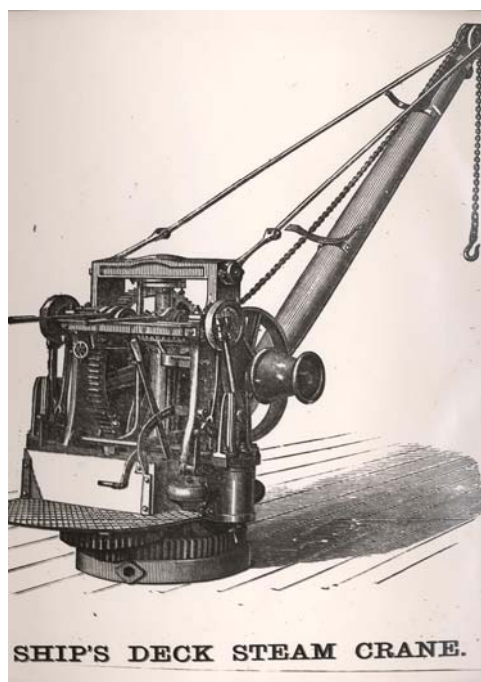


## Shipbuilding in Gateshead

The Tyne has been a port and shipbuilding centre for many years. There have been shipbuilders at Gateshead in past centuries but none have been large enough to rival the giants of industry nearer the mouth of the river. Ship and boat building in Gateshead was centred on Hillgate and the river-banks to the east of the town. Small ships and keels were the main vessels constructed and by the middle of the nineteenth century the larger ships were being built in the Friars' Goose area while boat building was concentrated on Hillgate. Despite the presence of the large firms downstream, a slip-way at Friars' Goose was in use until the mid-1960s. Trawlers were launched here as recently as 1961.

Shipbuilding has been a very minor industry in the town, but there are two examples to show that Gateshead men were to the forefront in the development of steam power and iron boats. In 1814 a steam boat was launched from the South Shore and went into service on the Tyne. A Gateshead glassmaker, Joseph Price, realised that this new form of propulsion was here to stay, bought shares in the ship in 1815 and was convinced that steam tugboats would be profitable to manufacture and sell. Unfortunately, his ideas were not popular and he was almost bankrupt by 1838 but, still certain that this was the power of the future, took out a patent for adopting steam boilers for ships.

A letter in the local paper, *The Gateshead Observer* in February 1860 stated that: 'The first iron boat built so far as I know, was a rowboat; in the year 1821, at Gateshead.' This was an experiment carried out by an employee of Hawks' with financial backing from Sir R. S. Hawks. The boat, the *Vulcan*, was completed in 1822 and was 31 feet long. The following year it was defeated in a race with a wooden boat and was being tested and re-designed when the builder, James Smith fell overboard and was drowned. The cause of this was said to be the crew who had 'too much beer and too little ballast'. After this setback the iron boat was not developed and was allowed to rust away.



**Ship's deck steam crane, Clarke Chapman**

From *A Short History of Gateshead* by I C Carlton