



LEEDS & LIVERPOOL
CANAL CRAFT

by G. WHEAT

£2

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Introduction and Acknowledgments

This booklet is not intended to be a definitive work on the subject. The lore of the waterways of the north is virtually unrecorded, and this booklet is intended to interest readers to the extent of conducting their own researches, or putting their memories down on paper. In fact, books relating to the history of canal craft, and of cargo carrying on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal are being prepared by other authors, and it may be that the reader will be interested enough to search out these books when they are published.

The Chapter on Decorative Paintwork was kindly contributed by A. J. Lewery, whilst the other chapters are really edited versions of others' reminiscences. In particular I am indebted to Messrs. A. Holden, D. Lorenz, R. Lorenz, W. Monk, J. Parkinson, B. B. Parr, E. Paget-Tomlinson, and T. N. Walls.

GEOFF WHEAT

June 1972.

COVER CAPTION

"Parbold," the horse-boat of H. & R. Ainscough Ltd. of Burscough, approaches Appley Lock en route for Wigan. The last horse-drawn trip—1960.

Courtesy J. Parkinson.

SETTING THE SCENE

The Leeds & Liverpool Canal Act was passed in 1770, and the Canal was opened in stages from 1773, although delays on the construction of the summit section prevented through navigation before 1816. The Leigh Branch, connecting with the Bridgewater Canal, opened in 1820.

The River Douglas had been navigable some 50 years earlier up to Gathurst (4 miles below Wigan), and later eight locks enabled river craft to load coal in Wigan. A long artificial cut, to by-pass part of the river, was partially completed, and later included in the line of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal.

Navigation for River Douglas craft was maintained throughout the period of construction of the canal, and arrangements were made to lock sailing craft through onto the canal, as their masts would not pass under the canal's Newburgh Aqueduct.

The Leeds & Liverpool Canal as a through route was built for craft of 62' overall length by 14' 3" beam, and a loaded draught of 3' 9". Below Wigan, the locks were built to accept craft of the same beam, but of 72' length and 4' 0" loaded draught. The dimensions were derived from the various craft which had evolved on the river navigations of the Mersey and Douglas, and the Yorkshire Keels. Although the majority of traffics were carried in craft built specifically for the navigation ("short boats"), there was some working of other craft, especially at the ends (Liverpool, Leeds and the River Douglas). Traffic remaining below Wigan, or moving to and from the Bridgewater Canal, moved in 72' craft generally similar to the short boats.

Of course, narrow boats worked regularly from the Midand Canals through the Bridgewater to the lower Leeds & Liverpool, and a small number of 62' narrow boats were built to work to such places as Blackburn.

The standard craft of the canal (the short boats), showed features of a mixed parentage of the earlier Douglas boats, Mersey flats, and Yorkshire Keels. The presence of the staircase locks on the Yorkshire side of the Pennines (especially the great Bingley Five-Rise) meant that the canal was forever limited to 62' boats for through traffics, and a type of craft was inbred, of which all looked superficially identical, yet were subtly different, according to the yard at which each was built. As with the narrow boats of the Midands, these differences were just enough to enable a boatman to identify instantly the parentage of any boat he came across.

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THE BOATS

The earliest short boats were of course horse-drawn, and generally had a square transom stern, with only a slight run-in from the sides. However, Leeds & Liverpool Canal Company craft had rounded sterns, and were numbered instead of being named. The bows were almost semi-circular in plan, and in elevation the bows and bilges shewed a very rounded section. The underwater lines at the stern were very fine, in contrast to the full shape above waterline. The rounded bilges, and the shorter length of these boats compared with narrow boats led to quite different handling characteristics, especially when navigating the acute turns of the canal.

Because a major proportion of the traffic on the canal was short-haul coal, inevitably most of the short boats were designed for that traffic. Consequently these boats did not have coamings or any facility for covering the hold. Two substantial crossbeams passed across the hold, and the rear was sometimes removable, should the cargo space be required for an indivisible item. Usually the hold was lined with longitudinal planking, spiked to the frames. An air-space surrounded the whole of the hold-lining, which was not generally removable as with narrow boats. Maximum cargo capacity was 45-50 tons on 3' 9" to 4' 0" draught.

Boats carrying general cargo were sheeted over with tarpaulins over stands and spars like a narrow boat, but over three longitudinal spars and not one. These were sometimes arranged with a rake fore-and-aft, giving the cargo hold a sort of "pyramidic hump" shape.

Cabins were provided fore and aft, although the bow cabin was usually used as a rope locker, etc. Despite the low headroom of the below-decks cabin (the raised roof cabin not becoming common until the advent of powered vessels) some of the steerers' families lived aboard.

Drinking water was kept in a small barrel on deck, adjacent to the chimney, which was usually of tapering square section timber. The chimney was in sections, to give clearance under bridges when unladen. The interior of the cabin was laid out around the coal stove, set against one bulkhead. Opposite (or against the stempost in the case of bow cabins) was a folding table which was also the cupboard door. Along either side were seating benches with a black panel. These panels enclosed the sleeping berths, access to which was via a quite small square aperture (the scuttle hole). Storage cupboards were either side of the folding table as well as behind it, and also under the benches.

Steam first appeared on the canal in the form of tugs for Foulridge and Gannow Tunnels, and on the 28 mile Appley-Liverpool level. The last tug was withdrawn in 1934.

