



Fred Bunn

What was it like working on boats?

It was alright, you got used to it and used to the weather, so it never bothered you. We regularly went to Weston Point with China Clay, Flint and Stone, we also went to Stoke to fetch coal for Henry Seddon in Middlewich. Sometimes when he was pushed, we'd take salt for them through the lift and up to Manchester.

When you were at Weston Point, there were dock men and they had cranes and tubs on the docks; they'd load the tubs with coal say and then you lowered them on the boat on your own or me dad did. When I got old enough I helped to tip the loads in. At the Potteries they had some blokes to help load and unload but you had to help them; then at another place you had to chuck your own cargo in, 20 ton for 7d 6s, that was hard work.

When you start off, they weigh you 20 ton in, you'd have barrows for loading china clay, they weighed the barrows and calculated how many barrows made a ton until you got to 20 tons. On the boat side you had gauges on but they didn't bother generally, they may take notice of your side to check if any cargo was missing.

It was a lot better when we changed to motors because we had to walk with the horse, coming from Weston Point to Anderton Lift it was 13 miles. With the horse you'd be 5, 5 ½ hours, but with a motor boat you'd do it in 3 hours, boat and butty, so it was a big difference wasn't it?

The fly boats never stopped, they worked all night and day they did, my dad said they had change overs. We worked until late but not like fly boats. If they put crates on you at Potteries, they'd want you straight out with them, and get them down the lift the next day for the flats. Long hours.



Having a Butty meant extra tonnage, so you could make more money. You'd go Runcorn to Potteries, loaded two boats, from Potteries to Runcorn, then bring coal down to Seddons and bring crates back to Runcorn, Weston Point; that was £7. There was 3 of you working for that so it wasn't much. Only narrow boats can work on this canal system, the big boats used to do Anderton to the Big Lock but that was stopped before I was born, Croxton was wider then, they've narrowed it now so you can only use a narrow boat.