

ART. XII – *James and George Brooker: West Cumberland shipcarvers of the mid-19th century*

BY D. IAN SMITH

SHIPCARVING receives a passing mention in many nautical publications but in this country only a handful of books have been produced on the subject of ships' figureheads, the most well-known and dramatic product of the shipcarver, and only one on the carvers themselves. In the more general works the lack of information on shipcarvers is noticeable and this dearth is acknowledged by the authors of these works. Similarly, those who have written in more detail about shipcarvers mention the scarcity of source material.

A number of researchers have touched on James Brooker and, to a lesser extent, George Brooker,¹ and their activities in the shipbuilding ports of Harrington, Maryport, Whitehaven and Workington, and beyond Cumberland. This article will bring together shipcarving and genealogical sources and add to them much new material. For clarity, the biographical details are separated from the carving information and links made where necessary. The wider context is examined in terms of how typical the two brothers are of shipcarvers of the time and how trends in shipbuilding affected their careers.

Family Background

William Brooker moved from Bristol to central Lancashire towards the close of the 18th century. In 1801 he married, at Leyland, a local girl Esther Gorton, and was at this time employed as a carpenter. Over the course of the following decade they moved south, a daughter being christened in Eccleston in 1803 and a son born in Shevington four years later, to arrive in the expanding city of Liverpool by 1813 at the latest.

In Liverpool the family grew and all the sons seem to have gone into woodworking trades, with James, John and George all becoming shipcarvers. William Brooker probably found work as a shipwright quite soon after settling in Liverpool and is listed in the 1841 census as having this occupation. Brewington² notes that in North America it was common for shipcarvers to be the sons of shipwrights. Presumably the shipwright would know the right people to be able to secure an apprenticeship and would view shipcarving as potentially a more lucrative career than their own.

James Brooker (Plate 1)

James was born in Liverpool in 1815 and was apprenticed to local shipcarver Archibald Robertson in 1828.³ At some date before 1838 he moved to Maryport, and is mentioned in the *Cumberland Pacquet* in that year in the company of members of some of the shipbuilding families there.⁴ Also in that year, in the same newspaper,

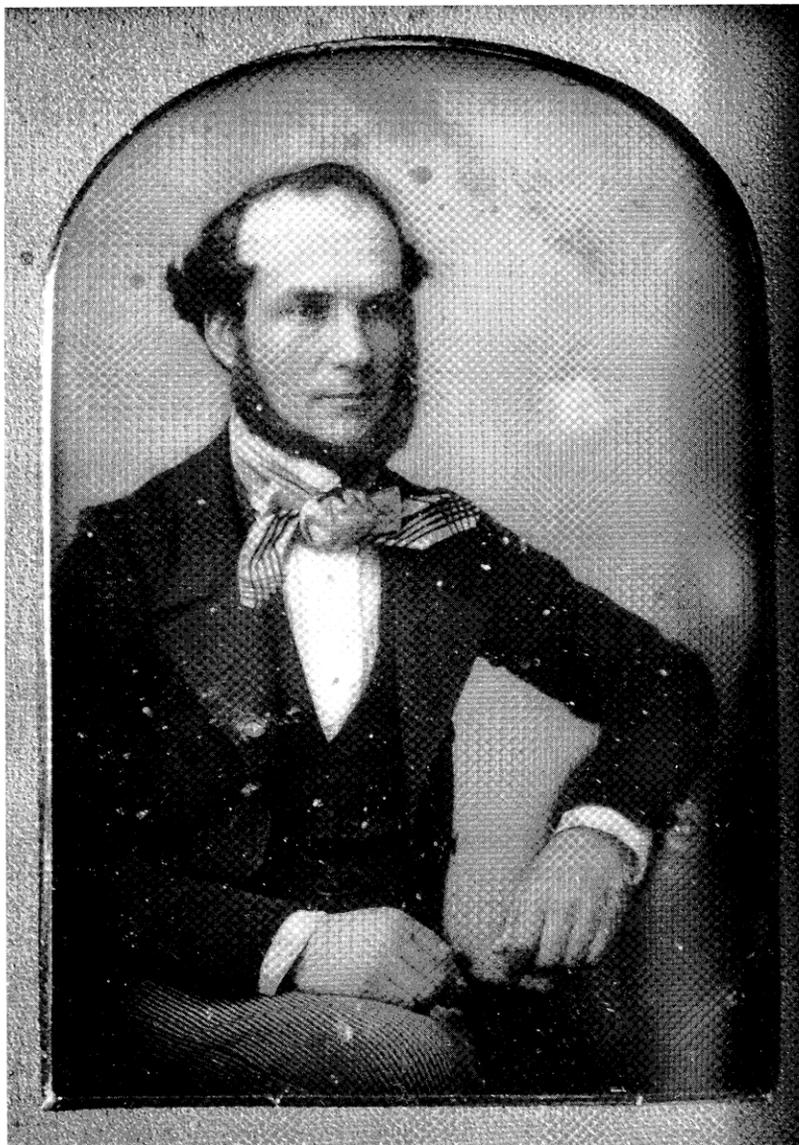


PLATE 1. James Brooker (date unknown) (Reproduced by courtesy of Mr I. M. and Mr W. D. Brooker).

the first details of James' shipcarving output are given.⁵ Why James should move to Cumberland is unclear. He may have tried unsuccessfully to establish himself in Liverpool once he had served his time, or he could have felt that prospects were better elsewhere (see Shipcarving section). Due to the strong ties between the Cumberland ports and Liverpool, James no doubt knew what was happening in Cumberland and would be aware of opportunities to advance his career.