Steam short boats appeared in the late 1800's and continued to be built until the diesel engine became supreme in the mid 1930's. The steam engines in use were often tandem, V-form, compound engines, exhausting to atmosphere (puffers), and examples continued in use until the early 1950's. The large space taken up by the steam engine and boiler meant the the living cabin had to be moved to the front, and the cargo capacity was somewhat curtailed. However, the considerable pulling power of these craft enabled working on a "butty" system, and these steamers worked a flyboat service (day and night) from Liverpool to Leeds in three days (127 miles and 91 locks). Typical of these steam flyboats were "Amy" and "Agate". Flyboats were identified by the word "Flyboat" proudly painted above the name panel on the bows. Some of the steamers ended their days towing dumb coal boats to Blackburn and Barton (Bridgewater) Power Stations.

From the 1930's onwards, diesel engines became popular for the propulsion of short boats. Similar engines to those in narrow boats were often used, though sometimes a three-cylinder version instead of a twin, was chosen. Nationals, Russell Newberys and Lister JP's were thus used. Gardners, and Widdops (a Keighley firm) were also firm favourites on these northern canals. In British Transport Waterways days, air-cooled Listers appeared but were not as popular with the boatmen, whilst in order to use cargo carrying boats as tugs as well, multi-cylinder engines such as Leyland, Albion and Thorneycroft appeared in some some craft of Jas. Monk & Sons, and A. Blundell's fleets.

With the advent of the diesel engine, a standard form or rear engine cabin arose. This had a hatch opening out to the rear, and with the exception of Messrs. Dean, Waddington's Gardner engined craft, was on the right hand (starboard) side. The controls were generally mounted on the roof of the rear cabin—a long lever to operate the ahead/astern gearbox, and a smaller lever or wheel to operate the engine speed setting. The exhaust generally came out at the side just below deck level. The fuel tanks were mounted under the stern deck (occasionally bulkhead tanks were used instead), and often the gearbox projected beneath this, driving the propellor via the shortest of tailshafts.

Wood was the traditional material for the hull:—oak frames and oak, elm, or douglas fir longitudinal planking. Because of the round



Square-transomed "Anthony" is towed past Scarisbrick by "Nidd." "Anthony" displays many of the features of Yorkshire Craft, including square chimney, and was brought over the Pennines from Airedale Canal Services. Courtesy: J. Parkinson

Blackness Illuminated by Beauty. Coal boat of Chris Iddon of Tarleton, during a family occasion. This was originally owned by Ben C. Walls. Courtesy: T. N. Walls Collection





A Parkes' transom-stern dumb boat.
"Leto" below Wigan.

Courtesy: J. Parkinson

"Clifton," a cross-bred craft, (short and wide, but very similar to a narrow boat).
Owned by Rathbone Bros., its name suggests that it originally hailed from
the Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal.

Courtesy: The Guardian



bilge, the frames did not have right-angle "knees" as did many narrow boats. Instead, a curved piece of timber was lap-jointed to the vertical side, and horizontal bottom sections. The keel did not project much below the planking of the bottom, but was well supported by a kelson of about 12" by 12", or in the case of the last ones built, an equivalent rolled steel beam. Ample stem and stern posts were fitted, and the end planks were tapered, steamed, and led upward to give a smooth three-dimensional curve to the ends. Fairly wide side decks (12"-18") were fitted, enabling the crew to pass along a boat without difficulty. The cross beams across the hold were again substantial in size, and generally curved upward in the centre. At the ends of the cross beams of the coal boats were small ropestuds which were handy when strapping a boat into a lock. General cargo crafts had low coamings with small brackets to accept the wooden wedges used to keep the sheets watertight to the coaming. All were amply provided with timber-heads or cast bits for towing, mooring, etc.

Steel ice plates were fitted to the bows at the laden and unladen waterlines, and frequently prominent iron guards were fitted to take the knocks and scrapes of locks and bridges. The rudder was a very substantial unit, and a long straight tiller fitted into it. When raised rear cabins began to be used, upward cranked iron tillers become usual.

On general cargo boats a raised timber rail, running fore-and-aft either side of the stern deck afforded the opportunity for the steerer to place a plank across and so to raise his steering position. This was necessary as some of the light but bulky cargoes of wool restricted the view forward. The feature was retained on some iron and steel craft.

Wooden boats continued to be built until the mid 1950's, and at the time of writing examples remain in use for maintenance.

Iron and steel boats appeared in the 1930's, and a new style of hull developed, of which large numbers were built for Canal Transport Limited (all named after rivers) and other carriers. This style was perpetuated in the small class of steel craft built by British Transport Waterways in 1950 and 1952 (Town Class; good models of these appear in the Stoke Bruerne Waterways Museum). "Clitheroe", "Bacup" and "Atherton" were conventional boats, with twin Widdop engines, built by Yarwoods. "Darwen", "Everton", and "Farnworth" were built by Harland & Woolf using high tensile steel. This enabled the same strength to be obtained for less weight, and hence a higher payload on the same draught.

Because of the difficulties in reproducing the curves of the wooden craft, the sterns of the iron and steel boats were made almost vertical above waterline, with a sharp cutaway below. On the powered craft this gave the same effect as the counter on motor narrow boats. The prominent stem-post of the wooden boats gave way to a mere strengthening plate to which were rivetted the side plates.

On some dumb steel boats, the raised rear cabin was astern of the steering position, with the long tiller arm extending over the roof. Along the outer edge of the sidedecks was often a steel strip to prevent a crew-member from slipping into the water if his clogs lost their grip. These were particularly useful when craft were in the docks or the open Mersey Eustuary, although if a man had to pass along a boat in choppy waters he would often prefer to inch his way along the sheets, with his legs astride the top plank. Iron and steel boats had the same type of bottom lining to the hold, but the sides were unlined.

