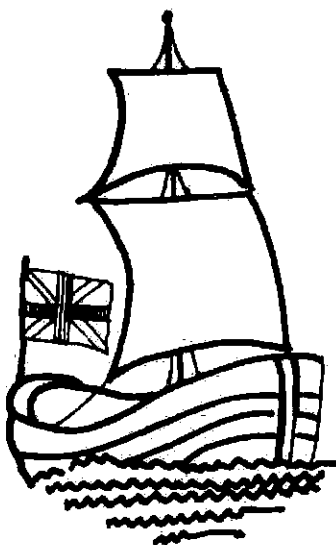




THE TROW



NO. 8 NOVEMBER 1974



STROUDWATER



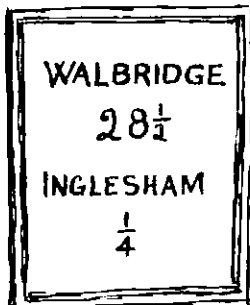
CANAL SOCIETY

EDITORIAL

This edition of the Trow sees the end of the series of articles by Tony Jones. I am sure that everyone will agree that this has been an excellent series - many thanks Tony.

I recently visited Bowbridge after a period of a few weeks away and was amazed to see the vast amount of work done by the dragline. It is a pity that more members do not attend the working parties these days. What has happened to the old crowd that longed and openly pronounced the need for mechanical aids in the early days? I personally intend to make regular visits once this edition has been duly distributed so please lets see the old crowd and some new faces as well. Even if you don't go down to work why not go along and give moral support. Weve got the plant let's have the manpower.

It seems inevitable that about two copies of each edition of The Trow fail to be delivered to members so if you do not get your copy of this marvellous magazine please let me know, just to remind you The Trow is published during the first week of:-
FEB - MAY - AUGUST - NOVEMBER.



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Now we are entering our third year and well on our way to becoming the STROUDWATER - THAMES & SEVERN CANAL TRUST LTD., a different approach must be made towards the working of the restoration. We have proved the point that we can be enthusiastic amateurs but it is now time to become experienced restorers and extend our activities to full time working. Already we have a part time employee on waste paper but we very shortly have to recruit full time bricklayers and dragline operators if we are to proceed faster. This combined with the construction of the first pair of lock gates should give us a successful year in 1975. This does not mean that if we have paid workers on the canal the rest of the membership will be able to sit back and let them get on with the job. The idea of this work is to supplement the weekend working parties not to replace it, secondly wages will get through a very large amount of money and waste paper and other fund raising events will have to be supported like never before.

Another very important development to the immediate future is the establishment of a Cirencester - Thames section of the society, as the route becomes more distant so we proportionally are less able to maintain tight control over it and for this reason we are pleased there is a separate section of the society to look after this half of the route. Help of course is needed here too and those living in that area should contact Peter Boyce whose address is to be found in the cover of the Trow.

An important fact for them is the New Road for the Cricklade Bye Pass which is crossing the Thames at somewhere like 10' 6" over the water. It is a pity we had not this sort of headroom provided this end of the system.

In this respect we learn that our friends on the Forth and Clyde Canal restoration have a road scheme over their derelict canal but the authorities are putting

in a sufficiently large culvert towards the possibility of restoration. One cannot help wondering for how much longer Gloucestershire County Council will sit on the fence. I think it must be the only authority on the waterway recovery system which is not supporting restoration in principal if not physically.

The recent heavy rains have made one thing importantly clear or should have done to the local water authorities that the Stroudwater Thames & Severn is still vital as a storm water channel all along the route wherever one goes may it be Daneway, Coates, Cerney Wick or in short sections above Oil Mills Bridge water is flowing and in some places very abundantly. It is a pity this quantity cannot be maintained all year round or we should have no water supply problems at all.

Recently vast improvements have been made to the Stroudwater between Ryeford and Eastington by the Company of Proprietors using a floating reed cutter a marvelous device owned by the Severn Trent Water Authority. Part of the canal cleared is the location of the proposed culvert over the canal at Stonehouse it is essential the local authorities span the canal here rather than commit another breach in the system. Anyone viewing this now cleared section of canal could not appreciate others wanting to obliterate it.

Unfortunately for the Company of Proprietors an enthusiastic local press gave us the credit for the work. The work done was to assist water flow to the essential R.H.P. Ball Bearing factory at Stonehouse which extracts all its cooling water from the Stroudwater. I have heard rumoured it is the secret ingredient which gives their bearings such high quality.

