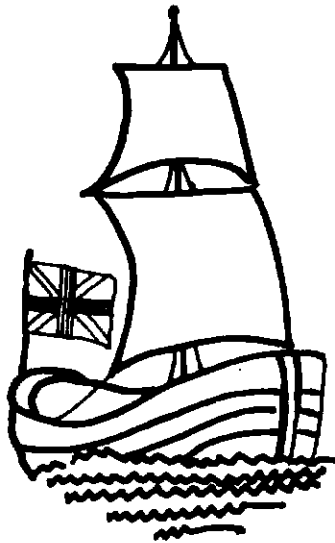


the
trow



NO.1 FEBRUARY 1973



STROUDWATER



CANAL SOCIETY

THE TROW

The magazine takes its name from the shallow bottomed craft developed for use on the Severn notorious for its shoals and shelves of rock.

The tides in the lower reaches of the Severn sweeping up from the Bristol channel gather impetus in the narrowing funnel of the river and can change the position of a sand bank in a few hours. So much so that even an experienced boatman might find himself running aground. Any vessel so stranded with a fixed keel would be overwhelmed by an incoming tide so a sturdy flat bottomed craft was developed capable of lying aground without harm.

Trows were square sterned with sides curving down to meet the bottom and forwards to meet bluff bows. With an open hold and short decks fore and aft trows were of 40-80 tons, 15-20 feet beam, 60-68 feet long and drew between 3 and 4 feet. Most had a single mast 80 feet high to carry square sails and some a mizzen mast as well on which a lateen sail could be set. Use was made of the tidal currents to assist wind power and in conditions of complete calm trows would be bow hauled by the crew.

Trows were a common sight on the Stroudwater Canal carrying coal from the Staffordshire Coalfield brought down to Stourport on the Birmingham and Staffs and Worcs canal in narrow boats at which point it was transhipped in to trows. From Stourport the coal was taken up to Brimscombe port on the Thames and Severn Canal for storage until it was sold locally or sent further east in Thames barges - the locks above Brimscombe being too narrow to pass trows.

Pete Swallow.

EDITORIAL

By tradition you should find on this page those solemn comments normally expressed by editors. However, as this is the first edition of "The Trow" you are to be spared the punishment. This has been "a hurried mixing", it was decided after Christmas that the first edition of "The Trow" would be in the post by the end of January. Some said "You'll never make it", well it looks as if we will due to the effort of all concerned (including the typist who is membership secretary and wishes to remain anonymous). If the postmark on your copy is January, it's success. The next edition of "The Trow" will be out at the end of April. If you have any comments - good or bad let's have them also any articles or facts that may be of use. By the end of March please, this is to avoid "a hurried mixing", an overheated typewriter and typist. End of rubbish now some facts.

Although the plan for Ryeford has not been finalised (Chairmans report) the Glos C.C. have given us the go ahead on the Bowbridge to Brimscombe section and work is well under way. Stroud U.D.C. and R.D.C. both have given the society support in principle to plans for restoration.

At the request of the Glos C.C. a meeting was held in October so that the society could state its plans for restoration. In June Mr Maddocks (Stroud R.D.C.) and Mr Harper (Stroud U.D.C.) together with Mr J. Robbins (Sheriff of Gloucester) were present at the start of the canal walk from Stroud to Saul.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Britain is only just beginning to realize the prize it has inherited in its waterways the tide is being stemmed and derelict waterways are being reconstructed and many projects are nearing completion. For this reason a second generation of derelict canals must continue to take the restoration experts eye. Will David Hutchins move his talents to other fields when the Upper Avon is complete? Will the Waterways Recovery Group sell all their gear and pack up when their programme is complete? I think not, riding on success other waterways will and must be tackled and into this category falls the Thames - Severn Link.

For years the giant has slumbered decaying rapidly as authority gnaws at its sinews. But this decay is slowly being checked and with each working party the momentum of decay is lessened. There will come a time when the amount of decay is accountable and checked. From that time on the waterway will go forward. Help and money for working parties is always desperately needed.

