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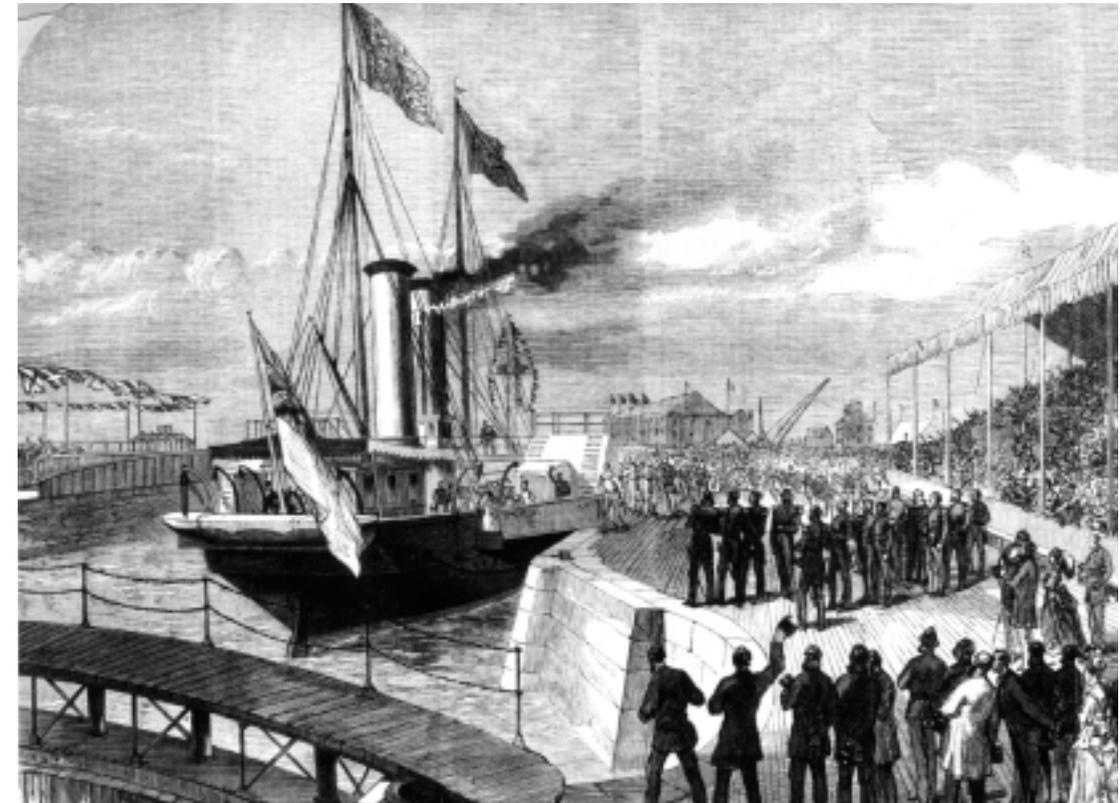
## FROM PARTNERSHIP TO LIMITED COMPANY 1869-1908

John Good's modest ship-owning interests obviously stimulated his sons to follow his example, except on a more ambitious scale in keeping with the emergence of the larger, faster steam ships. In the autumn of 1870 John Good noted that Francis and James (later Sir James) Reckitt, from the Quaker family which had created one of Hull's most important businesses, had approached Joseph and Thomas and asked whether they would consider a partnership as steam ship owners. The brothers agreed and, after an abortive attempt to acquire a new steamer built in Sunderland, Joseph, with an engineer, travelled to Holland and bought the 733 ton, 130 bhp steamer *Carolina*, for £16,000. Today this would be worth more than a million pounds – the Reckitts must have been the principal backers for the Goods certainly did not have such resources. The Reckitts were obviously more interested in the trading expertise Joseph and Thomas possessed.

The SS *Carolina* was one of the two vessels operated by the short-lived Good Bros shipping line in the early 1870s.



