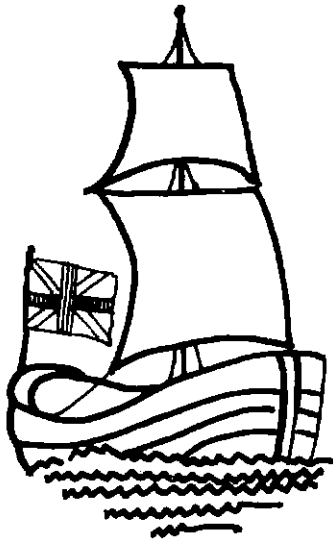




THE TROW



NO.5 FEBRUARY 1974



STROUDWATER



CANAL SOCIETY



EDITORIAL

Foremost in most peoples minds at present is the depressing economic situation. There will no doubt be many schemes shelved - some of which will certainly be road schemes. A period in fact of stagnation.

What should the Society do during this period? Sit back and wait for an improvement and then re-start with renewed vigour only to find the canal in a worse state than ever - more filled in - more bridges lowered - road plans finalized. Alternatively take advantage of the situation - actively campaign - actively improve the canal as much as possible so that when the road schemes rear up again it will be obvious to all that the canal must be restored.

Back issues of The Trow are available to members price 10p per copy. (10p in stamps is accepted).

I am still collecting old car batteries although we were able to buy the typewriter this method of fund raising has proved to be relatively easy and profitable. If you haven't one try your friend!

The next Trow will be published at the end of April - news from members is always welcome and should be sent to the editor not later than the 10th April - earlier if possible.

Distribution and addressing envelopes for the Trow has been kindly taken over by Linda Clarke, of Nailsworth. A great help with the increasing membership.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

December 1st saw the Societys' first A.G.M. and I was delighted that so many people took the trouble to come and support it. Usually such meetings are dull affairs badly attended but not for us and it is extremely gratifying to find so many gave us their support and I know the committee appreciated it.

The rules printed in the last issue of the Trow were accepted without revision and will last us until a Trust is formed which maybe well into next year. Such legalities take a long time formulating but are essential to safeguard both the members and the committee, we are fast growing too large for a Society status and a more responsible body will be the Trust for the management of the restoration of the canal.

The next issue of the Trow will I hope see the securing of the lease by the Society of the Bowbridge-Brimscombe section, excluding of course Air Plants (Hope Mill) but in the interim I do not want anyone jeopardising our position by working east of the white gate on the Bowbridge pound for the time being (Lower side of Griffen Lock). Landownership problems may prove difficult and no one should aggravate the situation.

Since the last edition we have had the scare of a fuel crisis which we seem to have avoided so far by the skin of our teeth but I believe this is only the first twinge of the impending world shortage of this valuable commodity and it will increasingly become too valuable to burn in motor cars and for that matter small boats.

We cannot go into a corner and sulk or work half the week hoping it will go away but to challenge the future eagerly, firstly by working eight days a week if necessary improving the facilities we have. April will see a new local government

re-organisation and I hope they will devise drastic plans for our future. These councils are filled with very talented people but they are often restricted by departmental strings. If there is a crisis then let us have crisis measures from our councils.

The Stroud Valley has a tremendous potential for water and rail transport and very shortly the society hopes to make an accurate survey of all industry adjacent to the canal to assess how much bulk goods could be freighted more economically by canal. If the results indicate the economic growth of the area could be improved by the canal this will add impetus to the campaign for its re-opening.

The Society now has a new committee with two new members. There is Phil Holland who will take on advanced planning with the assistance of Pete Swallow. Bob Paget is now our treasurer and like Phil has assisted for some time, now they wear official hats.

To those of the old committee who stepped down I would like to thank very sincerely for their efforts and especially to Mike Handford who in earliest days helped to stage the whole scheme.

Criticism has been levied at the Council by the public for not re-cycling waste paper, and many people have given the society their bundles normally left for the dustmen. This way the locality wins we sell the paper, it becomes re-used, and we get the money, spend it on the canal the public get the amenity but it is really doing two jobs the authority should be responsible for.

The fund raising committee side has used their usual "Midas" talents and they held a very successful Sale of Crafts at Minchinhampton just before

Christmas I only hope we are able to organise other sections of the society with the flair of our fund raisers.

