

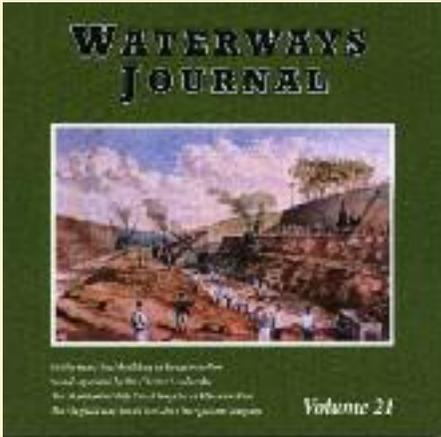


Limehouse for the boatman was the excitement of getting all spruced up in your Sunday best to visit the famous Petticoat Lane market. We would go in small groups and I remember going off with some of the younger boatmen and being told to watch out for them “spivs and flash ‘arrys”. We would walk among the stalls, or should I say be shoved from one to another, with our hands thrust deep inside our pockets hanging onto what little money we had got, keeping an eye out for the spivs. I loved every minute of it.

We all used to return to the boats with something we had bought, and tales of the bargains we had missed and what we had seen. Yes, Limehouse will never see the likes of the ships, boats, barges, horses, tugs and people again.

I'm glad I was part of it.

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The Spring 2019 issue of the journal, volume 21, has just been published and, as ever, includes some fascinating insights into waterways history. This issue has a distinct flavour of northern waterways (and none the worse for that!) The editor includes a somewhat hesitant apology that this issue does not mention narrow boats, but rightly explains the importance of broad-beamed, estuarial and coastal vessels to the whole of the carrying trade. The Waterways Journal has established a formidable reputation for scholarly

research and the articles in this volume can only add to this.

The first paper discusses what even the author admits to be the improbable concept of building flats on the upper River Dee for use on the Bridgewater canal. The clue to one reason why is given by the availability of suitable timber from the Duke's own estates in Shropshire. The research is supported by a considerable list of references to source material. I await part two of this work with some interest.

In the second article, a wider range of vessels is considered, but limited to those of only one company, the Chester Leadworks. This company, little known outside the area, operated a wide range of boats in the North-west. Again, ably supported by references, this piece describes the working of these boats with much detail relating to the crews and their many difficulties.

Next, the Manchester Ship Canal Hospital at Ellesmere Port is discussed in some detail. This hospital was at a time when workers' welfare was just starting to be considered and, as the author states, "This was effectively the first organised accident service in the world."

Finally, the last article discusses some documents from the archives of the Sheffield & South Yorkshire Navigation. In his introduction, the author writes that these documents survived only because of the inefficiency of the company's records management, which makes this article even more informative and entertaining.

This issue of the Journal, No. 21, is a worthy addition to the growing bookshelf of its companions and I commend it to anyone with an interest in some of the more unusual aspects of the larger waterways of the north of England.

Paul Monahan