Generally the cabins of these boats were also in steel. The lower parts of the living cabin were lined in timber for insulation, and "mushroom" ventilators were provided to cope with the condensation.

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Notes on the Decorative Paintwork of Leeds & Liverpool Canal Boats

by A. J. Lewery (Preston Brook)

The decorative paintwork on short boats has a distinct Leeds & Liverpool Canal character, although including little that does not appear somewhere on other canal or coastal craft. Vessels that work any barge waterway always contrast in decorative style to the domestic and slightly "feminine" paintwork of the better known narrow-boats, with their strong primary colours and the "roses and castles" tradition. Barges, being usually developments of the local river boats, ally themselves with coastal craft, and use the nautical standards of cleanliness and bright paintwork to a colourful, but masculine extent. The narrow-boats, however, and their crews, are land based, and their traditions seem to stem from the land although sharing some ideas with other boats in general. A contributory factor to this masculine/feminine distinction, if not the main reason, is the wage economy of canal carrying. Where the narrow-boat's capacity of twenty tons or so was able to support one man and his family commitments, the average barge's larger capacity could support two. As manpower necessary to run either was the same—one person to steer and one to lead the horse, it will be seen that there was not the same economic pressure among bargemen to work on a "family-boating" system, and it was never developed to the extent that was common on narrow-boats.

The Leeds & Liverpool short boat falls by its size between the two, and its development and decline during this century seem to bear out the suggestions outlined above. Before the First World War the canal company were the main carriers with a considerable fleet of horse drawn boats worked by a husband and wife team in a similar way to the Midland narrow-boats. Indeed, there seems to have been interchange between them, and the photographic evidence suggests that the decoration had similar domestic overtones. The roses and castles are there, but the rigid convention of narrow-boat subject matter gives way to a much more inventive use of more varied designs. As well as the formal patterns of roses, there were bunches of flowers of all sorts, in vases, with grapes and other fruit, paintings of figures and animals, and landscapes of any type that the painter cared to depict; one retired painter said: "You'd a job to think of something new".

The development of the motor driven short boat between the wars had several effects that brought changes in the decoration. The transom sterned boat with its relatively capacious after cabin gave way before the "round"-sterned motor boats with the engine occupying the stern. They thus offered less comfortable living quarters in the bow, at the same moment that single man working of boats became possible. The wives left the boats quite shortly and family boating disappeared, taking much that was pretty and feminine about the decoration with it.

With the phasing-out of the square-sterned boat, the single biggest area of painted designs was also removed. The transom had previously been the pride and glory of any boat, with both company name and boat's name emblazoned in deeply shadowed lettering on the top section, with the larger area below richly decorated. The central position on each side was usually reserved for marking the registration town and number required by the health regulations. This itself might be part symbolical, using a liver bird as the insignia of Liverpool, for example. The remaining portions on either side were then subdivided, bordered and lined as separate coloured panels, themselves acting as a ground for floral decoration. With the iron guard rails or "bumpers" between painted in turn with repeating geometric designs, the effect was glorious. With the arrival of motor boats and their raised cabin over the engine, one would have expected the love and respect previously bestowed on the transom to be transferred to the cabin sides, but this does not seem to have happened. It is unusual to have more than a simple border of a contrasting colour around the edge of the cabin side, although a few firms put the company name or symbol there.

The main areas of detailed decoration then became the top planks of the hull, fore and aft, where they joined the stem and stern posts, with a portion of the guard below. The name often appears on the bows, on a coloured panel either side of the stem post with a contrasting one inch wide border outlining this and further panels. Next to the name panel is a differently coloured section bearing a scroll, with often a third and fourth panel, finished in different colours again, or grained: the natural wood grain varnished. Decoration stops as soon as the boat approaches its full width—sensibly, as further paintwork would quickly become worn working through locks, or dirty with waterline tidemarks due to the low freeboard of a laden boat.

Whether the use of flowing baroque scrollwork is a survival of an earlier style of ornament, or is a more masculine/nautical replacement for flowers and landscapes it is difficult to tell, but it is a most noticeable component of short boat paintwork. Scrolls invariably occupy separate panels at stem and stern, frequently appear on the upper part of the



Another view of the last horse drawn boat on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal,
"Parbold" near Dean Lock. Courtesy: J. Parkinson

Canal Company dumb barges await collection by steam tug for the
tow through the Tunnel. Postcard Courtesy T. N. Walls Collection



Entrance, Foulridge Tunnel.



Albert Blundell's dumb boat "Tom" being moored at Barton Power Station (Bridgewater Canal).

Courtesy: The Guardian

River-class motorboat "Kennet" at Wigan Bottom Lock in British Transport Waterways' days.

Courtesy: B. B. Parr



stempost and sternpost, on the rudder, and often flank the boat's name as well. The owner's name appears on one side at the stern, with the registration town and number on the wooden guard below. The iron "D" sectioned guard rails above and below the painted work at both ends are gaily patterned with brightly contrasting triangles, diagonal stripes, or with a design of alternating semi-circles and triangles.

The large wooden rudders on dumb boats are similar on both transom and round sterned boats, and are similarly treated. Each facet of the rudder stock is painted as a separate panel of a primary colour with a unifying 1/4 inch wide white or yellow border to each, complete with scalloped corners. This use of a reverse curve to the corner of any area of colour is another characteristic of Leeds & Liverpool craft. It appears on both Mersey flats and Yorkshire keels in moderation, but never so insistently as on the short boats. The coloured panels at bow, stern, on the transom and on the cabin sides have already been mentioned, and all have the scalloped corners, but each surface of the timberheads and stern rails may even be similarly treated. Further decoration of the rudder is achieved by using the larger panels as backgrounds for flowers, scrollwork or pictures.