Finally after a year in business many members subscriptions are now falling due and I sincerely hope these will be renewed as it is sign of your confidence in our organisation. We cannot operate without you. We hope we have met some of your requirements. I will be the first to admit we could have done more but the ball is now moving we now have to hit it and hit it hard for I believe the next few years will be the most critical in our future. This is the last major canal route route to be restored and its not going to sink now.

STOP PRESS - CHAIRMANS REPORT

Just published is a new £1,500 million strategy for water which outlines the proposals of the Water Resources Board to meet the needs of the country for water supply until well into the next century. The important statement as far as we are concerned is a ground water development close to the source of the Thames with pipelines feeding East and West from this reservoir. What a marvelous idea but why build a pipeline when one exists. The canal could provide a very desirable and attractive alternative for water distribution as we stated in our feasibility study 18 months ago. The Llangollen canal is basically a water pipe running at over 9 million gallons per day. The Thames and Severn is larger and with correct regulation and correct management could deliver in excess of this in both directions from the summit. Let us start using the assets we have to their best advantage.

WORKING PARTIES

The last quarter has been a period of consolidation with a particular emphasis on plant. Much of the working party effort has gone into re-conditioning the dragline and this is now nearing completion and arrangements are being made to put it into the canal bed at Bowbridge by the end of February if all goes to plan.

The following items have now been added to our plant list:-

One 15 cwt Thwaites Dumper Truck.

One 15 cwt Jones Crane.

It is hoped that these items will also be in action at Bowbridge shortly.

As the location of working parties tends to be a little fluid i.e. various factors crop up (normally the day after the Trow goes to print) to alter priorities of the various worksites it is proposed in future that all working parties will muster at Bowbridge between 9.45 - 10.00 am and will then move off to which ever worksite is being worked that day. For latecomers a board has been erected at Bowbridge by the circular weir and this will give the location of the working party.

Below is a Provisional List of Working Parties.

First Three Sundays February Ryeford
General tidying up.

First Three Sundays March Bowbridge
Silt clearance with dragline.

Away Working Party

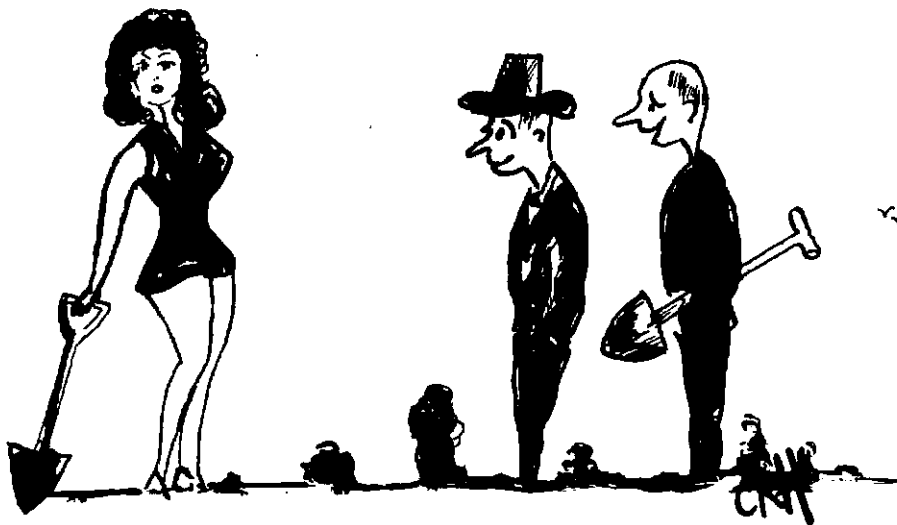
Fourth Sunday February Titford Canal
Contact Pete Swallow for details.

Our away working parties at Droitwich and Winson Green went off very well despite indifferent organisation of the National Dig at Droitwich.

As a return for our party at Winson Green the BCNS will be down on May 4/5 - see them in action on the Sponsored Walk.

Skittles - there will be a match against the BCNS at the Ship, Brimscombe on Saturday May 4th to which everyone is welcome to attend - a small collection will be made for the cost of the alley.

Our thanks go to the Blue School Wells for their working in assisting drainage between Air Plants and Lewis Lock of Brimscombe.



