

## Boats at Lady Lane Wharf - Stratford Canal



*Planet,  
Franklyn  
& Cepheus*

Photo: Weaver Collection No 2556

Looking through the Weaver Collection we came across this picture and asked Colin Scrivener what he could tell us about it. He replied:

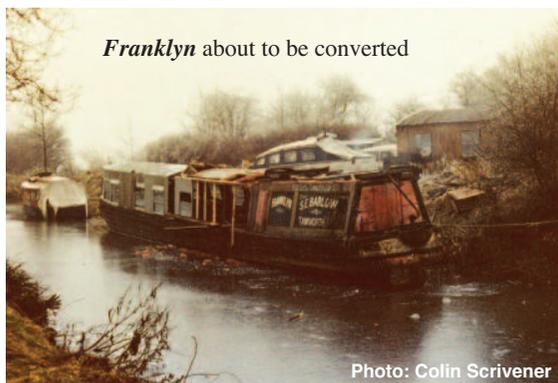
Lady Lane wharf was used as one of the maintenance wharves on the canal by the G.W.R. who owned the canal up to nationalisation in 1948. At that time there were two or three pleasure boats moored besides the icebreaker and the lengthman's punt. By the water there was a corrugated iron tool shed. Most of the rest of the site was let to Fred Osbourne, an old retired railwayman, who lived in a cottage just down the lane. He had the most fantastic vegetable plot and his old shed was lined with all the first prize tickets from all the local shows.

I became involved in 1951 when I was friends with one of the lads who had a small cruiser. In 1952 my first home made dinghy was kept there and later my lifeboat conversion. The group of lads who met there formed the Stratford Canal Club and we started doing some clearing of the canal. In 1956 this was reformed into the Stratford upon Avon Canal Society which went on to rebuild the southern section to Stratford.

By then Fred Osbourne had died and in about 1959 the lease of the

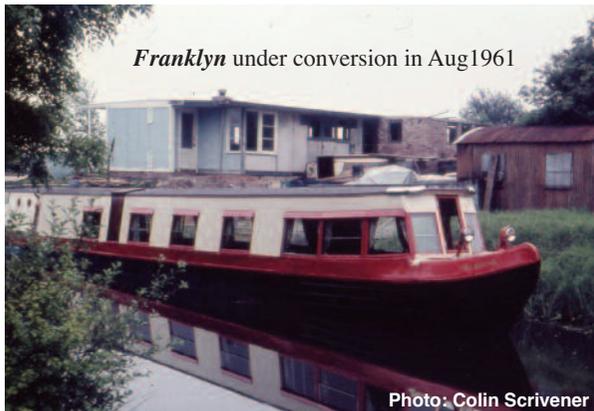
site was taken over by Les Pinder. His son John had helped me to convert my lifeboat and had cruised with me. Les had bought the **Franklyn** (originally FMC **Vanguard**) from S.E.Barlow and began to convert it into a 45 seater passenger boat with bar and piano. This venture proved to be very successful and so he looked around for another boat. At the same time he had formed the Earlswood Motor Yacht Club Ltd. and built the club house out of three redundant prefabs from a local estate.

In the end he actually bought a batch of four ex maintenance boats from Waterways in



*Franklyn* about to be converted

Photo: Colin Scrivener



*Franklyn* under conversion in Aug1961

Photo: Colin Scrivener

about 1962. These were *Planet*, *Cyprus*, *Cepheus* & *Rigal*. Work began on making *Planet* a trip boat but this project was sidelined when he sold *Cyprus* to Tony Phillips (*Founder of NBOC*) and agreed to convert it as a six berth holiday boat. At this point Sheila (my wife) and I had bought *Hazel* which we kept at Warings Green and I started working for Les as boatbuilder and skipper.

*Cyprus* was sufficiently finished to go to the re-opening of the Stratford Canal in July 1964 and then work began to complete *Planet* as a 50 seat boat with sliding roof hatches and the National engine replaced with a Lister HA2. She went into service in July 1966 and was very successful. To start with she was skippered by George Wain. At this point I had to go back into toolmaking as although the boat work was very enjoyable the pay was not enough for a growing family. I continued steering the trip boats when required in the evenings and weekends.

*Cepheus* was temporarily taken over by John Pinder, who had set up a yard at Hopwood on the W&B canal, and used as a camping boat. At the time of Philip Weaver's picture I think she had just been returned to Earlswood and before long had been converted into another 50 seater trip boat. The National was replaced with a Lister SR3.

In about 1977 *Franklyn* was

sold to Tim Wood who removed the conversion and returned the name to *Vanguard*.

*Rigal* had originally been intended to be converted into a living boat for Les. I made the roof sections but after I left no further work was done and the roof sections were actually used on the conversion of *Cepheus*. She was sold in 1979 and Tim Wood, who was connected to Tam & Di Murrell's Adelaide dock, came back to Earlswood with *Vanguard* to cut off the stern end and make a new motor's end on a finished

boat of about 50 feet which was then towed back to London. Some time later the stern section was sold and I believe made into a new boat.

Also at this time *Planet* was sold out of service to Rex Wain who immediately de-converted her and put her back to trading condition.

In 1985, with the Lady Lane operation now being run by Les's daughter Barbara Worley, the passenger boat business finally finished with the sale of *Cepheus*. She was sold to a young couple (I cannot remember their names although I helped them take the boat to Stockton dock for a pre-sale survey) who took the top off at Caggy's yard and returned her to carrying condition. They lived for a while at Warings Green.



Photo: Colin Scrivener

*Rigal* just launched with a new counter stern and *Vanguard* (Franklyn) July 1979