The paintwork on the deck and deck fittings is strong and contrasting. The fore and after decks are usually done with red lead paint—a bright orange when newly laid on, fading to a dusty pink—with the covering boards, or cants, and cabin hatches picked out in green or blue. An area of the deck in the angle of the covering boards is painted to contrast again, and although the previously quoted painter said it was simply to relieve the boredom of the deck expanse, its traditional curving shape suggests an earlier significance, since lost. Headledges and coamings stand out, whilst the development of the stern cabin with its sides, roof, hatch and doors gives further scope for bright gloss colour unavailable to the flat decked horse-boat.

Other equipment, however, has disappeared with the passing of the horse boat. The provender tub for the horse feed is an example, strongly decorated with geometric patterns, and often with the captain's name painted on a flowing ribbon, and the dog kennel which was a standard deck fitting regardless of the ownership of a dog. The large horizontal drinking water barrel standing on the deck close to the cabin hatch has also become a rarity. The two ends of the barrel were always the favourite place for the dock painter's finest landscape.

FORE END



ROUND STERN



TRANSOM STERN



LEEDS & LIVERPOOL CANAL BOAT DECORATION

Courtesy: A. J. LEWERY (Preston Brook)

An unusual ingredient in canal boat painting is the use of varnished natural wood as a finish. It appears now as a third main panel "colour" on the stem, and might derive from Yorkshire where it was an accepted part of the keel-painter's scheme. At one time it was also common practice to scrape and varnish the portion of the hull at the bow, above the loaded waterline, just below the guard. These are presumably remnants of the occasional keelman's choice of varnishing the complete hull, but even this varnish work has been largely replaced by artificial scumble graining, a similar light oak finish as the inside of the cabins.

The reasons for all this decoration are hard to define, but would appear to parallel the narrow-boat and the gypsy living wagon. In all these cases the space available in which to make a complete home is limited by the maximum practical size of the boat or caravan. The resident's standing and self-respect cannot therefore be expressed in increased quantity but only in the quality of their limited tools and equipment. Couple to this the belief of many companies that if the boatman is protecting his beautiful paintwork, he is also protecting his company's boat, and you have a fertile field for the development of a lovely tradition.

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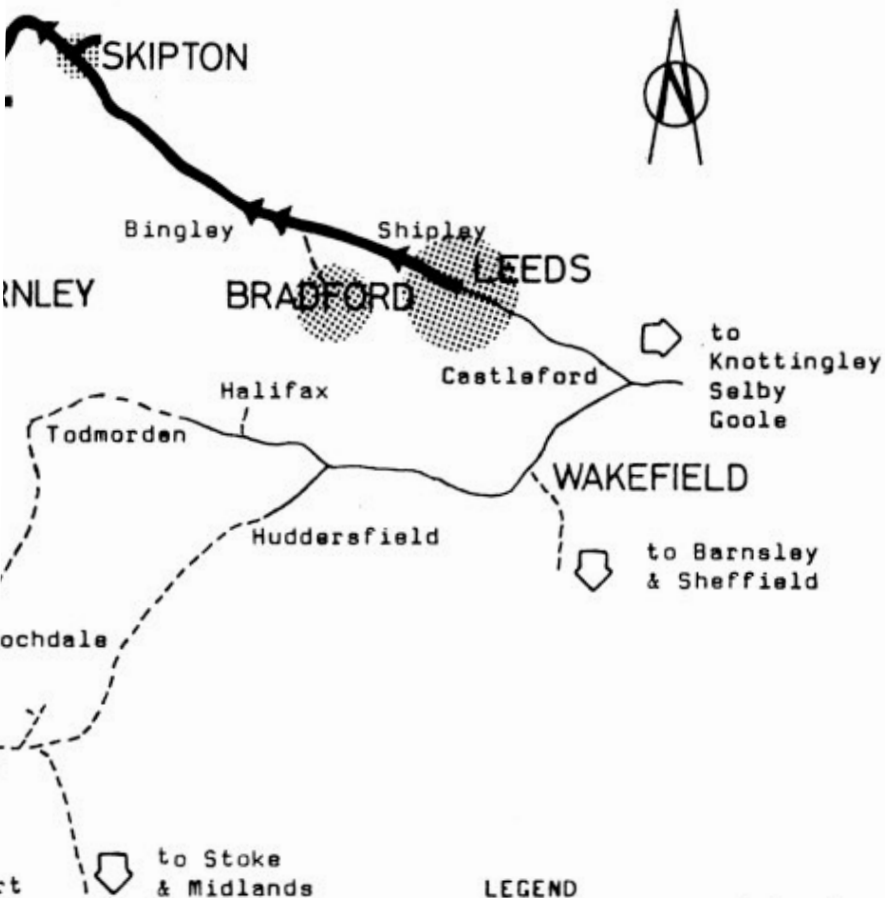
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




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-  links to tidal waters
-  connections to other parts of waterway system

A typical Boat Livery described in detail

Although a carrier might have a standard livery, differences often crept in when craft were painted at different yards. The following details are taken from an accurate model of Benjamin C. Walls' barge "Alpha" after motorisation in 1924. Further comments are given in respect of a slightly different scheme for vessels painted at Whitebirk.

SIDE-DECKS—White.

COAMINGS AND FOOTHOLDS—Red.