The new business took the name Good Brothers & Co, ostensibly because Good & Reckitt hardly seemed appropriate for a shipping firm, but perhaps the Reckitts wished to mask their own involvement. The *Carolina* was joined in January 1871 by the even larger and more expensive *Mont Cenis*, 930 tons, 140 bhp and costing £30,000 to equip for the sea. The *Carolina* carried mails to the Cape under Captain MacGarr, bringing back cargoes such as cotton seed from Alexandria in Egypt, while the *Mont Cenis* plied at first between the UK and India. The life of both vessels was short. On 20 November 1872 the *Carolina* foundered in the North Atlantic on her way back from Baltimore with a cargo of wheat. Her crew were rescued by a Norwegian barque and landed in New York. A month later, the *Mont Cenis*, sailing back from New York under Captain Hybert, was badly damaged in heavy seas, which washed away the boats and tore off the after-deck



An illustration of the opening of Hull's Albert Dock by the Prince & Princess of Wales in 1869. (Courtesy of Hull Maritime Museum.)

house, taking the captain with it. Most of the provisions were lost and rationing had to be imposed since the ship was still 1,500 miles from Lisbon. Navigation was very difficult since the chronometers had been put out of action and other instruments damaged. With the weather improving, she limped instead towards Plymouth. There temporary repairs were made, she went on to discharge her cargo in Antwerp and then returned to Hull where she was sold, unrepaid, for little less than she had been bought.

The partnership came to an end and this, recorded John Good, for whom the venture was far too speculative and risky, was 'when my sons Joseph and Thomas ceased to be steam ship owners, very much to my satisfaction'. The Good brothers made no further attempt to become shipowners. They appear to have come out of the episode unscathed financially – it was the next generation which would burn their fingers in a

speculative shipping venture. But there was another investment outside the main business for John Good also noted that in 1873 his sons had admitted as a partner one John Russel, and appear to have taken a stake in his timber business. This can only have been brief for Russel does not appear again.

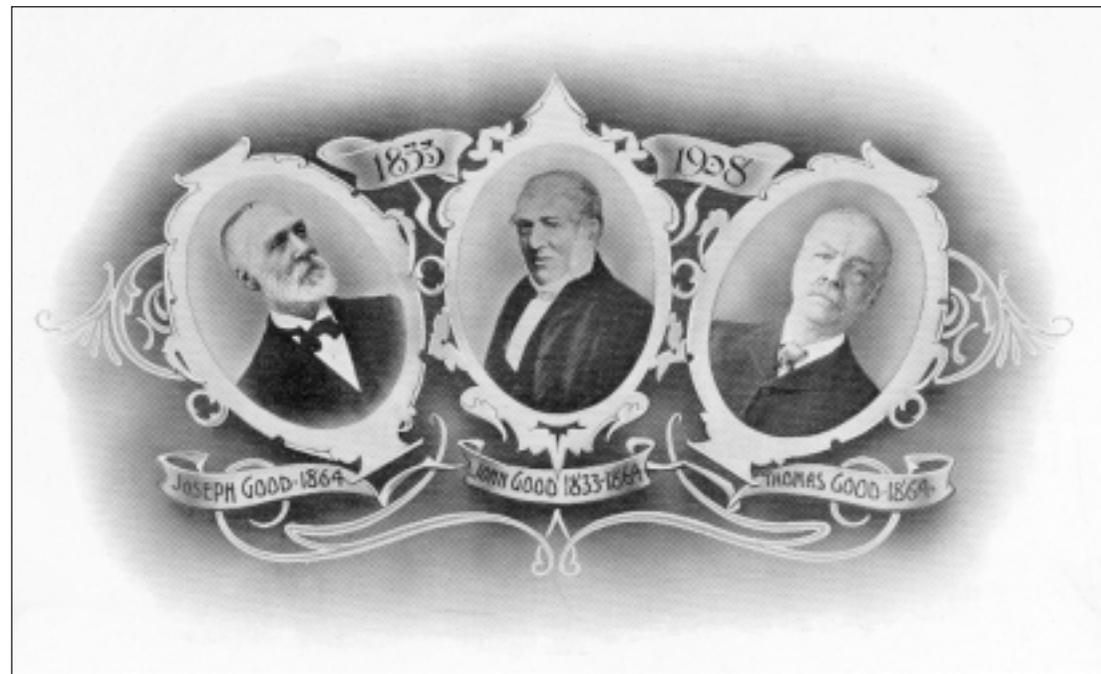
In the same year it was Thomas's turn to travel to Scandinavia, taking back with him Jonathan Essels who, like Otto Malm, had spent a year with the Goods 'for instruction' in their office. Benjamin Harrison, the firm's foreman, who had joined the business when John Good opened his first shop in 1833, also travelled frequently overseas for the business, and during the summer of 1873 visited Sweden and Norway.