I know she can't dig but we get plenty of volunteers to show her.

Reg Herrington.

A MICRON'S TALE

You may have met a Micron at our Winter Sale of Art at Minchinhampton, you may have even bought one of our noble friends. I was talking to the one that lives at Tunnel House the other day and he was telling me the local gossip. Apparently this big limousine rolled up 'a short burst of trumpets' and a gentleman crashed into the bar and shouted, "I am editor of the greatest waterways magazine of all time, when is the next boat due." "Go away" said the landlord" can't you see there's no water in the cut.

"But where-ever I go canals have water in them and hire cruisers and nobby boats and campari and soda, so how dare you have a grotty old canal for me to see."

Micron was by now on the phone to his brother in law at Siddington to see if he could bring the level up a bit but it was too late the editor was outside again, scale rule in hand deciding whoever painted the Inn Sign could not have measured the boat depicted because the side timbers were 0.295mm which to scale and as any bargeman worth his salt knows they worked in 0.315mm timber.

Micron told me the editor got redder and redder as yet more errors appeared in the drawing so he stomped off to find the source of the Thames without even looking at the canal.

I bought old Micron the next edition but he did not get a mention but probably the journalist did not see him, he did not see the Thames & Severn so a poor old Micron had no chance of being seen.

STROUDWATER CANAL SOCIETY

Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 31st October 1973

INCOME

Membership Subscriptions	394	
Donations	227	
Proceeds of Fund Raising	<u>1360</u>	
		1981

EXPENDITURE

Materials for work on canal	113	
Professional surveys of canal and plant	30	
Printing Feasibility Report	99	
Printing and Distribution of the Trow	126	
Postages, Stationery and Membership Forms	90	
Insurance	8	
Subscriptions	9	
Hire of Rooms for meetings	7	
Advertising and Exhibition expenses	<u>39</u>	
		<u>521</u>
Excess of Income over expenditure for the year.		£ <u>1460</u>

BALANCE SHEET

FIXED ASSETS

Priestman Dragline Excavator - at cost		400
Winch - " "		30
Display Stands - " "		<u>43</u>
		473

CURRENT ASSETS

Cash - In Hand	56	
" - at Stroud Building Society	1000	
Stocks of Fund Raising goods - at cost	34	
Debtor	<u>4</u>	
		1094

LESS: CURRENT LIABILITIES

Bank overdraft	3	
Sundry Creditors	<u>104</u>	
		<u>107</u>

NET ASSETS

		987
		£ <u>1460</u>
<u>Represented by General Fund:</u> excess of Income over expenditure for the year		£ <u>1460</u>

TREASURER'S REPORT

Financially, the state of the Society in its first year must be described as very healthy. The results of the Fund Raising Committee speak for themselves, but we are always looking for new ways of raising regular income and if you have any ideas please contact Dave Elliott.

We cannot list here everyone who has donated to the Society but extend our sincere thanks. All income from donations and fund raising will be employed directly in restoration; there is already a growing list of plant and equipment and much is still needed. Last years efforts already mean that 1974 will see great changes and as the Society grows your continued support will be vital.

BOB PAGET.

SALES

The following items are available from the Society:-

BOOKS:

The Thames & Severn Canal by Humphrey Household.
price £2.95.

Stroud 1890-1915 by J.H. Stephens. price £1.20.

A short history of the NARROW BOAT by Tom Chaplin.
(See book review) price 50p.

MILESTONE PLATES:

Replica Thames & Severn milestone plates - full size made of fibreglass, black on gold or black on white. Would make ideal wall plaques. price £2.00.

BALL-POINT PENS:

Retractable ball-point pens marked Stroudwater Canal Society.
5p or 3 for 10p.

TOILET KEYS:

British Waterways Board toilet keys for use on waterway sanitary stations. All boat users will require these - on sale to current licence holders. price 25p.

PICTURES:

Approx. 5" x 4" pen & ink drawings - in transparent case - of Thames & Severn Canal features. price 40p each or five for £1.50.

Donation for postage on above items welcomed - All orders to:-
Graham Pegler, Bourne Nurseries, Brimscombe, Stroud Glos.

Tel: Brimscombe 2397.