Recently stone walls and other obstructions have been placed across the public footpath between Bakers Mill Upper and Whitehall bridge. Members are requested not to take any other action than to write letters of complaint to the County Council Surveyors Department, Shire Hall, Gloucester. These will accompany many letters already written by members of the public who for some found the walk impassable. The towpath in

this area is public right of way. - Although complaints should be sent to the G.C.C. they were not of course responsible for the obstruction being erected.

The Social committee continue with great success, the lecture and slide show given by Mr Padin and Mr Gardner was enjoyed by everyone I for one did not realise that so many photographs were available on the canal and it is hoped someone about John Stephens size will produce a book showing the canal yesterday and today. Congratulations to Brian and Marian Marsh on the organisation of a very comprehensive tour of Stourport, The Severn Valley Railway, Ironbridge and Coalbrookdale Museums.

Finally a plea for help we desperately need help to clean out and make habitable the two floors of the Work House in Bisley Old Road if you can whitewash you are in. Please volunteer it is your accommodation.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

December 7th, 1974 Stroud Subscription Rooms 7.30pm

AGENDA

1. Apologies.
2. Minutes of the last meeting.
3. Matters arising.
4. Chairmans report.
5. Treasurers report.
6. Election of officers.
7. Any other business.

WORKING PARTIES

It is disappointing to admit that appeals for additional help in the previous issue of the Trow have largely been unsuccessful. True some new faces have appeared and the owners have worked very well indeed. But still we are working with only half a dozen or so members and have been rather embarrassed of late to be out numbered by visiting working parties. However, some progress has been made toward the setting up of the specialised working parties. Roger Hill has offered to organise and supervise dragline operating, and is very well supported by a keen but very small party. Pat Hobbs has agreed to lead the main working party but needs a lot more support. Perhaps the most encouraging event of the past few months has been the start of the remaking of the gates for Griffin Lock. This work is being done by John Bond of Chalford. Already one heel post is complete but not before John had spent many hours, reading, looking, measuring and generally studying the techniques of the old craftsmen. It is no secret that the cost of the timber for these gates - which are - the upper and smaller gates will cost £500, including balance beams but excluding the planking, the money being raised entirely by our own efforts. In parallel with this work, the design of the safety grill for the circular weir at Bowbridge is in hand as is the new paddle gear for the same lock.

During the past few weeks more heavy lifting jobs have been done for us, very professionally by Stroud Sea Cadets. As work at Bowbridge progresses more work of this nature will occur and I am still anxious to form our own heavy lift gang. Any offers?

Similarly we still need to form a bricklaying gang. If this is not possible within the next few weeks, we shall be forced to spend good money on sub-contract labour. Surely someone knows something about brick-laying!

During the past few weeks we have been assisted by working parties from, Horam Scouts, Sussex (two full weekends) South Wales I.W.A., Selsley Scouts and Bristol Conservation Corps (weekend). We are very grateful for their help and hope to see them again.

With winter approaching the Thursday evening shift is no longer practical but working parties still meet on Saturday afternoons (2pm) and all day Sunday (10am).

Work proceeds at Bowbridge with the dragline clearing 20 - 30 yards per week. The reeds have been cleared and work is in hand to build temporary dams across the mouths of the lock. A large bore tube is then to be laid between the two dams to carry the flow, and the lock pumped out in readiness for repairs to the brickwork. That's the theory - which can only materialise if we get sufficient support.

This weekend is a historical occasion (or hysterical - depending how we get on!) as the dragline should negotiate its first bridge. It will then be on the home straight for Griffin Lock.

Dave Elliott

The 'Eastern End' - The opportunity arises for members living East of the tunnel to take an active part in working Parties! With the conclusion of negotiations work will start at a site somewhere between Sapperton and Inglesham, and will be initially clearance of heavy undergrowth and overgrowth in a lock chamber. Would all those who can help, with physical or mental effort, please contact me. Confirmation of a site and date of working parties will be published as soon as possible.

Pete Boyce

A WALK ALONG THE TOWPATH

At a recent talk given by the Society to the STONEHOUSE WOMENS INSTITUTE members were asked to write a poem about the canal. The following was judged to be the best.