Three years later, in December 1876, John Good died in Hull at the age of 75, after a long and active life at sea and on land. He made sure his family were well-provided for – with the

The Junction Dock, completed in 1829, was renamed Prince's Dock after a royal visit in 1854. This photograph taken in 1880 conveys the growing prosperity of the port. (Courtesy of Hull Maritime Museum.)



The founder and his sons - John Good (centre) with Joseph (left) and Thomas.



exception of John, his eldest son. His will was changed to reflect the money father had given son throughout his lifetime. John junior was left with a small bequest of £100, a slight which led him to take his father's executors to court, all to no avail.

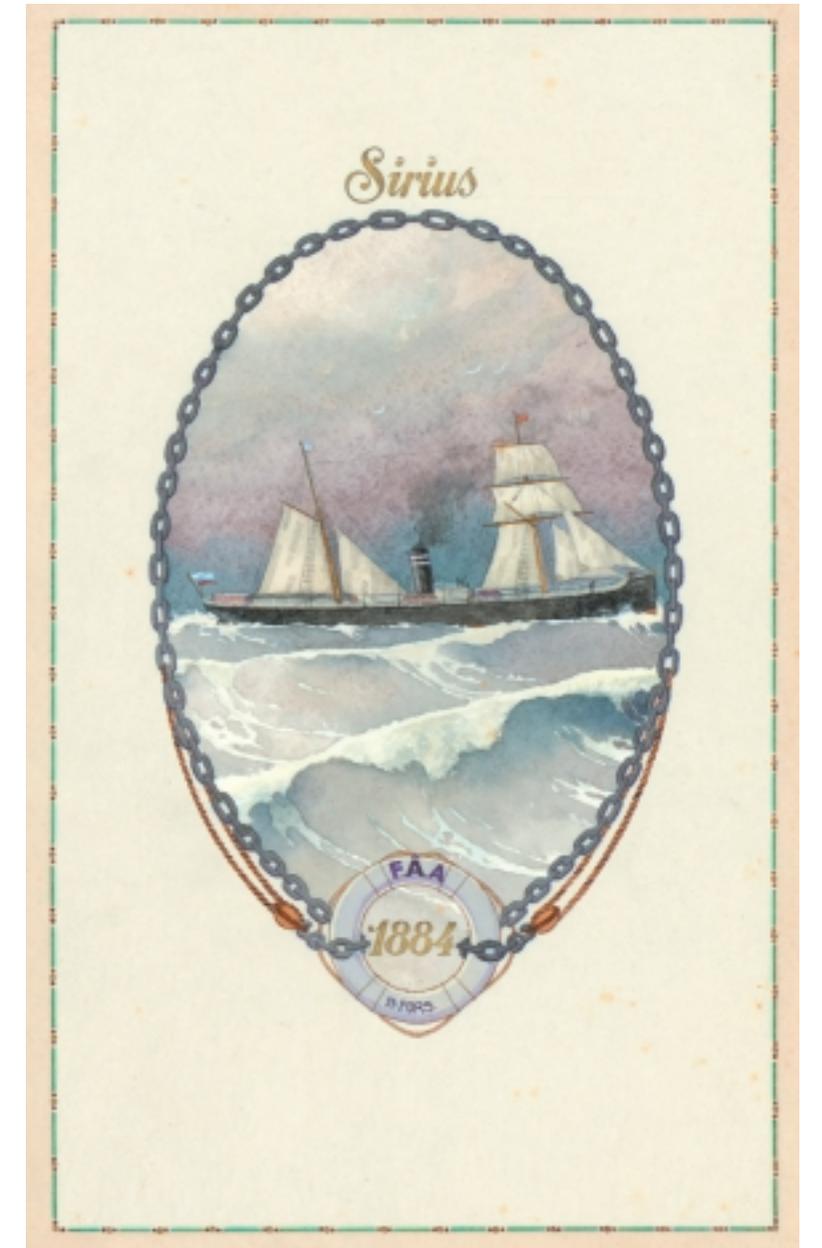
The links John Good senior had fostered with Finland were becoming even stronger. In 1860 regular sailings between Finland and Hull had begun when the auxiliary steamer *Express*, owned by G A Petrolius of Abo, under Captain Broberg, ran between Abo and Hull. She was followed by two larger sailing vessels with auxiliary engines, running from Abo and Helsingfors. In 1868 Bailey & Leetham from Hull operated several steamers from Hull to Russia via Finnish ports and in 1875 Massey & Sawyer also ran a steamship service from Hull to Finland. In the previous year, the Wasa North Sea Steamship Company began a regular service with the screw steamer *Fennia*, from the northern Finnish ports of Wasa and Uleaborg, adding two larger steamers, the *Patria* and the *Clio*, in 1882.