At the Society's first meeting it was decided to recommend the County Council to designate the whole waterway from Framilode to Lechlade as a linear park this we thought was a wonderful idea, a ribbon of water stretching half the width of the county as a nature reserve and an environmental buffer with the added benefits of recreational pleasure for many water users. But this is not to be and our suggestion has been refused rather hastily. But we must remember these authorities are there to carry out the public's work and you are the public. It is therefore, your duty as a member to pressurize every councillor, Parish, Rural, Urban or Country that Gloucestershire needs the Thames - Severn Link more than any other environmental project it has.

In December the Company of Proprietors of the Stroudwater Navigation asked the Department of the Environment to hold a public enquiry into the restoration of the Stroudwater and Thames and Severn canals. This they refused to do and recommended that decision be made by the local planning authority. This is a good thing, the local planning authority have for some time looked at the amenity value of the Thames & Severn canal and are promoting both the Cotswold Water Park and the Stroud Valley Face Lift. I hope now they will seize the opportunity with both hands.

At the same time as asking for a public enquiry the Company made the Society the offer of the section of canal from the River Frome at Whitminster to the A.38. This we are delighted with but have yet to accept as many details have to be worked out with the landowners and authorities concerned including British Waterways Board who we hope we may be able to prompt into making Walk Bridge, Whitminster a movable structure, a scheme which I discover has been on the stocks of I.W.A. members for many years. Nevertheless the Companies offer was very generous and the Society look upon this as a favourable move by the owners.

Plans for the proposed road from Dudbridge to the M5 have been released by the County Council and the Stroudwater canal will be affected at Stonehouse where 180 yards will be infilled for a roundabout. We have asked the council that a section be constructed over the canal large enough for the passage of craft. Having seen the plans I realised the Stroud Valley will have more roundabouts between the A.38 and Stroud than the canal had locks.

The Ryeford section is still a problem and survey work continues into the reliability of the spring as a water source. It is essential that we

do not create a stagnant pond. I feel the supply will be sufficient and when we have improved the specifications of the dam to the authorities requirements, I am certain we will get approval to start.

Finally, over the last few months the project has received a very successful coverage both by the press and television and we hope they will continue with our progress. I would like to make special mention of the Gloucester Citizen and the Bristol Evening Post who have been very encouraging with their favourable reports.



"By gosh George who told them
we were working here"

MEMBERSHIP

Welcome as a member of the STROUDWATER CANAL SOCIETY! I am very pleased to be able to tell you that at the time of writing we have about 200 members.

In just two months this is very good indeed, and I feel that by the end of this year we should be able to reach the grand target of 500 members. We already compare favourably with other waterway societies.

I have received from Mike Lloyd a "Boost the Membership Scheme" which the society is looking into and I hope to be able to give you details of this at a later stage. Meanwhile, encourage all those people that have shown interest to join. We now have an adequate supply of Membership Forms and they are available from me:- Mrs Judy Powell, "Lamorna", Upper Forest Green, Nailsworth, STROUD, Glos. Telephone:- Nailsworth 2416.

If there has been any error in your name and address when "The Trow" is received I would be grateful if you would write or phone me as above. Also I would like to mention that mostly family memberships have been addressed to Mr and Mrs to help save time with addressing to complete families. To all members that included stamps with their queries or memberships I thank you, this means that your membership money stretches a little further for restoration work.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

People have asked us why we chose Stroudwater Carriers as our company title. With the formation of the Stroudwater Canal Society and the prospect of reopening the canal we have been credited with prescience in our choice! The fact is that we can claim no such credit and the explanation is prosaic enough.

When we bought our pair of narrowboats, 'Comet' and 'Betelgeuse', for trading in 1968, we decided to operate as a private limited company. As part of the procedure of registration one has to submit to the Registrar of Companies a list of three choices of company titles, in order of preference. At this juncture I cannot honestly remember our first and second choices, but as it turned out our third choice of Stroudwater Carriers, picked more as a joke than for any other reason, was approved by the Registrar!

Anyway, the name has grown on us very comfortably, at least the 'Stroudwater' part of our title has, as we are usually referred to as 'Stroudwater' in carrying circles, when it comes to the fully title the references are more varied. In the most recent account of our activities in a canal society magazine we are credited with being the 'Stroudwater Canal Company' !

Some time ago in a canal pub I overheard an old boatman refer to our pair as 'them Stroud boats'. I sincerely hope he may be shown to have been prophetic and that our Company may yet operate boats on the canal which gave it a name.

A.E. Jones.