In 1839 James married, at St Bees, Jane Hudson of Whitehaven,⁶ and in the census of 1841 they were living in King Street, near the harbour, but in 1842 the family moved uptown to a new house in Eaglesfield Street.⁷ He is described in the

1847 directory⁸ as a Ship and Ornamental Carver, and by 1850 there were six children to support with his carving work. Over the door of Brooker's house in Eaglesfield Street is a carving in stone executed by James (Plate 2 and see also Miscellaneous carving section), so clearly he could carve in stone as well as wood. Having quite a large family it must have made sound financial sense to try to broaden his income away from purely shipcarving. The *Cumberland Pacquet*⁹ reported his contribution to a Maryport Protestant meeting during 1850: James was in all probability a popular resident of the town at the time. In the report he relates that he was brought up in the Church of England but, although concerned about the influence of the Pope on the English church, he is not a churchman. In this respect, James was quite different from his brother, George.

Towards the end of 1853, when James was thirty-eight, the Brooker family were preparing to leave Maryport and their household furniture was listed in the local newspaper prior to auction.¹⁰ Included in the list are a piano, oil paintings, tapestry, chandeliers and a "finger organ" (accordion or harmonium?) which had cost £50; so James would seem to have been making a good living, many of the wooden items were made on the premises with James doing most of the carving. The mahogany and teak used in the furniture was no doubt purchased cheaply from the local timber merchants who he must have known well. What the motivations were behind this move are difficult to determine and this question will be discussed in the section on shipcarving.



PLATE 2. Lion carved by James Brooker in 1842 at Eaglesfield Street, Maryport. This carving was based on one at Lake Lucerne. There are also said to have been carved lions at the rear of the house.

After leaving Cumberland the Brookers moved to Glasgow where James advertised in the city directory of 1854-5.¹¹ However, he did not remain on the Clyde for long and first appears in the *Sunderland Register of Electors* in 1856-7. Thomas suggests that Clyde shipbuilders were well catered for at this time,¹² and James was probably unable to get established in this competitive area. Whether he considered returning to Maryport we will never know but as he already had customers on Wearside (see Shipcarving section), it seems sensible that James should next move to Sunderland.

From 1857 to 1860 he appears in local directories, and sculptor is added to his job title.¹³ However, James' fortunes were to suffer an unexpected turn and the *Maryport Advertiser* of April 1860 carries news of his death.¹⁴ It would appear that James had been struggling financially as he had to enter Sunderland Workhouse when taken ill. From the workhouse he was transferred to the County asylum where he died after about two weeks. The cause of James' death is unclear, the newspapers mention broken ribs suffered in the workhouse and an inquiry¹⁵ into alleged ill-treatment there. A post-mortem, however, concluded that the broken ribs were old injuries and suggested that he had some type of general infection.¹⁶ Also mentioned in the asylum notes is the fact that James had been ill two years previously and, if he had been ill for some time, this would make his financial situation perhaps easier to understand, particularly as he had at least five dependants. At the time of his death James Brooker was aged just forty-four.

John Brooker

Christened in 1819, John is listed in the census of both 1841 and 1851 as a shipcarver in Liverpool and has an entry in *Gore's Directory of Liverpool* in 1851 and 1853. He clearly chose, unlike elder brother James, to try to establish himself in his home city. On his death in 1862, John was resident in Ashton near Warrington, with his occupation having remained unchanged.¹⁷

George Brooker

George was born in Liverpool in 1824 and followed his brothers James and John into the shipcarving profession. Unlike James, and probably also John, he did not receive his training in Liverpool but is listed in the 1841 census as the apprentice of James Brooker in Maryport. This would have been the cheapest and easiest way for him to become a shipcarver.

Nothing is heard of George until the next census. At this time he is described as a "Ship carver (Journeyman)" to James, "Master Ship carver employing one man". George is presumably this man, and it makes one wonder how the shipcarving work was split between them (and whether he had a hand in the making of James' furniture). Also in the 1851 census for Maryport is Ann Smith, soon to be married to George Brooker. She had her own business as a Straw Bonnet Maker, employing an assistant and two apprentices.

Later in 1851 George, aged twenty-seven, married Ann,¹⁸ daughter of Carlisle carver and gilder Hugh Smith. They had probably met in the late 1830s when Hugh

Smith was resident in Maryport and the suggestion that Hugh was then working for local shipbuilders is quite realistic.¹⁹ Around the turn of 1853-4 it would seem that George and Ann left Cumberland, as the *Maryport Advertiser* of October 1853 carries an advertisement announcing that the stock and business premises of Mrs Brooker are now under new ownership. This move comes just at the point when James Brooker and his family also moved away.

George and his wife probably went directly to Liverpool, and a son and a daughter were christened there in 1855 and 1858 respectively. George also appears in *Gore's Directory* in 1859 as a shipcarver. He occupied a house in the city which he bequeathed in his will more than fifty years later (this house is mentioned in John Brooker's will of 1858 and came to George either via his parents or an elder sister, Margaret Eliza).

The family did not remain long on the Mersey and towards the end of 1859 their infant daughter was buried at the parish church in Workington. In the local directory of 1861²⁰ George has the relatively broad job title of Ship and ornamental carver and gilder. Hugh Smith was living with the family, in Wilson Street, in the 1861 census, and Ann was still working as a milliner. By the spring of 1862, however, both Hugh Smith and the Brookers' son had died, leaving just George and Ann.

From Workington the pair seem to have moved across to Sunderland, with George Brooker appearing in local directories of 1865 and 1866-7 as a carver.²¹ George may have been by himself as Mrs Brooker still paid the pew rent at St John's church, Workington, in 1866.²² If Ann did indeed remain in Workington during this period it was probably for business reasons. Two years later both the Brookers were in Workington in Christian Street and George is again described as a carver and not specifically as a shipcarver.²³ This change of job title is probably an attempt by George to broaden his range of employment and thereby increase his income.

The 1871 census lists George and Ann in Pow Street, Workington's main shopping street at the time, and it is likely that Ann had a milliner's shop at this address. George is listed still as a shipcarver. Unusually, there is a description of George Brooker at around this time, from local man Wallace Ritson.²⁴ Ritson says, "He carved figure-heads for windjammers. He was said to be so clever he could have knocked an Aphrodite out with a hatchet". Also in the census of 1871, in between Wilson Street and Curwen Street, is a yard known as Brooker's Yard, containing three dwellings. No doubt this is where George did his carving and gilding when living at Wilson Street, and he may have used it later, when resident in Christian Street and Pow Street. Brooker's Yard was recommended for clearance in 1914.²⁵

George's shipcarving career seems to have been over before he was fifty, as the 1873 directory describes him as a milliner!²⁶ This must be a reference to his wife who probably still had her own business. It is not known in what year George became a photographer, but this was his profession when Ann died in 1877.²⁷ At this date he had moved again and was living at the large Shannon House, High Street, away from the town centre.

