the country, were thrown into the cavities but they had little effect in checking the scour.

The water from the basin poured out under the lock and on both sides, and the silt under the basin was dissolved away. On Tuesday about 500 ft. of the concrete facing on the west side of the dock was dislodged, being completely undermined, and on Wednesday 12th June about three-quarters of that side, from the north-western corner to the coal-drop, cracked and subsided to a considerable extent. In an attempt to prevent it slipping right into the dock train-loads of limestone clunch were thrown down the side, forming a protective heap at the base of the slope.

To stop the scour the lock gates were left open after Tuesday. Ships bound for Sutton Bridge were diverted to Lynn and other ports, and the following Monday the three vessels in the basin were removed into the river without difficulty.

It was confidently believed that when a proper examination had been made the Dock could be repaired but nearly all hands were paid off until the engineers should devise a scheme to the approval of the Directors.

In 1882 the Dock Company obtained an Act authorising them to raise up to £160,000 to repair the Dock. In the preamble to this Act it was stated that by means of ordinary and preference shares and loans they had raised £155,738 under the previous Acts, including £55,000 from the G.N.R., and had spent £155,869.

They failed to raise the money for the repairs and so obtained a further Act in 1884, by which time they had raised £163,941 under the earlier Acts and spent £162,957. The 1884 Act provided that capital raised under the 1882 Act was to have priority over capital raised under the previous Acts. More importantly, it provided that the capital could not be raised until the G.N.R. had approved plans, sections, working drawings, specifications and estimates for

the restoration and reconstruction. Even if this approval was given, the Dock Company could only carry out the works approved by the G.N.R., and payments could only be made on the written order of a G.N.R. Director.

The G.N.R. were told in August 1887 that no satisfactory plan had yet been devised for resuscitating the undertaking. The period for the completion of the Dock, which had been extended by each Act, expired on 31st December 1899. Grinling in his "History of the G.N.R." stated that altogether a total of about £180,000 was spent on the Dock.

By 1882 Long Sutton had become a potato growing district and the wooden warehouse on the Dock was at one time used by Dennis's of Kirton to store empty barrels for the early potato harvest. It is said that when demolished in 1926 the wooden warehouse was reconstructed as racing stables at Kirton.

The tall chimney of the hydraulic plant was demolished in 1913, and between 1913 and 1918 there was a Sulphuric Acid Plant between the Dock Chambers and the Lock.

The Dock basin filled with earth, which held up the surviving walls, and by 1937 the site was leased by the Sutton Bridge Golf Club, which still occupies it. The warehouse, hydraulic engine house and the coal hoist have gone, but the triangle in the bank, the walls of the lock and the swing bridge over it still remain. Much of the basin walls still stand, including the pier on which stood the coal hoist.

The Dock Company is still in legal existence and is owned by Travis & Arnold, who store timber on part of the site and lease most to the Golf Club. The top of the Dock Chambers, a two-storey building, was badly damaged in the fire which destroyed the Saw Mills behind it, but the ground floor was repaired and is now the local office of Travis and Arnold.

No ships now stop here, only a few fishing boats and the pilot boats, but periodically there are calls for the revival of the port facilities.

OTHER INDUSTRIES

Directories contain occasional references to other industries in Long Sutton and Sutton Bridge. As in other towns and villages, there were coach-builders, machinists, millwrights, and a "basket, riddle and scuttle maker", a shipwright and a brick and tile maker. In 1871 there was an attempt, apparently unsuccessful, to establish a beet sugar factory in Long Sutton. In 1882 there was a factory at Sutton Bridge for the manufacture of a cattle food known as "malt condiment". Woad was grown here till after 1872, and later there were a few orchards. In modern times Lockwoods Foods have established a large cannery in Little Sutton (at TF 450222) on the south side of Bridge Road.

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