FOREDECK—Grained, with a portion forward of the hatch dark green (with a freehand curved boundary).
(Whitebirk: orange lead.)

STERNDECK—(as Foredeck).

CABIN AND ENGINE ROOM HATCHES—Dark Green.

CABIN TOPS—Grained.

CHIMNEY—Blue.

INSIDE OF COAMING AND HEADBOARD—Dark Green
(Whitebirk: Blue).

INSIDE OF HOLD—Red oxide.

NAME PANEL ON SIDE OF CABIN—White with scalloped edges on a dark green ground. Panel lined lime green. Black Capital letters: **B. C. WALLS LTD.**, shaded lime green.

STERN PANEL ON CABIN—As above with a long black and lime green scroll filling the length of the panel.

BOAT'S NAME ON BOW AND STERN—White ground, black capital letters shaded lime green. (Whitebirk: post office red letters, shaded black.)
Then a 10" red panel with a white diamond motif.
Then an 18" varnished plain panel.

REGISTRATION TOWN AND NUMBER—Black letters edged white on a red ground. The hull below this and above waterline varnished, forming a slender triangle, widening toward the sternpost.

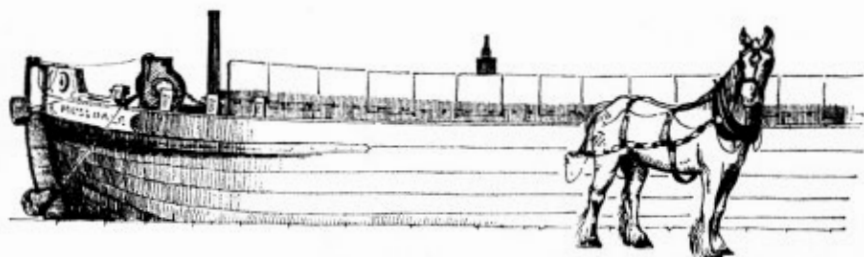
GUNWALE FORE AND AFT ABOVE NAME—Blue, red, and green triangles, bearing spike like motifs repeated.

WATER BARREL—White, but usually decorated by the boatman.

BOAT SHAFTS—Left to the boatman to paint his own easily recognisable style.

STEM AND STERN POSTS—White edged black (scalloped) with "scrawlings" and flowers.

CABIN INTERIOR—Moulded panels: mahognay edged light oak, with green moulding.
Ceiling and bedhole white; green lockers; fawn doors.



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SNIPPETS

The Monk family, now trading as James Monk & Sons, have been involved in canal transport since the Leeds & Liverpool Canal opened. They were also colliery owners, private railway wagon owners, and since 1919, road haulage contractors. The present trading name was established in 1944 when they commenced working for Manchester and Stretford Corporations. Trafford Power Station opened about 1948, and since then the delivery of coal by canal has been shared with A. Blundell's business. There were a maximum of 13 boats working for Monks', loading 3000 tons a week at Worsley, Boothstown, Astley, Plank Lane and Garswood, with a guaranteed 600 tons on a Saturday morning. Albert Blundell's maximum fleet was eight craft.

* * *

Residents of Adlington were well aware of the traffic passing along the canal just down the road. Even on a Sunday, from about 1 p.m., there would be a boat every ten minutes, spaced out by the flight of locks at Wigan. The full fleet of Rank's boats with grain from Liverpool would pass, together with coal boats for the various mills up to Blackburn (to be unloaded first thing Monday morning).

* * *

Several bye-traders worked on the Blackburn-Burnley level, carrying very short-haul loads of bricks, shale, rubbish, etc., often using boats "cast-off" by the larger carriers.

* * *

Between the Wars, one carrier in the Hapton area ("Old Growler") used to tow his dumb boats with an old motor-bike combination, with the sidecar ballasted with bricks. He couldn't afford a horse!

* * *

Dean Waddington's, or later Hargreaves, worked the Burnley to Whitebirk ("Blackburn Electric" or just "th'leccy") coal traffic intensively. With the wide beam craft virtually filling Gannow Tunnel, there was little point in steering, and the boatmen often utilised the time to shovel some coal overside, and thus reduce unloading time at the terminus.

The Electric Company provided a man to shovel the last few tons to the centre for the grab to collect. By this time, however, the steerer had his engine running and had cast off the mooring lines. Many is the time that the boat was moving away from the bank before the shoveller had had chance to leave, and was left with no option but a fifteen minute walk from the next bridge.



Traditional Leeds & Liverpool scene. A train of Hargreaves' coal boats
crosses Burnley Embankment.

Courtesy: E. W. Paget-Tomlinson

"Burscough 2" (Jas. Monk & Sons) passes Astley Green (Bridgewater Canal) in 1971.
By the derelict colliery are sunken N.C.B. narrow boats.

Courtesy: R. Lorenz





H. & R. Ainscoughs' 72ft. motor "Ambush" awaits unloading at Burscough Mill.
Courtesy E. W. Paget-Tomlinson

N.C.B. boats in the basin at Barton. The assortment (all dumb boats) includes short and long craft, and round and transom sterns.
Courtesy: The Guardian



Boats often tied up for the night at Church Warehouse, and at 5 a.m. the boatmen used to help each other swing their engines. Shortly after the dark chasm behind the terraced houses echoed to the crisp exhausts of diesels being opened up (often with complaints from the locals).

* * *

In British Transport Waterways days, some craft were allocated to regular crews, whilst others were used for "trainees" and consequently suffered more in wear and tear.

A husband and wife team worked a short boat for some years after nationalisation, but when the captain had a long period of illness, and the "mate" was not in a position to continue running the boat, as would have been normal practice, the arrangement was discontinued.