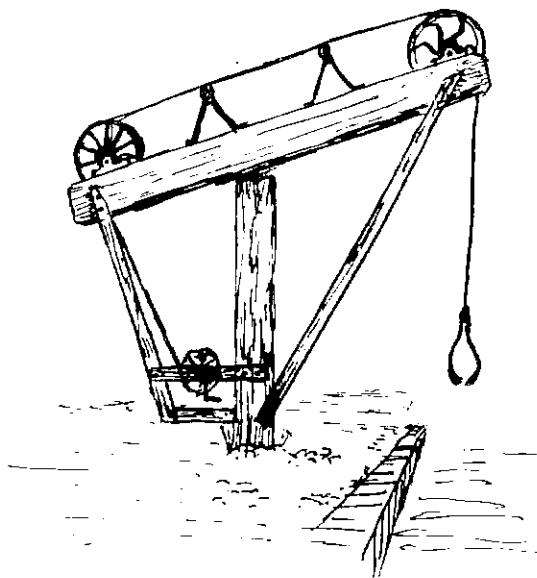
A walk along the towpath
In summers long ago
Memories of childhood
Spent where the rivers flow.

How sad and how neglected
The stream slips slowly by
Where once, the Horse drawn barges
Only swans sail by.

Not just the Stroud Bye Waters
Throughout all Englands land
Our heritage neglected
Where once they were so grand.

With just a few good people
Perhaps its not too late
We still may see the beauty
Restored by hand of fate.

Mrs Burrell



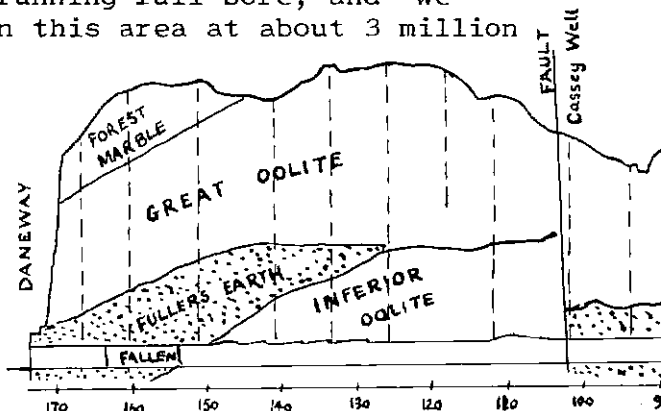
ADVANCE PLANNING

Sapperton Tunnel

During the weekend of 28/29th September, the Advance Planning section organised an inspection of the whole of the tunnel. On Saturday we assembled at Tunnel House, Coates at 9.30 and prepared our equipment. Seven stalwart volunteers, two inflatable boats, one Mirror dinghy, a canoe, surveying gear, ropes, helmets, lamps and a certain amount of food were transported down to the tunnel portal. After the heavy rain of previous week there was a good depth of water flowing from the tunnel, and by 10.15 we were on our way to 7 hours of exploration.

For the whole length of the tunnel distances are marked on the wall in chains (66ft) which makes recording of information much easier. From the portal to chainage 13 the arch is partly of brick and partly of stone and is in excellent condition. From here to chainage 45 (about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from portal) there are areas of arch alternating with plain rock tunnel. At chainage 46 a hole in the roof of the brick arch reveals a rock shaft about 70 ft high and the steel beams and sleepers of the cover can be seen at the top. Just beyond this the tunnel enters the Fullers Earth clay and the 'long arching' begins.

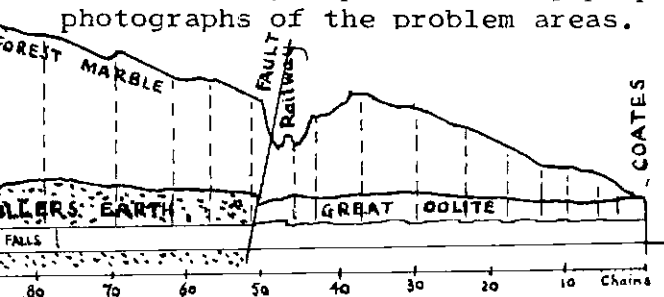
At the line between the rock and the Fullers Earth, the channel is lined with concrete, and clay pipes project up from the top of the concrete walls. On Saturday these were running full-bore, and we estimated the flow in this area at about 3 million



gallons per day. In various places in the long arching, the foot timbers across the floor of the tunnel can be clearly seen. At chainage 73 the first fall occurs as a collapse of the north wall, closely followed by a complete fall about 25 yards long. Beyond this are two smaller falls and three places where the walls have collapsed. This bad area continues to chainage 82, a total length of about 200 yards. From here to chainage 104 the arching is in fairly good condition, except for a few bulges in the walls. At this point the tunnel enters the rock again, and this length has a stone trough lining protecting the puddle clay which seals the fissures in the rock. This length is a little more than $\frac{1}{2}$ mile long before the arch starts again at chainage 146. Although the first 100 yards is in good condition, it gradually worsens until at chainage 154 the tunnel is completely blocked.