In 1883 the Finnish Steamship Company, known as Finska, was founded by Captain Lars Krogius. He saw an opportunity to revive Finnish maritime fortunes based on the export of Finnish butter and win back trade from the British. The rationalisation of the Finnish dairy industry had created a surplus of butter available for export, which was now possible thanks to the advent of refrigeration. Finnish butter was always labelled as Danish for otherwise it would be described as Russian, which was the last thing the patriotic Finns wanted. Finska's first vessels were the *Sirius* and *Orion*, the *Sirius* making its first voyage from Hull to Abo and Helsingfors on 31 May 1884. Joseph Good would later write to Lars Krogius, recalling 'the first arrival of the *Sirius* at the Queens Dock and my early visit that morning, and our pleasant reception by Captain Forsell'.

Wasa and Finska overwhelmed their English rivals. Firstly, they coordinated their services. Vessels sailed every nine days from Finland for Hull, calling at Copenhagen, bringing timber, paper, pulp and butter. For a perishable item like butter, regular services were particularly

important. Almost all the butter exported from Finland came through Hull for distribution in northern industrial towns. The Finnish lines consolidated their position in 1888 when, with a state loan, the *Capella*, specially strengthened to sail through the ice fields, was built. For the first

John Good & Sons first became agents for Finska when *Sirius* started the line's regular service between Finland and Hull in 1884.



Tens of thousands of Finns left their native country for a better life across the Atlantic in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Their first port of call was often Hull. This shows emigrants crowded together on board Finska's *Urania* in 1893.



time a regular service could be operated ten months in every year, whatever the weather, from Hanko to Hull. Another step forward came in 1891, with the introduction of the faster *Urania* and *Astria*, also built with state subsidies, when a passenger service began between Hull, Helsingfors and Hango.

