

and in that year was a recipient of a Civic Trust Awards Scheme Commendation.

Across Canal Street with its restored surface of stone setts and the old weighbridge are the former Canal Company Offices built in 1849. This building has, with grant aid, also been restored by the Stourbridge Navigation Trust and now houses their offices. Meetings take place in the original boardroom still accessed by its own staircase and centrally placed front door, the left hand door serving the weighbridge office and the right hand door originally serving the humble clerks of the Canal Company. At the rear of the Offices is a restored former canal company workshop, now in use again, and fronting Canal Street is a single storey building built from the ruins of an old garage.

In the 1830's the canal was extended to serve a basin on the other side of the main road but all was swept away by the development of the Trading estate in the mid 1970's. Only the blocked entrance to the tunnel portal remains at the eastern end of the modern dry dock.

At the western end of the secure moorings are narrows where stop planks could be dropped to isolate this part of the canal



should a breach occur elsewhere along the route. Over the narrows the Trust in 2000 built a bridge to replace one which may have previously existed at this point. This incorporated parts of a rescued 1838 bridge cast by J. Bradley and Co. and abandoned on the long defunct Stourbridge Extension Canal at Pensnett. The canal towpath starts at the narrows with access from Canal Street and here the canal is edged with cast iron plates. This is the start of the wharf area serving John Bradley's original iron works and there were two basins leading into it. The first has a cast iron bridge cast at Coalbrookdale because, as indicated earlier, there was no foundry initially, Bradley being a manufacturer of wrought iron bars, plates, rods and hoops.

The canal turns sharply to the north at the works and the towpath widens to form a wharf area with the base of a former crane and, beneath the surface nearby, the remains of a tramway with rails set in cobbles which led into the works. It is on this

wharf that the "Stourbridge Lion" and the "Agenoria" commenced their journeys into the history books.

Behind the wharf sit the remains of the elegant house and gardens known as "Riverside", once the residence of the Works Manager. Note the painted windows on the right hand side, which maintained the architectural symmetry of the facade but avoided the payment of window tax.

Beyond the wharf there follows a roving bridge across the narrow entrance to the Canal Company's dry dock where working boats were maintained and repaired. The lock is surrounded by a high wall giving security to it and "Riverside" and next to the dry dock is a large spillway and storm paddle installed so that excess water can drain to the River Stour, particularly during periods of heavy rainfall.

The industrial scene today is very different from the glory days of the old Iron Works but part of the former works still operates as a foundry casting gully grids and manhole covers for today's motorways. The principle casting floor for this modern business is in John Rastrick's "New Foundry" of 1821.

**The Future**

Despite being a "remainder" waterway and therefore outside the remit of normal British Waterways expenditure, a Heritage Lottery Fund assisted restoration scheme completed in the summer of 2000 should secure the future of the Stourbridge Arm and the Stourbridge Navigation Trust looks forward to another 200 years of active use of the canal and its associated buildings and structures.

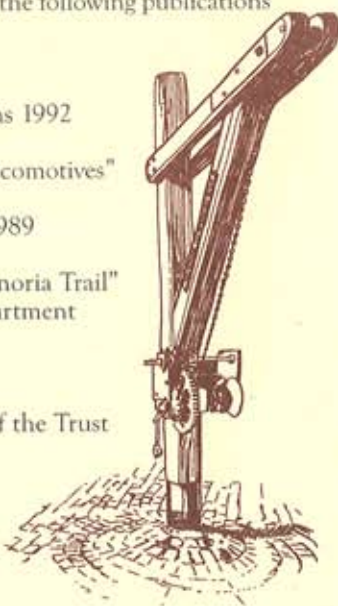
For further information on the history of the Stourbridge Arm and the Stourbridge Canal, and its associated buildings, structures and historic character the following publications are recommended.

"Stourbridge Canal"  
J. Ian Langford/Lapal Publications 1992

"Stourbridge and its Historic Locomotives"  
Edited by Paul Collins  
Dudley MBC Leisure Services 1989

"The Stourbridge Lion and Agenoria Trail"  
Planning and Architecture Department  
Dudley MBC

"Stourbridge Navigation Trust  
The Origin and Development of the Trust  
(1982-1999)"  
Alan T. Smith S.N.T. 1999



# The Bonded Warehouse *and the* Stourbridge Town Arm *of the* Stourbridge Canal



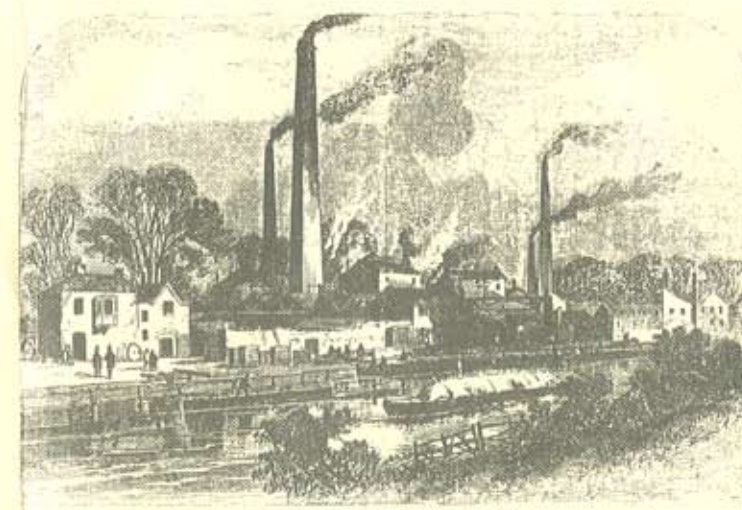
## *A Brief History & Guide*



Welcome to the Bonded Warehouse and the Stourbridge Arm both owned by British Waterways but leased to and under the watchful care of the Stourbridge Navigation Trust, a voluntary charitable body set up in 1985.