CANAL TALES

Pleasures of a Narrowboat Owner

As the manager of a pair of narrowboats still in trade I have been asked to write something for the "Trow" on the subject. Five years of operation of our pair "Comet" and "Betelgeuse" should be enough experience to write a book, yet when I sit down to consider the set backs and frustrations of those five years I wonder why I do it. I doubt the book "Narrowboats for Pleasure and Profit" will ever be written, and certainly not by me! If the financial return is minimal then I must gain some sort of pleasure (a fellow boatman suggested once that we were all masochists) and shall attempt to record something of our experiences.

When we bought our boats in 1968 a fair number of working boats gave life to the Coventry, N.Oxford and Grand Union canals with coal traffics to Croxley, Southall and Rickmansworth. Our boats were fitted out at Charity Dock, Bedworth, and the boats passed by to and from the loading points at Atherstone and Gopsall. Boats stopped at the Dock for repairs, and there and at nearby Sutton Stop (Hawksbury Junction) waiting orders, so we made early contact with the working boatmen and their families. Much has been written of the boatmen and in some ways their life has been unduly idealised, but certainly their company was never dull!

During our time on the dock we slowly made friends, once the boatmens initial scepticism of our boating aspirations had been overcome they helped us in many ways. Help was never thrust on one though, struggling with some task I would become aware of an audience, a diffident suggestion would be made that "it wasn't done quite right", and I would learn another trick of the trade. Small items of gear would be donated, in fact ones needs having been expressed lockers and "fore ends" would be rummaged and the needful item would almost always

be turned up. No payment would be expected, it was taken for granted that one would return the favour when the opportunity presented itself, and as we became accomplished "tatters" and spare items of gear accumulated we took pleasure in being able to produce "just the thing needed".

With boats lying side by side the boaters mutual respect of privacy was a notable thing. Before crossing a neighbors boat permission would be asked, to step across the cabin doors would be bad manners and you crossed foreward of the cabin. Visiting was touchingly formal, to be invited into the boatmans cabin was a rare event, tea would be served with the best crockery and family treasures and photos displayed. The more informal social life centered on the pub, gossiping sitting on the boats gunwales or, in foul weather round the dock workshop stove or blacksmiths shop. Humour was direct and often ribald but never offensive, one was expected to give as good as one got. As "trainees" (the term for novice boatmen) we came in for much good natured ribbing and practical jokes.

Few of the working boats had much money spent on them, but even so, the boatmen took great pride in them. Paintwork may have been faded and scarred but it was constantly mopped down, brasswork was kept gleaming, tattered side cloths were carefully rolled (and even if the "top cloths" were lettered from BWB to LMS, when the boats were "sheeted up" they were carefully spread and roped down without a wrinkle) and worn decorative rope-work and fenders scrubbed white. Decrepit engines were nursed along by miracles of improvisation, the majority of boatmen couldn't have read a maintenance manual if they had one but were accomplished fitters from hard necessity. While some swore by a particular engine others were great experimenters and would be forever swapping engines with results that could be, to say the least, interesting! Since in most cases diesel and luboil

were "found" from the boatmens tonnage payments they were often found by dubious means, siphoning of tanks was not unknown and "cheap" drums of diesel changed hands after closing time.

Slowly our boats were fitted out, and, in the early days of January 1969, we were ready to make our debut as canal carriers.

Next issue-

A.E. JONES.

..... a frantic shovelling of coal saved the boat from sinking

BOAT DAY TRIP

Sunday 4th August, 1974. Stroudwater Canal Society will be running a day trip from Stroud by coach to Gas Street Basin. Here we shall board a Traditional Narrow boat and cruise for the day probably down to Bittell Reservoir along the Worcester-Birmingham Canal. Midday buffet will be included. Bookings to be in as soon as possible. Closing date 30th June, 1974. (Bookings will not be accepted after that date) Price: £3.00 adults and £1.50 children. O.A.P. £2. (Coach, Boat and Midday Buffet included)

Details and bookings to: Mr R. Phelps, 16 Chedworth, Newent, Glos.

(S.A.E. with bookings please)

A RALLY OF BOATS IS PLANNED FOR THE GLOUCESTER/SHARPNESS SHIP CANAL IN GLOUCESTER for the weekend of 22nd 23rd June and it is hoped many boats will visit this part of the world which has long been neglected within the cruising network. The rally may include a 'cruise in' as far as Saul Junction.