On Sunday we waded in from the Daneway end to the first fall from the roof at chainage 167. From the other side of this fall, the poor state of the arch can be seen for about 70 yards to a complete blockage at chainage 164. This may be separate from the blockage at the other end, or it may be that the tunnel has collapsed completely for 200 yards.

The overall condition of the tunnel can be summarised as follows:- From Coates $\frac{3}{4}$ mile in good condition, part arch and part rock, with a further 200 yards of arch in fair condition. This is followed by $\frac{1}{4}$ mile in poorer condition, including 200 yards with a number of falls. There is then over $\frac{3}{4}$ mile mainly in rock in almost perfect condition, followed by a 200 yard fall. The remaining 200 yards to Daneway is in fair condition. Restoration is not the problem some people would have us believe, and should be well within our capabilities. A feasibility report is being prepared and will include photographs of the problem areas.



FUND RAISING

Past events

The Barbecue, Aug 17th. Favoured again by good weather 60 people had an enjoyable evening, eating drinking chatting and listening to folk music beautifully sung by Daryl Foxwell and his colleague John, and Phil Holland.

Presentation Evening, Sept 20th. A very large crowd was assembled in the Subscription Rooms to see this year's awards presented. We were very pleased to again welcome Mr Goodfellow who presented the Waller Trophy, and also Mr Michael Whitbread who presented a new award this year - The Whitbread Trophy. During the evening it was announced that this years Walk has yielded over £2500 with more still to come.

Coming events

Nov. 23rd The Caerphilly Male Voice Choir, Subscription Rooms, Stroud, 7.30pm. Tickets 50p at the door, 45p preday and 35p O.A.P. and children. A good evening out. Tickets from The Retreat, Mrs A. Rogerson on Amberley 2412 or committee members.

Nov. 30th Our 2nd Annual Exhibition and Sale of Art. This year in the Minchinhampton Youth Club. We hope to open at about midday this year, close for an hour or so at tea time then reopen for the Wine and Cheese in the evening. Tickets 50p for the evening (from those mentioned above), pay at the door during the day.

Waste Paper

Income from sales of waste paper - a general term which includes news paper, magazines, periodicals, cardboard, books, animal feed bags, computer stationery and shredded paper - continues to rise. In one six week period we dispatched paper valued at almost £500 and we still have more than ample stocks.

Whilst not without its problems our system seems to be working quite well. We have the baler in operation and now employ someone two days a week to collect from factories, shops and offices.

Perhaps the most disappointing feature of this exercise is that the same people who attend the working parties also keep the waste paper service going. True we need the money, but we also need a fresh set of faces. Its not heavy work - a bit dusty maybe but very worthwhile. To the ladies may we say that we occasionally find in the paper an old knitting pattern - and Gentlemen, it has been known to unearth the odd copy of Playboy!

If you don't want to dig, why not join the waste paper gang. We have a meeting for anyone interested at 8pm at the Black Horse, Amberley, on Thursday Nov. 14th.

In the meanwhile we shall be baling (at our store at Aston Down) every Saturday afternoon, 2pm. Wear Wellingtons!

For Sale

One electric Cylindrical mower 14", good cond, but need regrind. £10 o.n.o. See Dave Elliott - Money to Fund Raising Account.

Ann Elliott

THE STROUDWATER CANAL by Michael Handford

We are pleased to inform you that this book is now with the publishers so soon a gap in canal histories will be filled. Further details about this book in February edition of The Trow.

BOOK REVIEW

Our Canal Population by George Smith - Published by EP Publishing Ltd., Bradford Road, East Ardsley, Wakefield, Yorkshire. Price £3.00. Reprint of the 'New Edition' of 1878.

Many books have been written about canals rivers and the boats that use them, their history and their future. As its title suggests this book is neither about canals or really about boats but about the floating canal population - in this respect it is perhaps unique. It is perhaps also unique in the fact that it was written not for profit but as an instrument in George Smith's struggle for better conditions for boat people. This is clearly pointed out in the opening paragraph.In issuing this volume to the public of Christian England, I make no pretence to author-craft or fine writing. My aim is solely to write a dark chapter in the annals of the poor, so as to command the ear of our legislators and those high in office, and to draw their attention to the piteous wails of the thousands of poor perishing boat-women and children.