* * *

Even on the land, the former boatmen remained individualistic: one boatman turned Wigan bus-driver had to give evidence in court, and caused consternation by stating that a previous vehicle had stopped "a couple of boats' lengths ahead".

* * *

Parkes' and Williams' men used to consider the Liverpool end of the canal as being their own. If Parkes' boats were passed being towed light in bad weather, one often could see "Chad"-like characters, standing in the stern cabins, with only their eyes and noses over the hatch coamings, steering with a piece of rope to the tiller.

* * *

John Parkes & Sons were taken over by British Transport Waterways quite a while after nationalisation. The boats continued with the "lifebuoy" symbol of British Transport Waterways the only mark of change on the bright red and cream livery. Parkes' had three tugs for use with the fleet of mainly square-transomed dumb 72' craft.

* * *

When H. & R. Ainscoughs, the millers of Burscough, took delivery of their iron and steel craft "Black Prince", "Ironclad", "Claymore", etc., many boatmen did not consider them to be true Leeds & Liverpool craft. They were unusual in having hatch covers and cloths rather than stands and cloths, and in having small winches and anchors, as though in their parentage they had been crossed with Mersey Flats.

* * *

Ainscoughs' boat "Burscough No. 2" was originally named "Black Prince" and, with working regularly in the Mersey estuary, was registered at Lloyds. A steamship company wanted to use the name, and bought the right from Ainscoughs, who then renamed their barge.

Motor boat "Dee" was travelling late at night from Wigan to Burnley with clay for bank maintenance, and the Captain told the Mate to jump off at Botany, and run ahead to set Johnson's Hillock Locks. When the boat arrived at the locks, there was no sign of the Mate, and the Locks were set against. The irate Captain had worked the boat single-handed up most of the locks before the Mate appeared. Being a stranger to this part of the canal, the Mate had not noticed the Bottom Lock in the dark, and had carried on a couple of miles along the old Walton Summit Branch.

* * *

A motor short boat was hailed by a tug-skipper as it crossed the Mersey Eustuary. The tug skipper was thinking of salvage, and asked what the cargo was. On hearing that it was carbide (highly explosive in contact with water) he moved his tug away as fast as it would go.

* * *

The skipper of a horse boat received his orders in Birkenhead Docks: If the tug came before five that evening, he was expected to be in Wigan the following morning; If, however, the tug was late, he was told to stay where he was.

The boatman sat in his cabin, looking at his clock, but thinking of his ale. Occasionally he said "Gee-Up" as though he were working a horse.

* * *

Benjamin C. Walls bought boats and set himself up as a canal carrier in 1921, when the Canal Company ceased its own carrying operations. The business was incorporated in the mid-twenties, specialising in wool from Liverpool and Manchester to Skipton, Shipley, etc., and at its peak comprised nineteen craft, named after letters of the Greek Alphabet, or Planets. "Alpha", the first, was a dumb craft, towed by "Beta", the only steamer owned by the undertaking. "Alpha" was motorised in 1924 with a single-cylinder Widdop, later replaced by a downrated twin Widdop to reduce vibration. The fleet continued in alphabetical order until at least "Psi", and then there were the planets—"Neptune", "Uranus", "Pluto", "Saturn", "Venus", etc. During the first year the undertaking worked the Bradford Canal, before its closure.

In 1930 the Canal Company coerced B. C. Walls Ltd. and three other carriers (Liverpool Wharfage Ltd., Lancashire Canal Transport Ltd., and John Hunt (Leeds) Ltd.) into a merger, the large undertaking so formed being called simply Canal Transport Ltd.

This body purchased large numbers of iron and steel boats from Isaac Pimblott and Yarwoods, both of Northwich, in the 1930's, which today form the mainstay of the remaining short boat fleet (the "river" class).

Meanwhile the Walls family had again put boats on the cut bearing their name—now the newly formed Walls Shipping Ltd. (Specialist wool importers; represented on the Bradford Wool Exchange).

* * *

The large single cylinder Widdop engine (about 18 b.h.p. at 420 r.p.m.) was a very popular engine, and had variously blowlamp, cartridge or compressed air start. Ainscoughs' "Black Prince" of 1934 was typical of craft so powered, as were the many boats built for Canal Transport Ltd. in the thirties and fifties. The first motor boats above Wigan Locks (Accrington Brick Co.) had, however, the more powerful 30 h.p. twin Widdops, although later many were downrated to 24-25 h.p. The downrated version gave of course less vibration than the equivalent single cylindered engine.

Most Widdops were hand cranked from the flywheel, using a sprung pin like that of the Bolinder engine popular on narrow canals. In fact in many respects the Widdop was equivalent to the Bolinder, being a heavily constructed hot bulb semi-diesel, with hit-and-miss governing. Being a two-stroke it would run in either direction; when correctly adjusted it fired every time when under load, and one in five strokes when ticking over.

These engines sooted up quickly, especially when idling in locks. It was fatal to clear the carbon from the piston and rings. This rendered them impossible to start, and they had to be "doped" with lubricating oil to get sufficient compression for them to fire.

* * *

Because of the hot carbon building up in the cylinder, Widdops were very prone to seizing when left after a long run. It was common practice to put the blowlamp back on for a while when the engine was stopped for the night, to prevent the engine cooling too fast.