English competitors may have been forced out of business but John Good & Sons, as the business was now known, did well out of it, becoming agents for Wasa in 1882 and for Finska in 1883. The firm's efficient agency services for both lines contributed towards their success over the competition. Far distant owners had to place their trust in their agents as communications over long distances were not easy. Standing instructions were often given by owners to agents. A typical instance was the note from Finska issued in March 1895 which read, 'We hereby instruct and authorise our agents at Hull, Messrs John Good & Sons, to pay to the masters of the steamers of this

company as well as to our superintending engineer such amounts of money as they may from time to time require, it being understood that Messrs John Good & Sons shall be in no way responsible for the right use of such money'. The distance between agent and owner therefore made the closest relationship not that with the owner but with his captains. The agent, as the representative of the owner, was the first visitor the captain would have when he arrived in port, offering him assistance with any problems or requests he may have had.

Finska's superior services, and its ability to ship passengers swiftly across the North Sea, ironically saw it becoming the main carrier for hundreds of thousands of Finns tempted to leave their home country by the prospects of a better life at the far side of the world. Between 1891 and 1924 more than 427,000 Finns registered as emigrants, sailed on vessels owned or operated by Finska and passed through Hull. The port even

created a new dock, the Riverside Quay, in 1907 to handle more passengers, although it was primarily intended for the rapid turnaround of fresh fruit and vegetables. More than 319,000 emigrants, disenchanted with Finnish subservience to Russia, never returned to their home country. Some settled in Hull and one later described the phenomenon of the Finnish emigrants, who 'arrived in hundreds by many ships, travelling in steerage, and sometimes the families increased during the voyage. From the port of Hull they were taken to the station by horse-drawn carts to travel to the west coast ports.' Joseph Good, wrote his son, Ambrose, 'acted as intermediary between [Finska] and the British Lines (Cunard, White Star, etc) on the commencement of the route for emigrants for the US and Canada via Hull'. Ambrose himself would sit on the local advisory committee in Hull after the Aliens Act, the first

piece of legislation attempting to regulate immigration, was passed in 1905.

The links between the firm and Finland were not just confined to Hull or to Wasa and Finska. Other Finnish owners were operating from Newcastle and Middlesbrough, shipping coal back to Scandinavia where it could be bought as cheaply as in the south-east of England. They asked John Good & Sons to act as agents and the firm in turn developed a coal exporting business. The branch in Newcastle was based in Lombard Street. For a time this was transferred to a new partnership, in which the two cousins, Arthur and Ambrose Good, were partners with Norman Redmayne, but this lasted scarcely a year before John Good & Sons took over once more.

While Newcastle and Middlesbrough were both much closer to the coalfields than Hull, there were other reasons why some owners were



The busy river Hull in 1880, with keels, barges and lighters crowding alongside the wharves and warehouses. (Courtesy of Hull Maritime Museum.)



Hull's Alexandra Docks (from an illustration by Charles Dixon in 1913).

choosing to leave Hull. The port had been expanding but the Albert Dock, opened in 1869, and the William Wright Dock, opened in 1880, were both unsatisfactory. There was a feeling that the Dock Company, refusing to raise the capital for major improvements, was serving the port poorly. The same criticism was being levelled at the North Eastern Railway (NER). In response, the Hull & Barnsley Railway Company was formed and developed the much superior Alexandra Dock, opened in 1885. At last Hull had a dock capable of handling larger vessels, and, with a direct link to the coalfields of the West Riding, the new dock stimulated a huge rise in coal exports from the port. Despite this, the port was effectively controlled by NER after it had taken over the Dock Company in 1893.

While the regular lines running between Finland and Hull generally used the Victoria

Dock, the Railway Dock served other Baltic ports, such as Bergen, Copenhagen, Danzig, Stettin and Christiania. Lying alongside the Victoria Dock was the Foreign Cattle Wharf, complete with slaughter houses and chill rooms, while goods were quickly shipped out from the nearby Drypool station, run by NER. The Alexandra Dock became the focus for Hull's long sea trades, bringing in the grain and oil seeds which stimulated so much of the port's industry. Seed crushing mills rose up along the river Hull, served by barges, while Rank's mills turned wheat into flour. Timber went to local saw mills, iron was sent to Sheffield and food was distributed to Hull's hinterland, covering, it was said, one-third of the nation's population. Certainly, bills of exchange surviving from the 1880s show that John Good & Sons was dealing with agents and finance houses as far afield as the USA, such as Gardeicke & Co, ship brokers and



The Albert and William Wright Docks in Hull (from an illustration by Charles Dixon in 1913).

commission agents from Philadelphia, and the finance house of Lazard Frères in New York.