The first part of this book describes the life and conditions of the 100,000 men, women and children living on boats during the mid 1800's - the letters and replies that were published during the campaign for improvement.

The second part includes a copy of the 1877 Canal Boat Act together with suggestions for its implementation.

This book describes the blackest side of the canal age and for this reason alone one could justify it a place on the canal books shelf.

STAMPS....STAMPS.....STAMPS.....STAMPS.....

Many thanks to all those that still regularly send in Green Shield Stamps and other coupons.

SOCIAL

NOGGIN AND NATTER - CHANGE OF VENUE

In the New Year we change the Noggin and Natter evening to the very fine Cotswold Bar of the Union Inn, Stroud. This is immediately opposite the entrance to the London Road Car Park. For the first time we will be able to meet in private in what is probably the most pleasant bar in Stroud. So come to the Union at 7.30 on the first Tuesday of the month.

CHRISTMAS GET-TOGETHER - 18TH DECEMBER

The Union Inn, Stroud at 7.30pm. The Christmas Get-Together serves the dual purpose of christening the Unions Cotswold bar as a Society meeting place and getting everyone into training for the Christmas festivities.

There will be folk singing and a buffet provided for 25p per head, so let us see lots of members and friends at this new luxurious meeting place.

NEW YEAR SOCIAL EVENT - FILM EVENING

As a change from the usual illustrated lectures we are arranging a Film Evening at the Subscription Rooms. There will be one full length feature film probably with a canal setting and a short supporting film. A small charge will be made to cover the cost. The film will start at 7.45 prompt so be there early to be sure of a seat.

SOCIAL REPORT

Upper Avon Restoration. A most enjoyable and inspiring evening was had by the handful of members who attended the illustrated lecture by Dr. Johnson from

the Stratford Canal Society. In a very amusing and lively style he told how a river that had been abandoned for 120 years was turned into a navigable waterway in a mere five years. The difficulties of finance and an insistence on a very much lower water level than previously seemed insuperable. However, a quarter of a million pounds was raised and some eight locks built from scratch. It seems amazing that only 30 people out of a membership of 600 will attend a superb illustrated lecture on a topic so essential to the society.

Transport in the Stroud Valley. An enjoyable evening was spent on Friday 20th Sept, when the presentations were made for the Annual Sponsored Walk followed by an extremely interesting series of slides shown by Mr Padin and Mr Gardner from Chalford. These slides were a small sample of several hundred collected by Mr Padin and Mr Gardner over many years and the slides shown were carefully selected to give the society member a complete photographic history of the canal from the Severn to the Thames showing some well known landmarks and several local characters who had worked on the canal and their boats. It was particularly heartening to see the change in the canal after the restoration at the turn of the century, which was well illustrated by the slides.

We must be grateful to Mr Padin and Mr Gardner for supporting the society and for such a fascinating talk.

Tony & Carole Bradford

STEAM/COACH TRIP

On Sunday September 29th, arrived with packed lunches and bags of sunshine our party boarded a coach at 9.00am in the London Road Car Park, Stroud, then headed for Bewdley and the Severn Valley Railway. Having ample time in hand we made a twenty minute stop at Stourport to wander around the canal basin, then on to Bewdley where we had time to look around before our train left at 11.45am. We steamed our way to Bridgnorth an hour away, where the enthusiasts again had time to see what wonders this station could afford. Others who could not ignore their hunger pangs found the coach waiting with their various repasts on board. On again, now heading for Iron Bridge, where the weather took a turn for the worse. We arrived in rather a heavy downpour, but without being daunted we dressed as suitably as possible and set off for our walk around Blists Hill Museum. The rain stopped almost immediately and everyone was able to enjoy the various relics of the industrial revolution which had been restored. The coach then took us on to the Coalbrookdale Museum Site, stopping to view the famous Iron Bridge on the way. After leaving Coalbrookdale at 6.30pm we arrived back at Stroud at 8.00pm.

Only a fortnight before this trip it looked as though it would have to be cancelled. We were wondering whether we could even fill a 29 seater coach when - whoosh - we had filled a 45. This 'whoosh' came rather near the "cancel if not enough response" date. It does surprise us that there were only 25 members out of over 600 who were willing to come. The trip was only able to run due to the support of 20 non-members. We, the social committee would like to know the kind of events you would support, so please think about it and send us some "sensible" suggestions.

