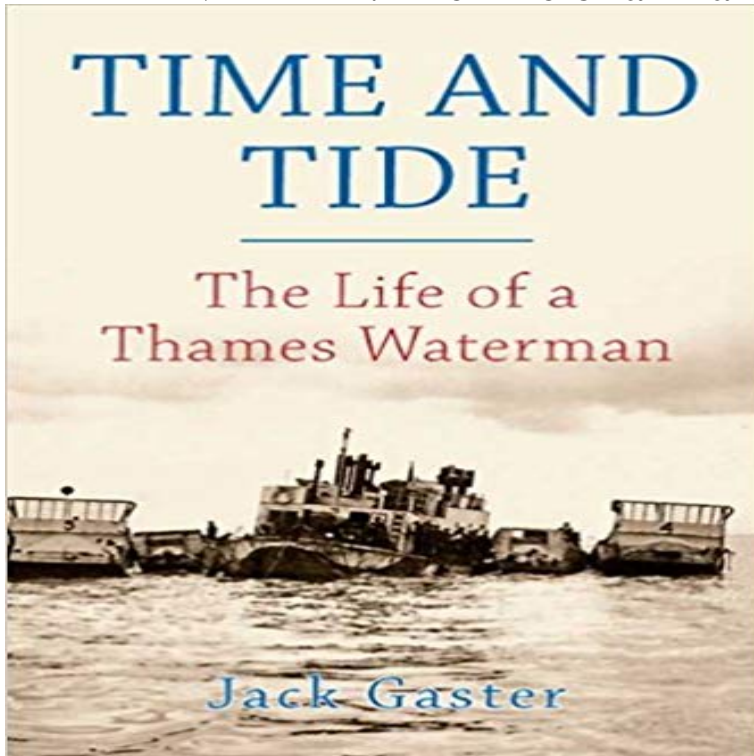


TIME AND TIDE: The Life of a Thames Waterman



Joseph John William Gaster (Jack) was born within the chimes of the Bow Bells in August 1923. A true cockney, Jack grew up with a love for the water and gained an apprenticeship for the Worshipful Company of Watermen and Lightermen when only a few days past his 14th birthday. Virtually his whole working life was spent on the River Thames: working on tugs from those early days as a 14 year old apprentice, through the Second World War and the post-war decline for the London docks; he joined the police to serve 22 years as a Thames Police Officer; he then spent ten years piloting the scientific launch for Thames Water. At the age of 65 Jack set up his own business, still on that boat for Thames Water, with his wife Phyllis as book-keeper and a grandson as apprentice after a while. In his sixty years of work, around 54 were on the river. His time away from the Thames was mainly with the Royal Navy, where he became one of the youngest ever sub-lieutenants in the Commandos. In the D-Day landings he was assistant beachmaster at Arromanche, the site for the biggest temporary harbor in Normandy. After the Normandy invasion, Jack joined the Rescue Tug Service, mainly on the Enigma, an ocean going tug, which once towed a floating dock from Scotland to Singapore. Jack has a passion for the Thames and an encyclopedic knowledge of the buildings and structures alongside it. This book chronicles his remarkable life.

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