The *Cumberland Pacquet* in the following year carries a report on the renewal of St. John's church in the town.²⁸ Included on the committee overseeing the work is George Brooker and, to judge from his fellow committee members, he must have been a man of some substance in Workington at the time. L. C. Jarman²⁹ relates that George held shares in at least three vessels at various times. In 1868 he purchased



PLATE 3. Eagle at St John's church, Keswick, carved by George Brooker. The lectern is inscribed "Carved and presented to the Rev. J. N. Hoare by George Brooker Keswick 1887".

twenty-eight of the sixty-four shares in the ship, *Architect*. At the time the ship was skippered by his brother-in-law William Smith, with another brother-in-law, John, being the mate. On a voyage in 1869, with a different captain, the vessel was lost, so George would, in all likelihood, not have done too well from this investment. In 1880 the vessel *Hippolyte*, in which he held all the shares, was sold by George and fetched £789, a considerable sum at the time.

Within a few years of taking up photography George had given it up and by 1881 he had retired. In 1883 he left Workington and moved to Keswick, initially living in

Ratcliffe Place.³⁰ Two years later George married Ann Routledge, a lodging-house keeper in the town,³¹ and they moved to a large house, Brow Top (Plate 4), on the outskirts of Keswick. He became involved with the Keswick Savings Bank³² and was a member of the Greta Lodge of Freemasons, becoming Worshipful Master in 1891, the year after Canon H. D. Rawnsley.³³ His second wife died in 1898 but George lived on at Brow Top for another fourteen years, dying, at the age of eighty-eight, in 1912. The *West Cumberland Times* of 26 October carried an obituary, which described George as a churchman and freemason, genial, possessed of a varied experience (surely an understatement) and a keen angler and yachtsman. He was buried at St. John's church, Keswick and, ironically, his gravestone is almost totally plain.

The contrast between the situation of George Brooker at his death and that of James Brooker could not be much greater. In his will George left property in Liverpool (ten houses) and Workington (at least three houses), bank and railway shares, and divided £500 between three people. In addition, there was Brow Top and its contents and George's personal possessions, and, significantly, his tools are a specified item.³⁴

It seems highly unlikely that this wealth was accumulated as the direct result of a prosperous shipcarving career. Both George's marriages were to women who had their own businesses, the second a widow, and he outlived them both. Due to the untimely death of his son and daughter and the fact that he did not have any more children, George did not have the financial burdens expected after marriage. As was noted earlier, he was an investor, presumably successful; and finally there was an element of inheritance, which helps to explain the property in Liverpool (e.g. at least two houses came to George from his brother, John).

William Brooker

James Brooker's eldest son, William, was born in 1843 in Maryport. In 1863, three years after James' death, he was carving for James Laing, shipbuilders of Sunderland (see Appendix 4), however, his name does not appear in Sunderland directories of the time. It is probable that William left Sunderland early in the 1860s but whenever it was, he did at some point move south to London, where he became a sculptor. He is said to have been employed on the Albert Memorial³⁵ and was commissioned to cut a statue for the Victoria Hall Memorial in Sunderland but died, in 1885, before the work was complete.³⁶

Carved work

Shipcarving

From Appendix 1 it can be seen that many different shipbuilders in the ports of Harrington, Maryport, Whitehaven and Workington employed James and George. This accords well with the comments of Horsley³⁷ that shipcarvers tended to supply work to a particular area and would seek work from numerous shipyards. A number of Thomas' carvers also exhibit this same characteristic, such as Allan & Clotworthy in Liverpool and James Lindsay on the Wear. That there was competition



PLATE 4. Brow Top, Keswick (Reproduced by courtesy of Mrs P. Moffat and Mrs L. White). George Brooker lived here for more than twenty-five years; the picture was possibly a wedding present. The house was demolished in the early 1930s.

throughout the period, both locally and from Liverpool, is demonstrated in Appendix 2.

Almost all the newspaper reports used to construct Appendices 1 and 2 mention the figurehead, and sometimes stern carvings are also described, such as the taffrail and quarter pieces. The figures are typical of the time, being portraits of men and women, classical figures and other creations, nearly all being inspired by the vessel's name. Brewington³⁸ relates that other carved work could have included the cathead ends, name board at the bow, trail boards, name board at the stern with port of registration, and cabin interiors. Additionally, there would be the gilding work but, in North America at least, the painting would be done by a painter and not the carver. It is also possible that money was to be earned repairing damaged carving.

Although eleven distinct shipbuilding firms are included in Appendices 1 and 2, it is noticeable that other firms from the period, such as Falcon & Alexander of Workington and I. Middleton & Co. of Maryport have no entries. This illustrates the nature of the source and this bias must be borne in mind when trying to assess the Brookers' work in Cumberland. It is certainly the case that Appendices 1 and 2 contain only a small fraction of the Cumberland vessels which carried significant amounts of carved work in the mid-19th century. Having found no carver employed in Maryport other than Brooker it would seem that, when the *Maryport Advertiser* reported James' death, the statement that his figureheads once graced all the vessels built in Maryport could well be true. However, there is no way to prove that this was so.

Judging from the much greater number of mentions of "Brooker" in the launch reports than any other carver, it could be said that work by Brooker was either particularly noteworthy, or was carried by a large proportion of vessels (the former is more likely as the Askews carved for most Brocklebank vessels³⁹). As to what the newspapers can tell us about the quality of the work and the artistry of the carver, I would tend to agree with Sythes when he comments that, 'the *Cumberland Pacquet* described her as a "fine copper-bottomed vessel", a description they would also have used to describe a kettle!⁴⁰ The reports follow the same pattern throughout the period with the vessel invariably being the finest ever launched from the yard and the carving "well-executed", cut in a "masterly style" and so on.

