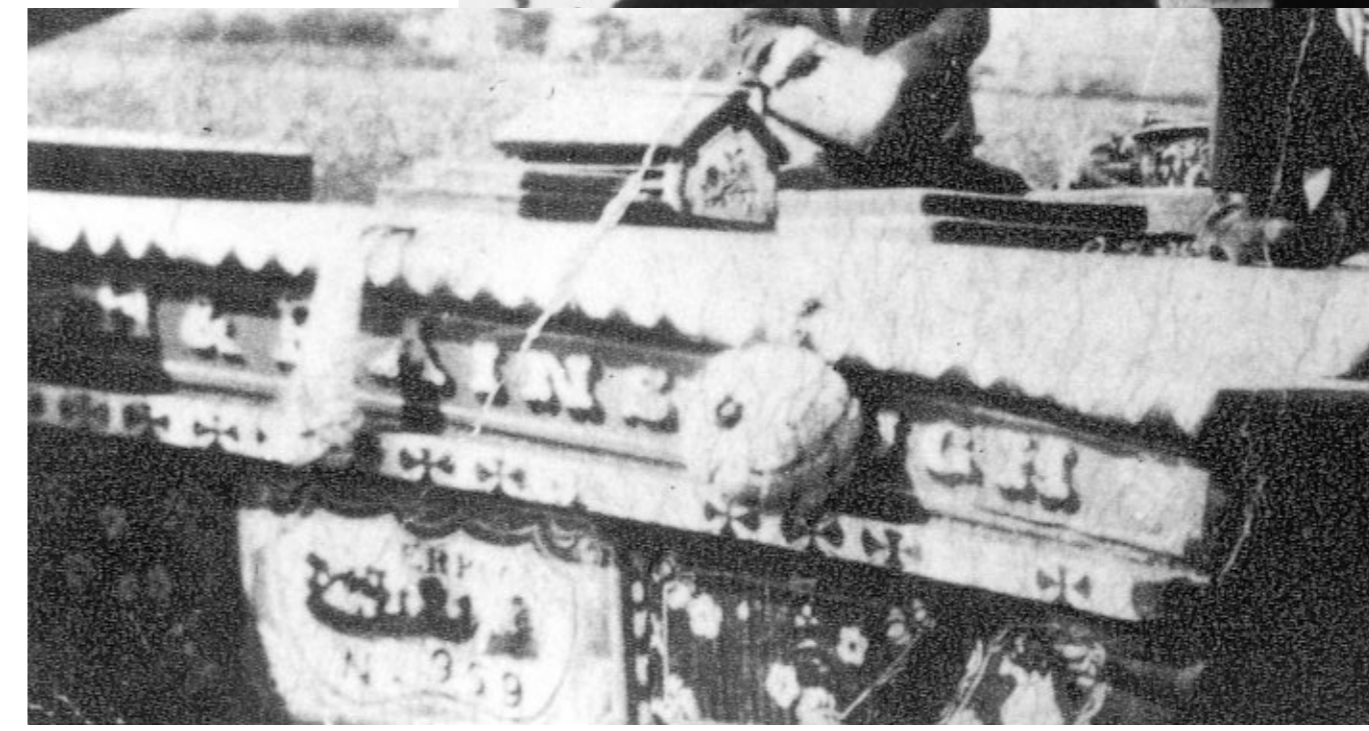


LEEDS & LIVERPOOL CANAL BRIGHTWORK

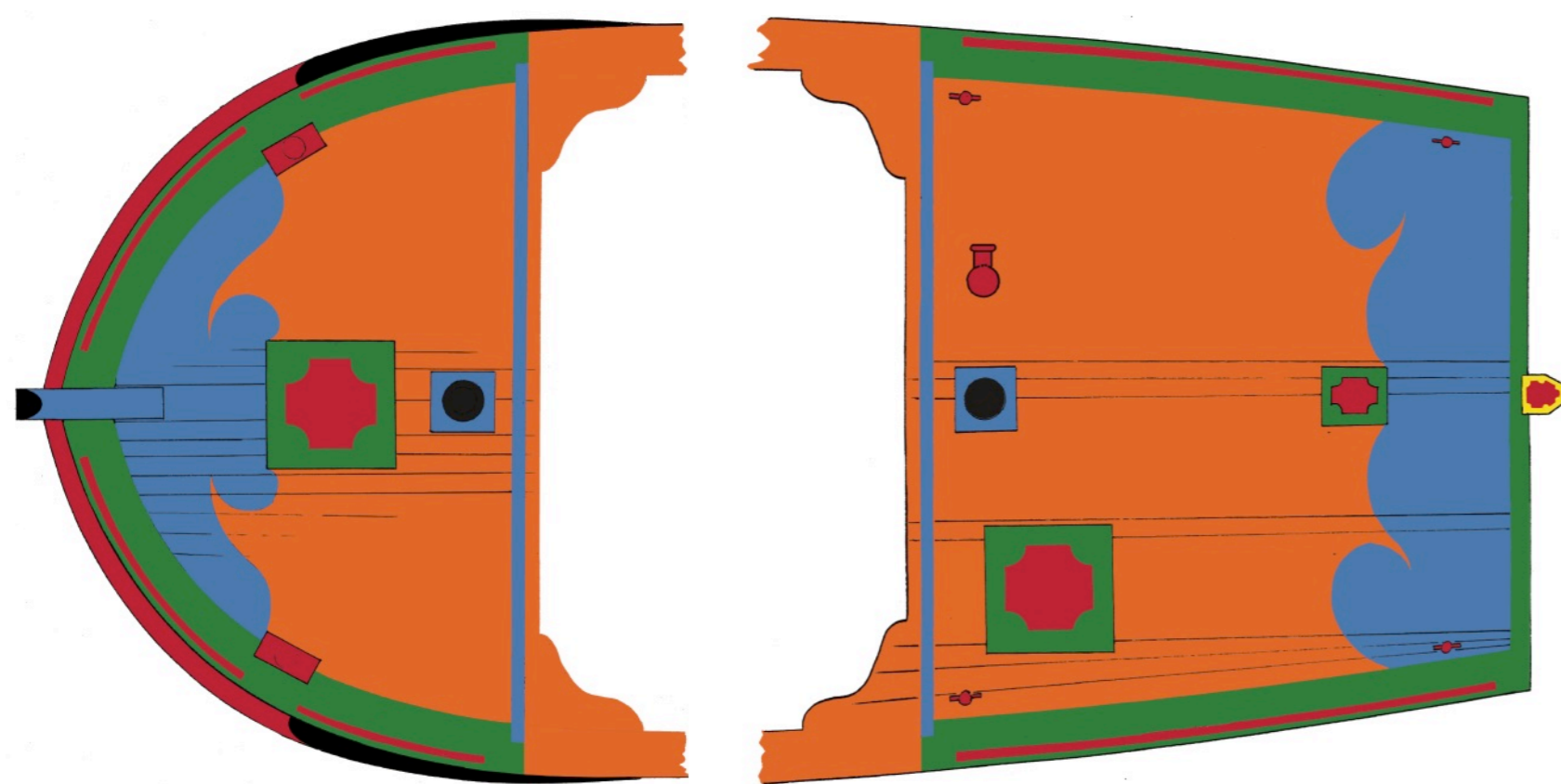


Above: The bow of a boat owned by Croasdale's, coal carriers from Blackburn, as painted at Hodson's Whitebirk, dockyard. Varnished wood often featured in Leeds & Liverpool Canal boat decoration, with painted graining being used where the wood was unsuitable. It is a reminder that this type of decoration came from sea-going boats, where varnished wood and carving were important features. A varnished or grained finish was more likely to be found on boats decorated in Yorkshire.

Right: The Yorkshire style of 'Brightwork' used fewer scrolls but more intricate lining and borders. It was less flamboyant than the Lancashire style, but showed a similar attention to detail. Unfortunately there are no colour photos, but this 1910 black and white photo shows the Anne after launching at Apperley Bridge, near Bradford and is typical of best Yorkshire tradition.



Above: Two fine examples of Leeds & Liverpool Canal boats painted in the Lancashire style. The lower one is an H & R Ainsoughs boat from Burscough; the upper is a coal boat belonging to Richard Williams of Liverpool. Both are square-sterned boats, which provided the boat painter with plenty of opportunity for displaying his skill. Note in particular the varied decoration to the guard irons. These were only two or three inches wide, and here have been covered with intricate designs, not just simple triangular 'dragons teeth', but semicircles containing scrolls, Maltese crosses and other detail. The flat panels have pictures of country scenes, flowers and bunches of fruit, all surrounded by further decoration. A Liver bird is included as this signified that the boats were registered in Liverpool. This was required from the 1870s to ensure that public health regulations were adhered to, but it is hard to imagine a boat with such splendid decoration having a dirty cabin. Amongst the other features which have been decorated are the dog kennel on the WILLIAM and the cabin ventilator on the Ainsough boat. Various types of ropework, including decorated and ropedged pieces of wood cut to a heart shape, were used to protect the paintwork when the boat was in use. They were often removed when the boat was tied up so that all the paintwork could be seen.