The build up of glowing carbon, and the massive construction of the single cylinder engine combined to cause amusing incidents at times. The engine could be stopped from outside the cabin by holding the fuel control against a sprung stop, and when a boatman was in a hurry to catch a bus or train, he would lock up ready for a quick getaway. Having moored, he would stop the engine, pick up his bag and leave. Presently, the heavy piston ($\frac{1}{2}$ cwt. with its connecting rod), having been arrested at top dead centre, would fall, imparting its momentum to the flywheel (nearly 400 lb.). The fuel pump would be back in its running position, and with the hot carbon already in the cylinder, things

were set for the engine to fire again. The boatman, waiting in a bus queue with the bus in sight, could not be expected to be in good humour when he heard the familiar sounds from the locked engine room!

* * *

The "Liverpool Post" of 10 July '39 quoted the number of craft registered in Liverpool as being 404, made up of 75 motor barges (towing 43 dumb boats), 61 steam craft (towing 102 dumb boats) and 122 horse-drawn boats.

These figures would, of course, include craft working the Estuary, Weaver, Ship Canal and St. Helen's Canal.

* * *

The first motor barge on the Yorkshire side of the canal was the "Ina", a converted horse boat, belonging to the Clayton Carrying Co. of Morley, near Leeds. The engine was a Kelvin 13 h.p. model, and the year 1921.

* * *

A pair of lads had been hired by a boatman to pump his boat out for 6d., but it was a harder job than expected. After the man returned from the pub in the darkness, the lads quietly unmoored the craft and pushed it from the bank. They then shouted that Old So-and-So never was any good, whereupon the enraged boatman climbed out of his cabin and jumped onto the towpath (or so he thought). The joke misfired for the lads had to get a boathook to help him out.

* * *

The same two pranksters had horse whips, and used to hide on the overbridges at night. When a horseboat approached they used to crack the whips so that the boatman thought an oncoming barge had beaten him to the bridgehole, and had to hold back smartly and stop the horse.

* * *

A typical barge repair yard was that of J. & J. Crook at Riley Green near Blackburn. The business was set up by Thomas Crook about 1800, when one of his short boats ("Lily of Houghton") had to be repaired at the exorbitant sum of £100. Thereafter he decided to do his own repairs. The yard employed upwards of 20 men, with two blacksmiths for shoeing the horses. The boats were built of english oak and larch, with a keelson of douglas fir. Three months elapsed from the laying of the keelson to the launching, and the winches used on the slips in later years were those used by the railway in building the nearby Houghton Viaduct.



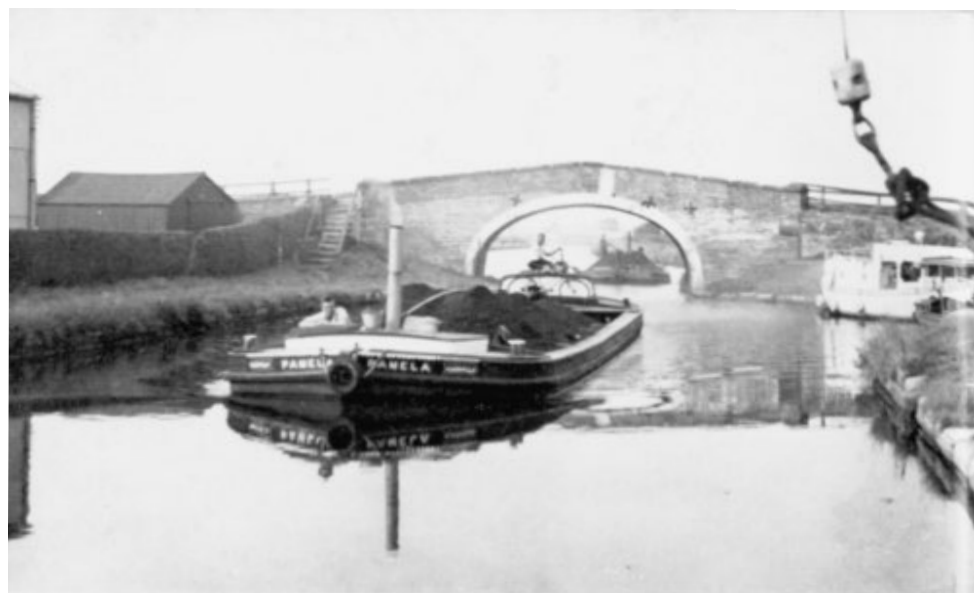
"Farnworth," the last short-boat built, proceeds laden through Scarisbrick in British Transport Waterways Livery.

Courtesy: J. Parkinson

Ainscough's motor "Burscough 2" and dumb boat "Claymore" (both 72ft. craft) proceed empty through Stanley Dock, Liverpool.

Courtesy: J. Parkinson





Richard Williams' boat "Pamela" and a dumb boat at Halsall, conveying coal to Liverpool.

Courtesy: J. Parkinson

Canal Transport Limited boats, with wool, at Skipton. "Nidd" is of the iron "River" class. "Comet" is a timber craft ex Ben C. Walls fleet.

Courtesy: T. N. Walls Collection



The Walton Summit Branch was extraordinarily busy considering its country location. 102,000 tons of cargo were transported in 1804. At the Duke of York Basin, coal was unloaded for Swansey Mills, and millstones from the Whittle Hills loaded outwards. Once a millstone broke loose over a barge and went right through its bottom.

* * *

The Whittle Springs Brewery used the canal both for the incoming raw materials, the product, and coal for the kilns. There was a tunnel for rolling the barrels straight down to the barges.

* * *

“The barges were bright and cosy inside the cabins, which had bright polished stoves where something always seemed to be cooking.

The ladies in shawls who bobbed out now and then, sometimes took a turn at the rudder. Then, likely as not, they smoked a clay pipe short in the stem.”