Firms like John Good & Sons, handling cargo for their principals as agents, dealing in the export of coal on their own account, mainly for the Finnish and Italian state railways, were also dependent on the vast body of dock labour. Casually employed, poorly paid and badly treated, these men were beginning to find their own voice nationally. After lasting for seven weeks, the 1893 dock strike in Hull left the dockers no better off and opened their eyes to the influence of organised labour. The dockers' union, formed in the aftermath of the 1889 London dock strike, found no shortage of recruits in ports up and down the country. Influence began to shift over time in favour of the union yet a movement which aimed to bring improved conditions of employment to the port labour force ultimately

played a major role in the port's later decline.

In 1894, the year after the Hull dock strike, Ambrose Good joined the firm. He followed his cousins Arthur and William Minnitt and his elder brother Harry. In 1898 Ambrose was sent to spend a year in the Finska office in Helsingfors to learn Swedish, commonly used in commerce. He had already been to Finland as a schoolboy and, like his father and grandfather, developed a lifelong affection for the country and its people. This had two consequences.

Firstly, Ambrose became convinced there was a future for tourism in Finland. On his return from Helsingfors to Hull, he started a passenger department and organised what he believed to be the first travel guide to Finland written in English, which was printed for Finska in 1899. Two new steamers, the *Arcturus* and the *Polaris*, had been introduced. Just over 2,000 tons each, they

boasted superior passenger accommodation, so Ambrose promoted Finland by advertising in the press and publishing a ‘Tourist Programme’, or holiday brochure, and distributing it to leading ‘Tourist Agencies’, as they were known. The first programme appeared in 1901 and was repeated annually. In 1906, under the slogan, ‘Off The Beaten Track’, the tours ranged in price from £3 5s (£240 today) second-class for the seven-and-a-half day tour to Copenhagen to £12 12s (£900 today) first-class for the 19 day tour which covered Copenhagen, Malmo, Stockholm, Hanko, Helsingfors and St Petersburg. In 1908, Finska took delivery of another new steamer, the *Titania*, built by Gourlay Brothers & Co in Dundee, for the carriage of mail, tourists, emigrants and butter. The tourists, 150 of them travelling first and second class, enjoyed incomparably superior conditions to the 550 emigrants confined to

The *Arcturus* was one of the superior steamers introduced by Finska on the Hull route in the 1890s and is seen here in the Victoria Dock.

steerage. On the day the *Titania* arrived in Hull for the first time, Joseph Good presiding over lunch for various notable guests in the ship’s dining room, a local paper remarked that ‘there is not a more handsome steamer sailing out of Hull. The *Polaris* and the *Arcturus* have made a reputation which any fleet might envy, but the latest star in the Finland firmament – the *Titania* – outshines them both in size, speed and luxurious quarters for travellers to “the Land of a Thousand Lakes”’. Ambrose Good himself travelled to Finland every year and in 1912 became a founder member of the Finnish-Anglo Society.

The second consequence was that the firm, through Joseph and Ambrose, became the accepted place for Finns to go to when they needed help while they were in Hull. Ambrose Good’s advice was much appreciated, especially by the Finnish sailors who would spend weeks at a



time in port. Sometimes they were paid off and were left to pass from ship to ship in search of work. Yet at other times captains were so desperate for crew that they would employ touts to ply men with so much drink that they had been corralled on board vessels before they

knew what was happening. Ambrose found himself acting for them as an unofficial vice-consul, reporting back to the Russian consul. The Good family had strengthened further their links with Finland begun by the founder of the business.