

JOE SALT:

“Joe Salt in the uniform he reputedly wore when working the Water Witch, the canal company's inspection boat. I also attach a transcript of an interview done circa 1970 with Mr Walls, from the family which owned the Skipton/Keighley based carrying firm. He was proposing to write a book about the canal which was never published. I seem to recall that Joe lived in Skipton at some time, which the transcript confirms. I think it should fill in a good bit of background for you”

Mike Clarke—Leeds & Liverpool Canal historian



Now my father was born on a boat; he never went to school. He was born in Sedgeley, Staffordshire, on a narrow boat and as years went on he still stopped on the Grand Union Canal running down to London, with his mother and father who owned their own boats. My grandfather worked a boat with so many of the family ~~and~~ my grandmother worked the other one. Then, when he got older, he left and he came to work at Runcorn for the Bridgewater Canal Company, and he was a marine on the Bridgewater Canal and he used to go with the fly boats on there and the market boats from Runcorn to Manchester and them back again, and then on to the Weaver up to Northwich from Runcorn.

Then he went back on to the narrow boats running to the Potteries.

The he got married - married at Runcorn Church near the Transporter Bridge and so on, and went to Hanley and then back to Runcorn. He used to run from the Potteries. And then he went with the first Salt Union fly with my mother - my mother worked with him - and when my sister was about ten, he left there and he came back and worked on the Bridgewater Canal running from Manchester to Liverpool, Birkenhead Winsford, and all up that way, and then he come to

My grandfather, my mother's father, worked for Simpson Davis' well over one hundred years ago, and I should think my grandfather Seymour would be one of the first to bring a narrow boat from Liverpool to Leeds.

and as far as I have been told the boat we're called 'The Lark and Linnet'. Then my father came on to Leeds and Liverpool Canal in 1901. He came to work for William Bligh's Chemical Works at Church and he had a boat called the 'Kathleen'. He used to run Castleford with acids, and then in 1914 he started with the fly boat - the Bradford Flies. In 1915 I started with him in the fly boats at thirteen years of age and I worked with him until the end of the Canal Company - Carrying Dept., which was the last boat to work on the Carrying Department.

Then we took over and went to work for Mr. B. C. Walls of Skipton who bought the boat 'Gamma' off the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Co. which was No. 335. We did two trips and then Mr. Walls bought the steamer and I worked for Mr. Walls for a number of years and then I left and went to work on the Manchester Ship Canal. I was there between four and five years and Mr. Bateman, the Engineer at Skipton asked me to go back and I came to work on the Engineering Dept., till they nationalised it in 1947, and then I left them and that was my end of the Canal so that is all I have to say about it.

"In 1921 when we started, till 1930, you were running on what boat?"

"I was with the boat 'Tau' and the 'Epsilon' and I did two trips with Harry Melling with the 'Theta'

"What do you mean that the trade was bad, because our trade compared with John Hunts was excellent?"

"Well it was very bad at that time"

"What year was that - during the summer of what year?"

"It would be about 1924 and I was staying at Liverpool three weeks to a month waiting for a load and there was no dole money. We was paying the unemployed insurance and of course we were looking after the boat and the horse. We couldn't draw unemployment so I thought - "Well here goes I can't carry on like this so I left and there were three of us - my father and my brother Bill and me - three of us out of one house so one of us had to be going and earning a bit of something so I says "Well I'm off" I gave up - I left right way - and I left my boat at Blackburn. I always remember leaving it; we got a load of cement from Hunts at Leeds and my last drop was at Blackburn; that was with the boat 'Epsilon'

I went to Manchester and I went to work for Stanley Abbotts - Frederick Abbotts - on the Manchester Ship Canal and I worked there between four and five years before I came back to Skipton, and I jumped away from nothing when I went to Abbotts to £3. 4s. a week, standing wage plus overtime unloading and loading at the ships so that was good money in those days.

"Do you have any experience of loading our boats at Manchester?"

Loading - no."

"Was it easy to load?"

"Yes we had no difficulty. Well the boats was big and we used to take goods down from ~~Ma~~ Manchester - leaving Manchester tonight, alongside the ship in the morning; unload, across to Liverpool into Toxteth; - a load of cotton; happen down to Alexandra; grain again and goods back to Manchester; but the ships used to unload to cotton, used to bring cotton up the Manchester Ship Canal for they had to lighten the ships at Liverpool before they could go up the Manchester Ship Canal. Then we used to take cement up there; all goods; everything.

"Did you ever come up the Bradford Canal?"

"Yes I have been up the Bradford Canal"

"Will you tell me your experience of that?"

"Well we could come up Bradford Canal and go up the bottom of Windhill bottom Lock and then up to Pricken Lock. Then water would start being low when we got to Three Rise. Pool would be empty and we had to wait while they pumped water.

Some boat had happened to let something ^{fall} to under the gate - a brick or a stone or something; anything, a peice of wood, anything.

That used to run the whole length dry and it all had to be pumped up which was a very expensive job.

Bradford then was Bradford, and oh! there was boats there, Aire and Calder boats, Leeds and Liverpool Boats, then there was the tar boats and then there was the bye-traders and it never stopped.

"When was the last time you went to Bradford, do you remember?"

"I would be up to Bradford in 1916 with the fly boats and I went up once with one of your boats. I went up with the 'Gamma'

"The steamer 'Beta' was the last one to go up".

We had a load of bales back from Bradford to Liverpool which would be about 26 or 27 tons. There were belonging to a Bradford

Merchant after a while your father lost the trade because the owner set his own son up with a new motor boat called the 'Patsy'. It was a lovely motor boat and deserved better treatment than it received. Your father took it over for a while and secured the order for press-packs (wool) for a short time, and then that sold to Canal Carriers who used it for carrying coal. It was the first boat to have electric light, and that was built at Ramsays Shipley with Widdops engine.

"When did you finish working on the Canal?"

"I finished workins on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal in 1947, and finished altogether in 1947"

"So what do think of the Canal future Mr. Salt?"

"The Canals are very very slow, but they never had the chance. They weren't looked after like they have done the roads. If they had put some of that money into the Canals and made some kind of lifts like the Anderton Lift or if the Wigan Locks had been put three lifts instead of 23 locks, and one where there used to be six locks at Blackburn, if they had put one there the Canals - modernised it properly - it could have been a good thing today.. But the trouble today is - where would they get the botmen?"

"That is one big snag. There is no seed left for the boatmen. They have all gone, and today they would not have it. I have put my clogs on Monday morning at 6 o'clock and have never taken them off while 7 or 8 on Saturday night, and been too tired to go anywhere and stopped in bed saturday night and Sunday too tired to get up. Well they would not do that today, and when I working on the Canal Transport, we had three nights, three full nights and three days for £2.7s. with 46 tons of grain from Manchester to Blackburn.

"Were you happy on the canals?"

"I was happy in my young days on the Canals when it was the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, when it was worked properly, when they had a system, but the 1914 war ruined the Leeds and Liverpool Canal.