Before 1860, where the newspaper does indicate the carver's full name, and not just "Brooker" or "Mr Brooker", it is always James Brooker. As was noted previously, there is a question as to how the work was split between the two brothers before 1854. It is likely that all the figureheads before 1860 were cut by James: the *Volunteer* was probably George's work as were the vessels from *Charlotte Clarke* onwards. The provenance of the *Whitehaven Lass* (Plate 5) is more uncertain.

At the time of James Brooker's arrival in Cumberland, c.1836, Maryport was an expanding town, producing more vessels than the neighbouring ports.⁴¹ Harrington and Workington only managed to build five vessels between them in 1835 and just four in each of the three years following. Over the same period Whitehaven's figures were 4, 7, 10, 9, while Maryport's were 13, 10, 14, 12. If these statistics are coupled with the fact that, in John Askew and Son, Whitehaven already had an established shipcarver, it can be seen that, of the West Cumberland ports at the time, Maryport would have appeared the most attractive to a shipcarver. Indeed, James Brooker's entry in the 1847 directory is the first by a carver of any description in Harrington,



PLATE 5. Figurehead believed to be from the “Whitehaven Lass” (date and location unknown) (Photo Whitehaven Museum and Art Gallery). The *Cumberland Pacquet* states that the figure was by “the late Mr Brooker of Maryport”. It is probable that the figure is of a general type and therefore could be cut in advance. However, as James had been dead for eight months when the vessel was launched, George Brooker is more likely to have been the carver. The neck of the figure is disproportionately thick to prevent her head being taken off by the sea.

Maryport or Workington. No other carvers are listed in these three ports in the local directories of 1811, 1829 and 1847.

The Brookers’ removal from Cumberland in 1853-4 is more difficult to explain. Turning again to the shipbuilding figures in Wood’s thesis,⁴² it is found that just six vessels were constructed in West Cumberland yards in 1853. However, this figure had been as low in 1846, and from at least 1845 James was providing carving for vessels built on the Wear (see Appendix 3). This would suggest that already by that date there was not enough work in Cumberland to employ fully the two brothers. Again, the question arises as to how much of this work, for Sunderland shipbuilders prior to 1854, was executed by George Brooker.

The suspension and eventual repeal of the Navigation Laws (foreign competition), in 1849-50,⁴³ and the spread of the railway network (effect on coasting trade), may have been factors in this shipbuilding decline. It is also probable that new styles of vessel, such as the clipper, did not carry as much carving as their predecessors.⁴⁴ Other factors were probably also involved in the Brookers’ moves; it might be expected that if there was not enough work for two people, then one of the two would leave and not both at the same time.

Whatever the reasons were behind these moves, and those made subsequently, they were not untypical of shipcarvers in general. A number of Brewington's⁴⁵ carvers illustrate similar mobility as do some of those outlined by Thomas,⁴⁶ such as A. P. Elder – London, Sunderland, Glasgow; A. Levison – Swansea, Gloucester; and Archibald Robertson – Greenock, Liverpool.

Thomas relates that only one bill has been found to indicate that James Brooker was employed by Clyde shipbuilders. Once James arrived in Sunderland he seems to have picked up with Laings where he left off. James is first recorded as providing carved work for Laings in 1845 and it is interesting to note that Maryport was not fully connected to the railway system, and Sunderland, until that date.⁴⁷ Thomas observes that on at least two vessels where Brooker carved the figurehead, another carver was paid more for the other bits and pieces.⁴⁸ This could have been the case with the four Cumberland vessels shared with John Askew, and it is clear that the tendering process and allocation of work was quite complex. With reference to Appendix I it can be seen that James continued to carve for Cumberland shipbuilders when he was in Glasgow and Sunderland. Other carvers outlined by Thomas supplied firms outside their immediate area. The best example probably being Nehemiah Williams who, from a London base, appears to have carved for yards in Jersey, Sunderland and Dundee amongst others.

The fact that he was employed by J. Robinson would suggest that James may have had a number of Sunderland customers while he was at Maryport.⁴⁹ During his time on Wearside he would almost certainly have been employed by more than one firm. This is particularly likely as two of the Laing vessels he worked on, *Dunbar* and *La Hogue*, were very large⁵⁰ and no doubt prestige came with them and as a result, more work.

The reasons behind George Brooker's retirement from shipcarving before he was fifty would seem clear-cut. The situation in Cumberland was probably already difficult in the mid- to late-1860s as George moved to Sunderland for a while. No vessels were built in Workington or Maryport between 1870 and 1872, and those of Harrington and Whitehaven were increasing in size, with many made of iron. Although vessels were getting bigger and average tonnage was increasing, the amount of carving did not increase in proportion, as much of the increase in size was longitudinal.⁵¹ As a result of the increase in size of vessels the output of vessels slowly decreased in number (in 1872 only five vessels were launched in West Cumberland), which further increased the average tonnage, but was no consolation to the shipcarver. The same process was taking place at Sunderland⁵² and over the rest of the country. The quantity of decoration also seems to have diminished naturally as the new materials took over.⁵³ Finally, the number of sailing vessels was falling, as steamers, which would be less likely to carry carving, became increasingly common. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 accelerated this development.⁵⁴

Miscellaneous carving

Stammers⁵⁵ briefly discusses the fact that many shipcarvers must have attempted to supplement their income by carving for non-maritime customers. Similarly, many firms and individuals can be found in *British Figurehead & Ship Carvers*⁵⁶ who are not purely shipcarvers. Shipcarving is merely one of the services they offer.

Earlier it was suggested that James and George Brooker both sought to broaden their income in this way. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that they managed to achieve this. However, some non-maritime items carved by the Brookers do exist.⁵⁷

Among the items lost in the fire at St Michael's church, Workington in 1994 was a carved wooden memorial tablet. It commemorated George Brooker's children and father-in-law and would originally have stood outside in the churchyard. This tablet was almost certainly the work of George Brooker.