Above: Even the decks of boats were painted with geometric designs. The covering boards around the edge of the deck were always coloured, making the extent of the deck easier to see in the dark. The blue areas at bow and stern must have had some significance, but the reason for them has been lost over time.



A barrel painted in the style of Sheldon's of Parbold



A barrel recently painted for Billy Wells of Dover, on the Leigh branch.



An example from Hodson's of Whitebirk, near Blackburn

Above: Drinking water was usually carried in a barrel kept on deck. The barrel was the property of the boatman and his initials were painted on it, together with scrollwork and pictures. There was no particular subject for the picture, a scene from a Christmas card or a postcard often being used as a pattern. The three barrels illustrated here show the Lancashire style of paintwork, with three different styles of painting for the barrel ends.

Right: A view inside the traditionally painted cabin on PLUTO, a wooden motor boat built in 1939. The panelling had painted graining, light oak for the centres and mahogany for the surrounds. The moulding between the two was light green, as was the bench seat. The cast iron stove was typical of those fitted to Lancashire boats. Those in Yorkshire were similar, but tapered upwards, ending in the square-section chimneys typical of Yorkshire-built boats.



Left: Iron and steel motor boats had less decoration, with few scrolls or other embellishments. The panels, however, did have the scalloped corners, typical of Leeds & Liverpool Canal boats. This is the SEVERN near Chorley in the 1960s.



Above: Ropework was also used for decoration, with 'turk's heads' featuring prominently on Leeds & Liverpool Canal boats. Once again, the style was different from that found on narrow boats, like the one above.



Above & Left: There are some similarities between the style of painting on Leeds & Liverpool Canal boats and that found on narrow boats, particularly those from north west canals, such as the IRENE on the Shropshire Union Canal. Scrolls and geometric patterns could be found on both, though the stylized roses and castles of the narrow canals were never used on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal. Early photographic evidence suggests that illustrations were of a high artistic standard.