STROUDWATER CARRIERS are currently carrying coal by narrow boat from the midlands selling over the wharf mainly at Fretherne (Glos-Sharpness canal) more details in next issue. Ed.

HISTORICAL INQUIRY

The third attempt to build a Stroudwater Navigation in 1759-63 centred around the efforts of John Kemmett and his friends to build a navigation without locks. In this way they hoped to circumvent the opposition of millowners on the Frome who feared that additional calls on Frome water would deprive their water-powered mills of the energy needed in the processes of woollen manufacture. This navigation was built between Framilode and the Stonehouse area - apart from the section between Bristol Road and Bonds Mill - its line has never been found. Can any member help with local knowledge? Replies to M.A. Handford, 52, Park St., Bristol. BS1 5JN.

The virtually complete records of the canal company are available in the County Records Office. These date from the formation of the Company in 1730 to 1973. But the crucial years of 1935 - 53 are missing. Does any member know where they are or why they might be missing? Replies as above please.

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History of Stroudwater Canal - early attempts to build a navigation. Lecturer M.A. Handford M.A.

The course will be held at the Subscription Rooms, Stroud as follows.

26th January, '73 7.45-9.30p.m.

27th January, '73 10.15-1.00p.m.

23rd February, '73 7.45-9.30p.m.

24th February, '73 10.15-1.00p.m.

These courses will be continued in Sept.

Apply: The University of Bristol, Dept. Extra-Mural Studies, 32 Tyndall's Park Road, Bristol BS8 1HR.

WORKING PARTY REPORT

Are you a 'GONGOOZLER' ? i.e. an idle and inquisitive person who stands staring for prolonged periods at anything out of the common, particularly at canal boats and people.

You are? - then if you take a trip to the BOWBRIDGE SECTION of the Thames and Severn Canal (O.S. Sheet 156 grid ref 858/044) any Sunday between 10.00am and 4.30pm and look to the south you will see a curious band of navvies digging towards Griffin Mill.

Your curiosity may drive you to take a closer look - this can be dangerous! As soon as you come abreast of the party and ask what is going on you may find a shovel being placed in your hand whilst your other is signing the register (most important this for insurance cover) and being set to work.

However we are really quite civilized and believe 'one volunteer is worth ten pressed men' so if you feel you can assist us please drop in and try a working party one weekend.

If you do decide to come please bring some kit if you can as our resources are still a little slender in this respect. Useful items to bring include spades, shovels, garden forks, grabbers, slashers and bow saws.

If you are a carpenter or bricklayer you will be doubly welcome as we shall have need of your skill in later projects.

At the time of writing this article we have had seven working parties and despite a national shortage of wheelbarrows (true) we have achieved some encouraging results.

The first working party got off to a cracking start by the removal of the top gates to Bowbridge lock in an incredible Y-front ripping 3 hours.

Whilst this was going on Mike Ayland who was doing what appeared to be gardening in the lock chamber discovered that the water level in chamber was higher than the tops of his waders. Since then his aversion to water has driven him up the withy trees in search of fencing stakes. Rumours he is growing a long tail for balance are completely unfounded!

Subsequent parties have cleared silt, reeds and debris from the lock head and up the canal bed for a considerable distance using the spoil to build up the banks. This work is now gaining impetus with experience and it is hoped to reach Stanton's Bridge by the middle of February and Griffin Lock by Whitsuntide.

When the work is completed a dam with a weir edge will be built in the mouth of Bowbridge lock and the pound flooded to working level and it is hoped to celebrate by having raft races etc on it.

In conclusion I should like to thank all those who have given their valuable time and muscle on the working parties and the following especially.

Messrs Orchard & Peer - for use of scaffolding planks.
Mr F.A. Tehrani - for permission to store barrows
on his land and cooperation
over his boundary with the canal.

P.S. If you cannot make a Sunday working party
Graham Pegler and Nigel Roe run a smaller
working party on Saturdays.

PETE SWALLOW

(contact on site or c/o Nailsworth 2416)

THE OTHER PEOPLE

The Wey & Arun Canal Society.