Conclusions

James and George Brooker were typical shipcarvers of their time. They came from a background in shipbuilding, admittedly probably only one generation, and were mobile in search of employment. James and George had a number of different employers in a particular district and James provided carving for employers outside his local area. During their shipcarving careers they both probably supplemented their income with other sorts of carving work.

As shipcarving was ancillary to shipbuilding it might be expected that the career of a shipcarver could be explained by reference to trends in shipbuilding and the decoration of vessels. However, in the case of the Brookers this is not always easy, suggesting that factors other than pure economics were at work. On James Brooker's death his financial situation was most probably the result of injury and illness while George Brooker's prosperity is unlikely to have been dependent on a successful shipcarving career.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all those individuals and institutions mentioned in the text who provided material for this article and the many others who showed an interest and offered encouragement. Particular thanks are due to Mr P.N.Thomas who provided copies of research on the Brocklebank and Laing shipbuilding archives, and to Mr R. Hunter for details of two inscribed Brooker figureheads.

An unrevised and unabridged version of this article is available as a dissertation, from the Scottish Institute of Maritime Studies at St Andrews University.

APPENDICES

**Appendix 1 – Known Cumberland vessels with carving by
James or George Brooker.⁵⁸**

Year	Vessel	Builder	Port	Launch report
1838	<i>Briton</i> ⁵⁹	John Peat & Co.	Maryport (Ma)	<i>Cumberland Pacquet (CP)</i> 25 Sep
	<i>Blair</i>	Huddleston, Ritson & Co.	Ma	<i>CP</i> 6 Nov
1839	<i>Earl of Lonsdale</i>	L. Kennedy & Co.	Whitehaven (Wh)	<i>CP</i> 22 Jan
1840	<i>Warlock</i>	Kennedy	Wh	<i>CP</i> 21 Jan
	<i>Chebar</i>	Peile, Scott & Co.	Workington (Wo)	<i>CP</i> 11 Feb
	<i>Syren</i>	Kennedy	Wh	<i>CP</i> 15 Sep
1841	<i>Enchantress</i>	Kennedy	Wh	<i>CP</i> 23 Feb
1842	<i>George Buckham</i>	R. Ritson & Co.	Ma	<i>Maryport Locomotive</i> February
1844	<i>Sancta Bega</i>	Kennedy	Wh	<i>CP</i> 16 Jan
	<i>Isabella Harnett</i>	Ritson	Ma	<i>CP</i> 13 Feb
	<i>Recorder</i>	K. Wood & Sons	Ma	<i>CP</i> 12 Mar
1846	<i>Lord Hardinge</i>	Kennedy	Wh	<i>Whitehaven Herald (WH)</i> 16 May, <i>CP</i> 19 May
1847	<i>Mary Spencer</i>	Kennedy	Wh	<i>CP</i> 17 Aug
	<i>Magician</i>	Kennedy	Wh	<i>CP</i> 14 Sep
1848	<i>John Wood</i>	Wood	Ma	<i>WH</i> 9 Sep, <i>CP</i> 12 Sep
1851	<i>Braganza</i>	Kennedy	Wh	<i>CP</i> 18 Feb, <i>WH</i> 22 Feb
	<i>Robert Barbour</i>	Wood	Ma	<i>CP</i> 25 Mar, <i>WH</i> 29 Mar
	<i>Dinapore</i>	C. Lamport	Wo	<i>WH</i> 19 Apr
	<i>Robert Ritson</i>	Ritson	Ma	<i>CP</i> 22 Apr
1852	<i>John Peile</i>	Kennedy	Wh	<i>CP</i> 10 Feb
	<i>Charles Jackson</i>	Ritson	Ma	<i>CP</i> 13 Apr
	<i>Racer</i>	R. Williamson & Son	Harrington (Ha)	<i>CP</i> 17 Aug, <i>WH</i> 21 Aug
	<i>Ann Lawson</i>	Peile, Scott	Wo	<i>CP</i> 24 Aug
	<i>Martaban</i>	T. & J. Brocklebank	Wh	<i>CP</i> 19 Oct, <i>WH</i> 23 Oct
	<i>Coringa</i>	Kennedy	Wh	<i>WH</i> 13 Nov, <i>CP</i> 16 Nov
1853	<i>Red Gauntlet</i>	Ritson	Ma	<i>CP</i> 26 Apr
	<i>Pizarro</i>	Kennedy	Wh	<i>CP</i> 24 May, <i>WH</i> 28 May
	<i>Star of History</i>	Williamson	Ha	<i>WH</i> 9 Jul, <i>CP</i> 12 Jul
The Brookers leave Maryport				
1854	<i>Aracan</i>	Brocklebank	Wh	<i>CP</i> 18 Apr
	<i>John Currey</i>	Ritson	Ma	<i>CP</i> 12 Sep, <i>Maryport Advertiser (MA)</i> Oct
1855	<i>John of Gaunt</i>	Kennedy	Wh	<i>CP</i> 8 May
	<i>Ann Pitcairn Sharp</i>	Ritson	Ma	<i>MA</i> July
1856	<i>Aladdin</i>	Ritson	Ma	<i>CP</i> 12 Feb, <i>MA</i> Mar
1857	<i>Mallard</i>	Kennedy	Wh	<i>Whitehaven News (WN)</i> 29 Jan
	<i>Ganjam</i>	Ritson	Ma	<i>CP</i> 28 Apr, <i>MA</i> May
1858	<i>Yanwath</i>	Ritson	Ma	<i>CP</i> 2 Feb, <i>WN</i> 4 Feb
George Brooker moves to Workington				
Death of James Brooker				
1860	<i>Volunteer</i>	Harrington and Workington Shipbuilding & Ropemaking Co (formerly Peile, Scott & Co.)	Wo	<i>CP</i> 21 Aug
	<i>Whitehaven Lass</i>	Hugh Williamson	Wh	<i>CP</i> 6 Nov
1862	<i>Charlotte Clarke</i>	Ritson	Ma	<i>MA</i> January
	<i>Chanaral</i>	Ritson	Ma	<i>MA</i> 15 Aug, <i>CP</i> 19 Aug
1864	<i>William Ritson</i>	Ritson	Ma	<i>MA</i> 15 Jan, <i>CP</i> 19 Jan
1865	?	Ritson	Ma	<i>CP</i> 7 Feb
(Figure is of Miss Sparks)				
George Brooker moves to Sunderland and then returns to Workington.				
1869	<i>Omega</i>	H&W S&R Co.	Wo	<i>CP</i> 14 Sep