Marian & Brian Marsh

CANAL TALES

With the end of '72 pit strike we set about organising our coal trade. Once again the Ashby Canal Association were the main instigators of this new trade, by becoming Ashby Canal Transport Ltd. and registered coal merchants they arranged the purchase and delivery of coal to the boats. A large measure of credit is due to the indefatigable Nick Hill of A.C.T. who was pushing the retail coal trade long before it became fashionable with the enthusiasts and published in the waterway journals.

In mid-March 'Comet' and 'Betelgeuse' loaded at Gopsall and, crewed by Jim and Dinah Marshall, made a successful debut as floating coal yards, our first load of over forty ton sold in eight days along the Sharpness Canal. As a closer loading point than Gopsall we tried Anglesea on the Wyrley and Essington for a while, but it was taking up to three days to do the 16 miles to Horsley Fields on the Main Line. I should think ours were the last boats to load there, the level was always dropping due to pumping at Walsall power station and one trip required the assistance of a tug (B.W.B.), lorry and seven men - the local lengthsmen were very good, but were probably most relieved when we gave up Anglesea!

Altogether 1972 was a busy year. We had a load of maize from Sharpness to Pershore which turned out badly. Comet and Betelgeuse were on dock at Charity so we sub-contracted the maize, the boat proved leaky and the cargo arrived wet, with the result we forfeited our tonnage and paid to have the maize dried. It was an expensive lesson in choosing ones sub-contractors more carefully and lost us what could have been a long term contract. However, we kept a few boats busy besides our own with coal and, a bit of variety, firewood logs back loaded to Walsall! Towards the end of the year the water shortage started to make itself felt (this was 1972, it took another twelve months before the pleasure boaters started to notice, or B.W. admitted it!) In spite of lengthening trip times

and a punitive stoppage programme the coal trade continued reasonably well through the winter.

The summer of '73 Jim and Dinah hired Betelgeuse from us and set out to make themselves a local institution at Chester with horse-drawn trips. We did a little tripping with 'Comet' at Gloucester and a coal delivery up on the Weaver to British Waterways bridge and lock keepers there. Winter came, and the miners decided to go slow with the result we moved very little coal. It was perhaps as well that we had decided, on the strength of 'Comet's' modest success as a trip boat to expand into the pleasure boating trade with the building of the 'Gloster Packet'.

So, at present, we appear to have a well balanced scheme of operation with the boats employed on tripping and camping in the Summer and the coal trade in the winter. In the middle of bringing this account of our activities up to date the phone rings, the boats are fixed to load at Penkridge Monday. "Sorry Tony, so smokeless, but I've ordered you a load each of cubes and cobbles, is that okay?" It has to be, the supplies are hard enough to come by so we'll take what we can get! No point in getting in a sweat, wait for Jim to confirm he's actually got the loads Monday, the pit washers could break down or the lorry driver go sick, then hope there's good levels down the 'Stour Cut' When he's out on the river at Stourport I can start letting the customers know he's coming with a fair certainty the boats will be there on time. A working boat owners life is never dull.

Tony Jones

EVENTS

- Nov. 2nd - I.W.A. GLOS. BRANCH FORMATION MEETING.
Wheatstone Hall, Brunswick Rd, Gloucester.
at 2.30pm - please come.
- Nov. 2nd - ANNUAL DANCE - MINCHINHAMPTON YOUTH CLUB.
at 8pm For details ring Tony Bradford.
- Nov. 5th - NOGGIN AND NATTER - SHIP INN, BRIMSCOMBE.
(chance for members and committee to get
together informally over drink and chat)
- Nov. 23rd - CAERPHILLY MALE VOICE CHOIR - SUB ROOMS,
STROUD see page 12.
- Nov. 30th - EXHIBITION & SALE OF ART - MINCHINHAMPTON
YOUTH CLUB see page 12.
- Dec. 3rd - NOGGIN & NATTER - SHIP INN, BRIMSCOMBE.
- DEC. 7TH - ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - SUBSCRIPTION
ROOMS, STROUD - 7.30PM
- Dec. 18th - CHRISTMAS GET TOGETHER - UNION INN,
STROUD. 7.30pm see page 15.
- Jan. 7th - NOGGIN & NATTER - COTSWOLD BAR, UNION INN,
STROUD. 7.30PM see page 15.
- Jan. 25th - FILM EVENING - SUB ROOMS, STROUD. 7.45PM
"The Bargee" starring Harry H. Corbet
(of Steptoe & Son) all welcome - small
charge.
- PRESS DATE - February Trow - 10th January, 1975