



## TRANSFORMED BY WAR 1939 - 1945

### Women trained as shipbuilders solve a key shortage

By using Government trained women welders, producing pre-fabricated sections in local workshops, tugs could be built far faster. Recognising that welding as a skill could be taught more quickly than traditional shipyard skills, an enterprising shipbuilder, Richard Dunston of Thorne (South Yorkshire) and Hessle, pioneered this new approach which set a precedent for further production line orders for coasters for D Day and for the shipbuilding industry.

In 1942 Dunston's built 12 TID (Tug, Inshore and Dock) tugs, their first order to be all welded. The Admiralty were impressed and agreed to a rolling order which eventually totalled 159 steam tugs from Dunston and 23 from William Pickersgill and Son in Sunderland - 182 TIDs in total. As Dunston stated "By careful production control, the completed ships, including the installation of steam machinery and auxiliaries, were produced at a rate which permitted vessels to leave the shipyard at 6 day intervals."



TID tug Brent preserved at  
**Maldon Heritage Harbour**



Above: Women welders and left: TID hull fabrication  
Images: IWM A22746, A9779, A9782

*South Yorkshire Times, Mexborough and Swinton Times, 7 July 1945*

*Women welders praised, Shipbuilding at Thorncliffe*

*"A fine tribute to women welders, many of them from Mexborough, was paid at a social gathering at Thorncliffe last Thursday to mark the completion of an important contract for prefabrication of ship sections carried out by Newton Chambers and Company for the Department of Merchant Shipbuilding through the shipbuilding firm of Richard Dunston Ltd, Hessle and Thorne.*

*The principal welding shop at Thorncliffe has been devoted to this work for the last two years and it was initiated with the aid of women recruited locally, principally from Mexborough and specially trained. These women have had a part in the construction of nearly 70 ships of various types.*

*Mrs N Spence of Mexborough, the first woman to pass out of the training school said that at first the women never thought they would be able to do anything, the work seemed so hard, and yet, constantly encouraged by the management they gradually mastered it. For many months she and her friends from Mexborough had been getting up at 4 in the morning to catch the bus and when they got home there seemed so many things to do, but one good effect of the arrangement was it gave them an opportunity to train their husbands also to do unaccustomed jobs, and eventually to do them well."*