Appendix 2 – Known Cumberland vessels with carving by other carvers.⁶⁰

Year	Vessel	Builder	Port	Carver	Launch report
1838	<i>Mary</i>	Wood	Ma	Kelsick Wood, shipbuilder, Maryport	CP 6 Feb
1841	<i>Vicar of Bray</i>	R. Hardy	Wh	Archibald Robertson, Liverpool	CP 27 Apr
1842	<i>Lanercost</i>	Brocklebank	Wh	John Askew Jnr., Whitehaven (stern only)	CP 1 Feb
1844	<i>Robert Pulsford</i>	Brocklebank	Wh	Robertson	CP 9 Apr
1845	<i>Sir Henry Pottinger</i>	Brocklebank	Wh	Robertson	CP 26 Aug
1851	<i>Braganza</i>	Kennedy	Wh	Askew (stern only, see App. 1)	CP 18 Feb, WH 22 Feb
1853	<i>Pizarro</i>	"	"	"	CP 24 May, WH 28 May
1855	<i>John of Gaunt</i>	"	"	"	CP 8 May
1857	<i>Mallard</i>	"	"	"	WN 29 Jan
1859	<i>Dunmail</i>	H&W S&R Co.	Wo	Burrow, Carlisle	CP 26 Apr
1862	<i>Ann Gambles</i>	Williamson	Ha	Allan & Clotworthy, Liverpool	CP 5 Aug
1863	<i>Belted Will</i>	H&W S&R Co.	Wo	Allan & Clothworthy	CP 7 Jul
1864	<i>Moss Trooper</i>	H&W S&R Co.	Wo	Carmichael, Workington	CP 27 Sep
1865	<i>Anne Humphreys</i>	J. Shepherd & Co.	Wh	Allan & Clotworthy	CP 7 Nov

Appendix 3 – Known Sunderland vessels with carving by James Brooker.

Year	Vessel	Builder	Notes	Source
1845	<i>Sir Walter Raleigh</i>	J. Laing	Figurehead	Extracts from Laing ledgers ⁶¹
1846	<i>Camperdown</i> ⁶²	"	Carved work – shared with another carver	"
	<i>Blue Bell</i>	"	Carved work	"
1847	<i>Australasia</i>	"	Carved work – shared	"
1848	<i>Bernicia</i>	"	Carved work	"
	<i>Minden</i>	"	Carved work – shared	"
	<i>Garland</i>	"	Carved work	"
1849	<i>Reynard</i>	"	Figurehead	"
	<i>Elijah Packer</i>	"	"	"
	<i>Randolph</i>	"	"	"
	<i>Falcon</i>	"	"	"
	<i>Anglia</i>	"	Figurehead – another carver did other work	"
1850	<i>Talavera</i>	"	Figurehead and shared carved work	"
	<i>Pyrenees</i> ⁶³	"	Figurehead – another carver did other work	"
	<i>Mercia</i>	"	Figurehead and carved work	"
	<i>Wreath</i>	"	Figurehead	"
	<i>Alipore</i>	J. Robinson	Figurehead and perhaps more carved work	WH 26 Oct
1851	<i>Vimiera</i>	J. Laing	Figurehead – another carver did other work	<i>Illustrated London News</i> 28 Jun
1853	<i>Antipodes</i>	"	Carved work – shared	Extracts from Laing ledgers
	<i>Dunbar</i> ⁶⁴	"	Figurehead	"
James moves to Glasgow and then Sunderland				
1855	<i>La Hogue</i>	"	"	"
	<i>Bacchante</i>	"	"	"
	<i>Vedra</i>	"	"	"
	<i>Lowestoft</i>	"	"	"
	<i>Wearmouth</i>	?	Figurehead and perhaps more carved work	Thomas p. 11
1858	<i>Enterprise</i>	"	Figurehead	Extracts from Laing ledgers
	<i>Asia</i>	"	"	"
	<i>Talavera</i>	"	"	"

Appendix 4 – Known Sunderland vessels with carving by William Brooker.

Year	Vessel	Builder	Source
1863	<i>Diamond</i> ⁶⁵	J. Laing	Extracts from Laing ledgers
	<i>Cochrane</i>	”	”
	<i>Alipore</i>	”	”
	<i>George Elliott</i>	”	”
	<i>Lady Beatrice</i>	”	”
1864	<i>Onega</i>	”	”
	<i>Biddick</i>	”	”