Details from Stroudwater Canal Society, Riverside, Priding, Saul, Glos. Tel: Saul 385 (evenings)

FUND RAISING

REPORT ON PAST EVENTS

Disco. The reasons why we lost £2 have been analysed and we are confident that other discos planned for the future will be more successful.

Rummage Sale. Well supported by contributors and customers. Raised over £40.

Exhibition & Sale of Art. An encouraging start for an event which we hope to organize annually. The exhibits were of an exceptionally high standard but sales were disappointingly low. Even so we raised £60, a large proportion of this from the Society's own stand. Thanks are due here to the members and non members who provided so many attractive items for sale.

Dog Show. Very well supported. Thanks are due to our 'consultants' Mrs Shirley Roe and Mr Blick for their valuable assistance. About £25 raised.

In case members reading my name at the end of the last three Fund Raising reports are under the impression that the financial resources of the Society are due solely to my own efforts, allow me to explain.

We now have a Fund Raising Sub-Committee of eight people. We have Audrey and Howard Rogerson of Amberley. Audrey converts volumes of virtually unreadable scrawl into most presentable letters, correcting the grammar on the way. Howard, in spite of being heavily committed to a partially restored Cotswold cottage, finds time to become deeply involved in all that we do - claiming he needs a change! We have Elaine and Graham Peglar of Brimscombe responsible for sales. (see page 11) We have Nigel Roe, well versed in the art of selling gas-filled balloons and currently organising our circuit of local shows for 1974. We have Lawrence Ratcliffe

of Miserden who has accepted responsibility for waste paper collections. This is a mammoth task which, we hope, will produce even larger financial returns as the price of recoverable waste rises. We have Bob Paget, newly elected as Treasurer to the Society, who still finds time to keep the Fund Raising Section's books straight.

FUTURE EVENTS

Having introduced the team I now list below some of the various activities which are planned for this year.

Rummage Sale. Another Rummage Sale - details later but please start sorting out the rummage.

Sponsored Walk. May 5th. This will follow the same route as last year i.e. from Stroud to Daneway and back - 14 miles round trip. Free refreshments, of course! Booklets available next month.

Medieval Feast. May 11th. At the Abbey Mill, Tewkesbury. £4 per head may appear expensive but this is the TOTAL expense for the evening and includes a six course meal, plenty of punch, mead, claret, ale, entertainment, service charges, VAT, the coach fare and 25p for the Society - well, its a fund raising event.

Barbecue. Aug.17th to be held at The Retreat, Amberley. Details later.

Summer Shows. Watch the Monthly News Notices for details of the Summer Shows at which we intend to exhibit.

Concert. Nov.23rd in Subscription Rooms, Stroud by Caerphilly Male Voice Choir. Details later.

Exhibition & Sale of Art. Nov.30th. Our second Exhibition & Sale of Art at Minchinhampton Youth Club. Details later.

DAVE ELLIOTT.

Stroudwater Chat

A Thames & Severn bronze token has been offered for sale by a member. - contact Editor for details.

MEMBERSHIP - If all memberships are renewed we have about 480 members. This is a splendid achievement. The new yellow Membership Forms have a bankers order on the back page. This will make it easier all round, if you decide to renew in this way.

CANALS BOOK 1974 - Shows bridge keepers houses on Glos/Sharpness Ship Canal as pubs!! - 13 pubs - 16 miles. Should be a most popular canal this year.

A few weeks ago a Severn River Authority digger was seen working near to the Gloucester-Newent road. Could they be restoring the Gloucester and Hereford canal!!!???

LOTTERY - Fund Raising hope to launch a Lottery this year. Details later.

STROUD OLD WORK HOUSE - Bisley Road, Stroud - has been offered to the Society for use for meetings etc. Consists of - 2 long rooms second and third floor in the North West wing plus accommodation for equipment etc on the ground floor. Volunteers wanted to renovate rooms - peppercorn rent!

Seen in Gloucester Docks - financial gentleman rowing in ever decreasing circles - knocking up miles for his I.W.A. Silver Sword award!! Closely followed by a gentleman with Press on his hat!

Caravan obtained by the Society for exhibition-sales purposes being renovated by volunteers - Thanks to Malcolm Critchley for allowing it to be parked in his garden.