(from “Over the Five-Barred Gate”)

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Traffic still working on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal

(Correct to June 1972)

Coal

Leigh (Plank Lane) to Wigan (Westwood Power Station).

Carrier: British Fuel Co. ("Hargreaves Lancashire").

Eight iron barges involved.

Leigh (Plank Lane) to Manchester (Trafford Power Station) via Bridge-water Canal.

Carriers: Albert Blundell. Four iron barges involved.

Jas. Monk & Sons. One iron barge involved.

Bank Maintenance Materials (Piles, Clay, etc.)

Occasional loads of up to 35 tons to various parts of the canal by British Waterways' maintenance fleet ("river" and "town" class short boats).

TRAFFICS OF RECENT YEARS

Commodity	From	To	Carrier	Until
Grain	Liverpool	Vauxhall Rd., Liverpool	BTW & R. Abel & Sons	1961
Bentonite Copper Nickel Vermiculite Borax	Liverpool and Manchester	Anderton, Weston Pt., Runcorn	BTW & R. Abel & Sons	1962
Sugar	Liverpool	Leeds	BTW & R. Abel & Sons	1960
Wool	Bootle & Manchester	Shipleigh	BTW	1962
Wheat	Birkenhead, Liverpool & Manchester	Burscough	H. & R. Ainscough	1961
Machinery	Church	Liverpool & Birkenhead	BTW	1962
Coal	Burnley	Barnoldswick Brierfield Nelson Feniscowles	Crookes & Thompson	1953 1959 1959 1959
Coal	Shevington	Liverpool Gas Works	John Parkes & Sons BTW	1964
Coal	(ex Aire & Calder)	Skipton Bingley Shipleigh Kirkstall	(various)	1958 1960 1962
Coal	Burnley	Blackburn	Hargreaves	1963
Stone	Skipton (Springs Branch)	to BW Maintenance Sites		August to December 1964

Craft of recent years

As mentioned elsewhere, the mainstay of the present fleet of Leeds & Liverpool boats is the large "River" class built for Canal Transport Limited. Apart from two built by John Harkers at Knottingley ("Ouse" and "Calder"—notable for having sterns with the plates shaped exactly as were wooden craft), this class was built at Northwich by either Pimblotts or Yarwoods. The British Waterways maintenance fleet consists mostly of these.

The first three post-nationalisation steel craft ("Town" class) were built by Yarwoods, but the second, and last three, were from Harland & Wolff's at North Woolwich, and came from London by road. These were built of high-tensile steel of thinner than normal gauge. However, this suffered from wear by rubbing on the bottom, the same as any other material. Because they were built to the absolute maximum dimensions which could pass through the canal (even to scraping the ventilators on the roof of Foulridge Tunnel), and looked larger than the others even to the untrained eye, they were known to BW crews as the boxes the other short-boats came in!

The impressive fleets of Ainscoughs, the millers of Burscough, was notable for red hulls above water-line, and wooden hatch covers. These have ended up with the British Fuel Company (coal to Wigan Power Station): "Ambush", "Attractive", "Viktoria"; Albert Blundell (coal to Trafford Power Station): "Cadellis", "Claymore", and "Parbold"—now "Norman"; Jas. Monk & Sons (coal to Trafford Power Station): "Burscough No. 2". A further 72' craft, "Boadicea", passed through Monk's hands to Rea's of Liverpool, with whom it sports an impressive wheelhouse.

The 62' boats of Rank's the millers, "A36-41" inclusive, were very similar to Ainscough's craft, and passed to Henry Crosedale in the 1950's when the grain traffic to Blackburn ceased. Crosedale's supplied coal to Blackburn and Wigan Power Stations, and many of this class remain with the British Fuel Company. The "A38", however, became Albert Blundell's "Shirley".

Londoners might be interested to know of former iron short boats in their midst: British Waterways' "Fair Lady" is to be seen acting as a floating cafe at Little Venice, and the converted "Arthur", built as "Mersey", is now berthed on the Grand Union below Rickmansworth.

The boat "Aire", yet another "River" class, is converted to a trip boat and works in the South of Ireland, having made the passage directly from Tarleton Sea Lock to Waterford in one stage.

Further Reading

A detailed description of the trading history of the Leeds & Liverpool and associated canals appears in "The Canals of North West England" (two volumes) by Hadfield & Biddle (Publ. David & Charles Ltd. 1970).

* * *

Some excellent views of traditionally painted short boats appear in "Canal and River Craft in Pictures" by McKnight (Publ. David & Charles Ltd. 1969).

* * *

Rare views of steam short boats in action appear in "Inland Waterways of England" by Rolt (Publ. Allen & Unwin 1962) and "Inland Waterways of Britain" by Calvert (Publ. Ian Allan Ltd. 1963).

* * *

A description of the Canal Scene of many years ago was presented in a two-part article entitled "A voyage from Manchester to Rochdale in 1849" which appeared in the magazine "The Archer" in 1957. (A copy is kept in the Manchester Local History Library.)

* * *

A useful booklet describing the route of the Leeds & Liverpool is the official BRITISH WATERWAYS publication "Cruising on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal" (No. 16 in a series) (Publ. 1966). A revision of the information in the booklet is under way, and will be published as part of regional volume covering the North West.

* * *

For the pedantic, complete details of the mileages, names of locks, etc., of this canal (and all others in Britain) are included in "Inland Waterways of Great Britain and Ireland" by Edwards (Publ. Imray, Laurie, Norie & Wilson Ltd. 1962).

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