Notes and References

- ¹ These sources, some containing inaccuracies, are outlined below: Thomas, P. N., *British Figurehead & Ship Carvers* (Wolverhampton, 1995), 11, 25-27, 49-50.
 Stammers, M.K., *Ships' Figureheads*, (Aylesbury, 1983), 23.
 Crerar, Dr J. W., “Past Master of a Vanished Craft” in *Sea Breezes* (1947). Cumbria Record Office, Carlisle [hereafter CROC] D/Cre/25 and 31 – Notes of Dr Crerar [Dr Crerar was a Maryport GP].
 Sythes, D. G., *Ships of West Cumberland* (Whitehaven, 1992), 8,19 [This is a reprinted series of articles that first appeared in the *Whitehaven News* in 1969].
 CROC DX/404/1 and 5 – Notes of Mr Sythes.
 Norton, P., *Ships' Figureheads* (Newton Abbot, 1976), frontispiece.
 Hall, M., *The Artists of Cumbria* (Newcastle, 1979), 11 [This entry is confused and misleading, with many mistakes].
 Robinson, A., *Maritime Maryport* (Clapham, 1978), 15 [The entry in *The Artists of Cumbria* would seem to be based on this paragraph].
 Robinson, A., *Maryport's Great Shipbuilding Yards & Ships* (Workington, undated but appeared at some date in the 1980s), 2, 6.
 Carlisle Library local collection (CL) 7483 2H, Brooker, J.G. – Genealogy of some Cumberland families. Vol. 1 A-E. B637 1H, Brooker J. G. – Pedigree of the Brooker family of Liverpool.
 CROC Jarman, L. C., *A Smith Family History* [This work can be found on the shelves in Carlisle].
 CROC DX/785/3, DX/917/8 – Notes of Denis Hepburn.
 Personal communication, Miss I. Benn.
 Personal communication, Mr I. Smith.
- ² Brewington, M. V., *Shipcarvers of North America* (Barre, Massachusetts, 1962), 47.
- ³ Crerar, Dr J. W., *op.cit.* From the precise date of 21 December given by Crerar it is probable that the Brooker family had James' indentures at this time.
- ⁴ *Cumberland Pacquet* (hereafter *CP*) 3 July 1838.
- ⁵ *CP* 25 September 1838.
- ⁶ *CP* 10 September 1839.
- ⁷ Crerar, Dr J. W., *op.cit.* This information had probably been passed down the Brooker family.
- ⁸ Mannix & Whellan, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Cumberland* (Beverly, 1847), 546.
- ⁹ *CP* 17 December 1850.
- ¹⁰ *Maryport Advertiser* (hereafter *MA*) December 1853.
- ¹¹ Thomas, P. N., *op. cit.*, 26.
- ¹² *Idem.*
- ¹³ *Ward's Directory of Sunderland* (1857 and 1859). *Kelly's Post Office Directory of Westmorland, Cumberland, Northumberland and Durham* (1858).
- ¹⁴ *MA* April 1860. Dr Crerar clearly knew, and Gorton Brooker too, the details of James' death. However, due to the possibility of insanity and the harrowing nature of the newspaper report they both chose to omit the details.
- ¹⁵ *Sunderland Herald* 23 March, 11 April, 4 May 1860.
- ¹⁶ Durham Record Office, H/Wi 123 (restricted) – medical case papers, Sedgfield asylum. Dr M. T. Haslam suggests that the infection may have been syphilis or TB. I am indebted to Dr Haslam, Winterton Hospital, Sedgfield for obtaining and interpreting the medical record.

- ¹⁷ Liverpool Library, *Index to Wills and Administrations* (1865). It is probable that only a painstaking trawl of contemporary Liverpool newspapers could provide any information on John Brooker's career.
- ¹⁸ They were married at Crosscanonby, near Maryport but a previous marriage had taken place at Gretna (*Liverpool Mercury* 29 August 1851).
- ¹⁹ Personal communication, Mr I. Smith. It is possible that Hugh Smith left Maryport due to the arrival of the Brookers and moved back there only when they had left the town. He has an entry as a Carver and Gilder in the Maryport directory of 1856 – Adair, J., *Directory of the Town and Port of Maryport 1856* (Maryport, 1856).
- ²⁰ Morris, Harrison & Co., *Commercial Directory and Gazetteer of the County of Cumberland* (1861).
- ²¹ *Barne's Directory of Sunderland* (1865). *Campbell's Directory of Sunderland* (1866).
- ²² CROC (Whitehaven) YDX/157/3.
- ²³ Slater, I., *Royal National Commercial Directory of Cumberland and Westmorland* (Manchester, 1869). Mercer and Crocker's directory of the same year places George Brooker in Griffin Street. This is more likely to be an error than another change of address by George.
- ²⁴ *Workington Star* 10 January 1936.
- ²⁵ *Borough of Workington Minutes of Council and Committees* Vol. 24 (1914), 76. These are bound volumes in Workington Library.
- ²⁶ *Kelly's Directory of Cumberland and Westmorland* (1873).
- ²⁷ *West Cumberland Times* (hereafter *WCT*) 22 December 1877. I have seen one portrait taken by George Brooker and the card is typical of that time, with elaborate details of the photographer on the reverse.
- ²⁸ *CP* 8 January 1878. The committee members included Mr Curwen of Workington Hall. CROC (Whitehaven) YDX/157/3. *To the Parishioners and other Members of St. John's Church* contains a list of subscribers to the church renewal project.
- ²⁹ Jarman, L. C., *op. cit.*
- ³⁰ CROC D/CU/5/186 Curwen estate ground rent book. A pencil note indicates the move to Ratcliffe Place and an ink note the subsequent move to Brow Top.
- ³¹ Bulmer, T. F., *History, Topography and Directory of West Cumberland* (Preston, 1883), 605. On her death it was recorded that she had carried on business in Lake Road for many years before moving to Brow Top (*WCT* 26 February 1898).
- ³² *English Lakes Visitor & Keswick Guardian* 8 December 1894.
- ³³ Jarman, L. C., *op. cit.*
- ³⁴ CROC copy of will of George Brooker. Shelved in bound volume.
- ³⁵ CL, B637 1H – Brooker, J. G., Pedigree of the Brooker family of Liverpool.
- ³⁶ *Sunderland Herald* 4 December 1885. This memorial can be seen today, decayed and neglected, on the main driveway of Bishopwearmouth Cemetery, Sunderland.
- ³⁷ Horsley, J. E., *Tools of the Maritime Trades* (Newton Abbot, 1978), 282.
- ³⁸ Brewington, M.V., *op. cit.*, 67-9, 91, 140.
- ³⁹ Thomas, P.N., *op. cit.*, 23-4. Other Cumberland carvers are also outlined by Thomas.
- ⁴⁰ Sythes, D.G., *op. cit.*, 8.
- ⁴¹ Wood, O., *The Development of the Coal, Iron and Shipbuilding Industries of West Cumberland 1750-1914* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1952), 352. As Wood's figures are now forty-five years old I compiled my own using the shipbuilding checklists produced by Whitehaven Museum between 1984 and 1989. My figures differed from those of Wood but as the trends were similar and differences slight I decided to stick with Wood's figures.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*
- ⁴³ MacGregor, D.R., *Tea Clippers their History and Development 1833-1875* (London, 1983), 210.
- ⁴⁴ MacGregor, D. R., *British & American Clippers* (London, 1993), 18. Brewington, M.V., *op. cit.*, 72-3.
- ⁴⁵ Brewington, *op. cit.*
- ⁴⁶ Thomas, P. N., *op. cit.*
- ⁴⁷ Brewington, *op. cit.*, 5. Brewington mentions figureheads being transported by sea on the eastern seaboard of North America but at a much earlier date.
- ⁴⁸ Thomas, P. N., *op. cit.*, 50.
- ⁴⁹ A systematic search of contemporary Sunderland newspapers would doubtless bring to light more information on James Brooker and a similar approach in Liverpool would probably also meet with some success. The British Library, Newspaper Library holds some files of some of the more obscure Cumberland newspapers which may yield additional details.