Letters

Dear Sir,

As a new member of the society I wonder why no restoration has taken place on the Wallbridge-Bowbridge section of the Thames and Severn canal. The towpath is good and provides a very pleasant walk just two minutes from the centre of Stroud, whilst being already 'in Water' this pound would be improved very quickly to become a real amenity, transforming a neglected area of the town which could so easily be destroyed by rash development.

J. Smith.

(name and address given)

When the Society was formed application was made to the County Council to restore the section from Wallbridge No.1 Lock (lower) to Brimscombe. Permission was given for Bowbridge onward but was refused for the Wallbridge-Bowbridge section as the section was required to build the Stroud East-West bye-pass and would be a waste of the society's time, effort and money.

Book Review

ED.

When this book was first published in 1967, transport by narrow boat was decreasing at an alarming rate and it was felt that some of the interesting facts should be recorded. Surprisingly, little published matter was available on the design and construction of the boats, the firms who built them, the people whose lives were devoted to their operation, the traditions of painting and decoration, the cargoes carried and the way of life on waterways once hectic with freight movements.

Since the first edition reached an enthusiastic public, narrow boat decline has accelerated, while the interest in waterways and cruising has grown rapidly. This third edition has been completely revised, re-designed and provided with many more illustrations. It thus forms a valuable record of a fascinating aspect of our transport history.

PLANT

A recent assessment of the structure of the Society's administration system has resulted in the creation of a number of additional posts, one of which is Plant Engineer. With the dragline excavator well established in my garden for the duration of its overhaul, it seemed logical that I should temporarily, I hope accept this job until a permanent appointment can be made.

In this capacity, I can report that work on the dragline proceeds well considering that recent Sundays have been either cold or wet (or both). Credit for progress to date must go to a devoted gang working in conditions that they would not tolerate in their normal jobs. If present progress is maintained, the dragline should be ready for operation at the end of February.

In parallel with the dragline, overhaul work is proceeding on a Crane recently acquired and currently lying in Bristol. This job has been undertaken by a society member, Tom Robinson, who has accepted full responsibility for restoring this equipment to a safe operational standard. The machine is a mobile Jones Crane, 15 cwt capacity, 16ft. jib, diesel powered, capable of travelling under its own power. Ideal for lock clearance work. Cost about £120.

A further item of plant recently purchased is a 15cwt dump truck again diesel powered, and in good condition. Cost £95.00.

During the next few weeks, the duties and responsibilities of the Plant Engineer will be decided - a job specification, if you like. This may sound rather officious for a newly formed Society, but we feel that this job carries particular responsibilities since, in addition to the safety of operators the plant itself represents a high proportion of the Society's assets and needs to be well cared for. Having said that, I hope I haven't discouraged interest in what promises to be a very rewarding job. It is not often that one gets the opportunity to play with a 8 ton excavator.

DAVE ELLIOTT.

EVENTS

- March 5th - NOGGIN AND NATTER - SHIP INN, Brimscombe, Stroud (chance for members to meet committee whilst enjoying informal chat and drink)
- March 9th - OPEN EVENING - SUBSCRIPTION ROOMS, Stroud. Colour Slides of Birds by Mr A. Richardson. 7.30pm.
- April 2nd - NOGGIN AND NATTER.
- April 5th - OPEN EVENING - SUBSCRIPTION ROOMS, Stroud. Speaker to be arranged. 7.30pm.
- May 4th - SKITTLES MATCH - SHIP INN, Brimscombe, Stroud. BCNS Working Party Team v Stroudwater Canal Society Team. (details P. Swallow)
- May 5th - SPONSORED WALK - Fund Raising Event of the year - walk from Stroud to Daneway and back. (Refreshments and transport provided free)
- May 7th - NOGGIN AND NATTER - again.
- May 11th - MEDIEVAL BANQUET - Abbey Mill, Tewkesbury, (Fund Raising Event see inside for exact details)
- Aug 4th - BOAT TRIP - See inside Trow for details.
- Aug 17th - BARBECUE - Amberley (Fund Raising Event - see inside for details)

WORKING PARTIES: First Three Sundays Feb - Ryeford
" " " March - Bowbridge
(see Working Party Report)

STOP PRESS - GLOUCESTER BOAT RALLY - JUNE 22 - 23.