The Arun Navigation built between 1785 and 1787 together with the Wey & Arun Junction Canal built between 1813 and 1816 provided a safe passage for small craft between London and the south coast. - 23 miles in length - 26 locks. Commercially never successful was abandoned by Act in 1871. Although the canal was abandoned over 100 years ago, most of the line remains intact to this day. It leaves the River Wey at Stonebridge and climbs through Bramley and Cranleigh to the five mile summit level near Dunsfold where it crosses the Surry/Sussex watershed 163 ft. above sea level. It then winds through Sidney Wood, descending through Alfold to Loxwood and Newbridge and then follows the Arun Valley to connect with the river at Pallingham Lock.

The canal traverses extremely pleasant rural countryside throughout, and peace and tranquillity are easily found. It is not difficult to foresee that the canal, once restored, can provide a haven for the rambler, the angler and the naturalist, as well as for the pleasure boater.

The canal itself can best be seen at Newbridge (A 272 west of Billingshurst), Loxwood (B 2133), Run Common (close to the A 281 near Cranleigh) and Birtley Depot (A 281 near Bramley). For map references see the 1" Ordnance Survey Sheet 182 (Brighton and Worthing), or for more detail the following 2½" maps: TQ 02, TQ 03 and TQ 04.

Inquiries in 1968 led to the formation of the society in August, 1970. Membership now tops 550.

Problems facing restoration:-

1. Records of ownership virtually impossible to find and so the society are working under the assumption that the canal has reverted to the multitude of landowners along the route. All but two of these whilst apprehensive have been most helpful.
2. Eight roads cross the canal without bridges; as and when these roads come up for re-development it is hoped to persuade the authorities to provide bridges.
3. A short stretch of the canal has been built on at Bramley - the society see no reason why the Bramley stream, which runs parallel at this point, should not be used as a by pass.

The support they have received from landowners, local societies, local and county authorities, the river authority and public has been beyond expectations. They have been loaned a dragline, a crane, pumps and other equipment by local companies. Local farmers have lent tractors.

The President is Lord Egremont whose ancestor financed the canal and Vice Presidents include several County Councillors and the local M.P. The society feel that restoration is an opportunity to provide an amenity that Surrey and Sussex County Council cannot afford to miss. They realise that there are many problems but feel that none are insurmountable.

This article has been written from details supplied by the secretary of the society - Mr John Markwick, 59, Ardsheal Road, Worthing, Sussex, to whom I thank and apologise for any facts that may have been omitted due to lack of space.

TREASURER'S REPORT

So it's the treasurer's report. WAKE UP! I haven't started yet. Hard though it is to escape from platitudes in treasurers' reports, we can but try.

Until the end of 1972, Peter Swallow nursed the books, and did so most ably, leaving me with nothing to do but ake all the credit.

We are solvent, thanks to the steady flow of memberships, and are now able to start buying tools and equipment. The chief expense to date has been the £100+ needed to produce the feasibility study. Postage seems to soak up a lot of money, but this is one expense out of our control. Thanks to all those who contributed to the study or have made donations.

Trading stamps - green, pink, yellow or metallic puce - we can use 'em. Various items of equipment can be obtained with stamps or cigarette coupons, and the more the better. Send them to me, please.

It's a pity to be after your money all the time, but we need as much as we can get. So turn out your pockets in an idle moment (and if you have idle moments why aren't you navvying?) and send us the contents. Please note, however, that at present the banks place no value on fluff.

Andy Hiles.

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The Fund Raising Section is not quite off the ground - worth mentioning now is Ken Weaver of Newtown Garage, Eastington, gives cash stamps with petrol. A box will be placed there for donations of stamps. You need petrol, Ken needs custom, we need the stamps. - Many thanks Ken.

EVENTS

- Feb 3rd - Informal Slide Evening and general discussion at Subscription Rooms, Stroud. 7.30p.m.
- Feb.March and April First Tuesday in month.
Noggin and Natter at British Oak Inn, Bowbridge, Stroud. 8.00p.m.
- April 29th - Coach Trip to Crofton Pumps (in steam) on the Kennet and Avon Canal. Details included separately with "The Trow". - or ring Social Sec.
- Easter Weekend - Dudley Canal Trust Trad Rally and re-opening of Dudley Tunnel.
- June 23-24th - Bristol Water Festival. Further details in May edition of "The Trow".
- Every Sunday - Working Parties at Bowbridge from 10.00a.m. (Except April 29th - Crofton Coach Trip.)

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