- ⁵⁰ MacGregor, D. R., *Fast Sailing Ships their Design and Construction 1775-1875* (London, 1988), 138.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 135.
- ⁵² Lindsay, W. S., *History of Merchant Shipping and Ancient Commerce* Vol. 4. (London, 1876), 599. Numbers in Sunderland began to drop in the late 1860s and the average tonnage increased from 408 in 1867 to 1,045 in 1873, with 32 fewer ships being constructed in the latter year than in the former.
- ⁵³ An analysis of Cumberland port registers (say from 1830 to 1875), which describe bow carvings in general terms, would be a useful tool in helping to place the Brookers more firmly in context. There is currently no book on merchant ships' carvings comparable to L. G. C. Laughton's, *Old Ship Figure-heads and Sterns* (London, 1925) which describes the development of naval carvings.
- ⁵⁴ MacGregor, D. R., *The Tea Clippers* . . . , 210.
- ⁵⁵ Stammers, M. K., *op. cit.*, 23, 26.
- ⁵⁶ Thomas, P. N., *op. cit.*
- ⁵⁷ Gorton Brooker mentions a bust of James Brooker's wife, which used to be in the garden of his house in Eaglesfield Street, Maryport.
- ⁵⁸ Other researchers have attributed various vessels' carving to the Brookers, which I have been unable to confirm, and these are as follows:
 Sythes research notes, 1843 *Mary Stoddart*, Ritson, Maryport – It is highly likely that this vessel was carved for by James Brooker.
 Sythes research notes, Robinson (*Maryport's Great* . . . , 6) and Thomas (*op. cit.*, 26) – 1848 *Mary Ann Johnston*, Ritson, Maryport – Dr Crerar carefully avoids a definite attribution but again it is most probably by James Brooker.
 Hepburn research notes – 1851 *Sea Horse*, Peile, Scott & Co., Workington – Not as likely as the Ritson vessels to have carried Brooker carving.
 Crerar, and Sythes research notes – 1853 *Nottingham*, Ritson, Maryport – Almost certain to have had carving by Brooker.
 Sythes research notes and Thomas (*op. cit.*, 27) – 1859 *Mary Lee*, Ritson?, Maryport. Quite likely to have included carved work by Brooker, with George Brooker perhaps the more likely carver.
 Sythes (*op. cit.*, 19) and Norton (frontispiece) – *Ann Gambles* – see Appendix 2.
 Norton misspells the name and has the vessel down as a Whitehaven vessel.
 Sythes (*op. cit.*, 19) and Stammers (*op. cit.*, 23) – 1874 *John Gambles*, Williamson, Harrington – Stammers places Harrington shipowner, John Gambles, in Maryport; clearly the reference to Brooker of Maryport is inaccurate also. James had died in 1860 and George was retired and living in Workington. A figurehead inscribed 'J. Brooker M'Port' is held by Gothenburg Maritime Museum. Another inscribed 'J. Brooker' is in private hands in Germany, *pers.comm.* Mr R. Hunter. This figure is very similar to that shown in Plate 5. James Brooker also exhibited a figurehead at the Great Exhibition of 1851.
 A signed Brooker figurehead was auctioned in the U.S.A. earlier this century and it is hoped that it may eventually turn up – personal communication, Mr R. Hunter. An intriguing piece is to be found in Sythe's research notes which seems to originate from between the time of the launch of the *Dinapore* and the end of the Great Exhibition. It reads, "Mr Brooker's work in the mid-nineteenth century has been noted before and apparently he was the most sought after carver of figureheads in the country". The piece from which this is taken appears to come from a local newspaper but I have been unable to trace it. Gorton Brooker mentions some figureheads in a Sunderland park but it seems likely that this is a confused reference to the Victoria Hall Memorial (see William Brooker).
- ⁵⁹ Paintings of *Briton*, *Earl of Lonsdale* and *Whitehaven Lass* (two pictures) are to be found in the collections of The Beacon in Whitehaven.
- ⁶⁰ This table includes only those carvers mentioned in newspapers; John Askew and Son carved for most of the Brocklebank vessels built over the period (Brocklebanks are the only Cumberland shipbuilding firm to have left records which include details of shipcarvers). Denis Hepburn's notes contain a reference to the *Sancta Bega* of 1863, built by Williamson in Harrington. The carving is attributed to Allan & Clotworthy but I was unable to confirm this.
- ⁶¹ I am indebted to Mr P. N. Thomas for the Laing extracts used to construct Appendices 3 and 4, and for the reference from *The Illustrated London News*.
- ⁶² Thomas, P. N., *op. cit.*, 50. Gives the date of the *Camperdown* as 1847.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*, 25. Gives the date of the *Pyrenees* as 1851.
- ⁶⁴ *Idem.*, Gives the date of the *Dunbar* as 1854.
- ⁶⁵ Thomas, *op. cit.*, 27 states that *Diamond* and *Cochrane* were built by W. Doxford & Sons.