The Bonded Warehouse, after a long and chequered history, is now a building serving the Community for a wide range of functions but visitors often ask what it was built for, when, and why here? Indeed, why a canal here and did it go any further? To answer these questions we need to turn the clock back.

Behind the former Canal Company Offices opposite the Bonded Warehouse runs the River Stour and near the top of Canal Street the main road crosses it on a modern bridge. Stourbridge developed as a river crossing and it was through the erection of a bridge here in the 15th century that the town took its name. The river played an important part in the growth of the town as in adjoining parishes were rich deposits of clay, coal and iron. These



THE IRON WORKS OF MR. H. STUBBS, STOURBRIDGE

America, but only one arrived. The rest having been sunk in the St. Lawrence Seaway.

But what of the Bonded Warehouse? It is a three storey building with walls up to thirteen inches thick and an unusual semi-circular end, the reason for which no one can explain. The Bonded Warehouse held taxable goods such as tea, spirits and tobacco "in bond" until an importer redeemed them by paying the appropriate level of excise duty. The barred windows and heavy and barred doors of the warehouse bear witness to the high value of the goods once stored therein.

The earliest part of the building may date from 1799 but could include parts of a single storey structure from the 17th century when attempts were made to make the River Stour navigable. By 1829 a second storey had been added and the building was extended yet again in 1849 during the Canal Company's most prosperous period. By this time a majority of goods were stored for transhipment in addition to the taxable items. Internal cast iron columns have slots to take horizontal boards thus permitting an entirely flexible compartmentation of the building's lower two floors. The projections at front and rear, called Lucams, enabled goods to be loaded and unloaded in all weathers either to water or land.

In 1980 the Bonded Warehouse, by then empty and derelict, was listed as being of special architectural and historic importance. By 1989 it had been fully restored by the Stourbridge Navigation Trust with financial assistance from a wide variety of sources

One of their great problems was transport. Turnpike Trusts were formed to build new roads but even these were insufficient to move both the heavy loads of the iron industry and the fragile loads of the glass industry. An alternative system was required.

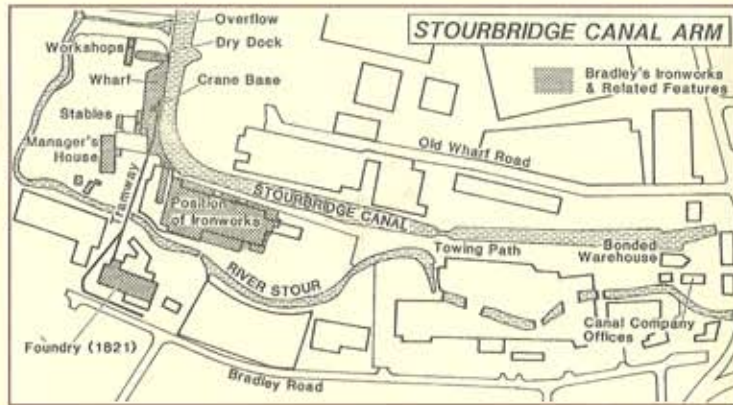
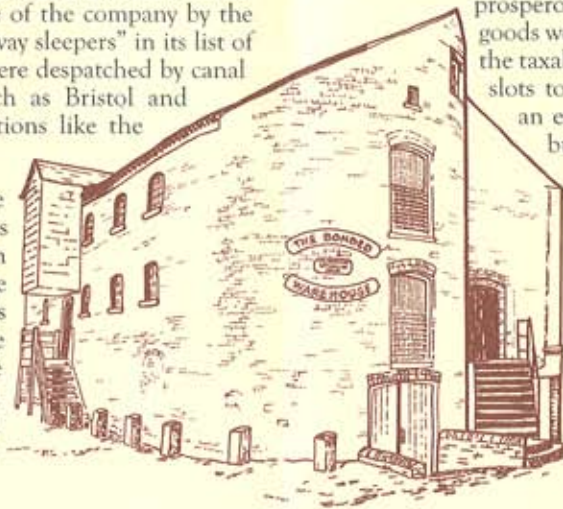
The great canal builder James Brindley had in 1772 completed the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal, which eventually connected the Rivers Trent and Severn via the Trent and Mersey canal. Unfortunately for Stourbridge and the adjoining parishes it did not serve the area's great coalfield. This moved Viscount Dudley and Ward together with other local landowners and industrialists to plan a branch from the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal to Stourbridge. Three miles downstream from Stourbridge the canal passed through Stourton and this was where the connection was to be.

The plan took time to realise and in the interim an extension to Dudley was proposed and constructed at the same time. In December 1779 both the Stourbridge and Dudley Canals opened for business heralding new growth and prosperity for the area. Indeed within twenty years John Bradley had developed iron works between the canal and the river near to the town bridge, a site that by the early 19th century became the principal manufacturing headquarters of one of the largest integrated manufacturing companies in Great Britain.

Initially, supplies of pig iron were brought in by canal and finished goods of wrought iron, plates and rods supplied the flourishing metal working trades of the area. The subsequent entrepreneurial skills of James Foster (1786-1853) and John Rastrick (1750-18) saw the Stourbridge Iron Works expand to produce a vast range of products and it was in this period that the New Foundry of 1821 was built, still in use to this day.

By 1825 Foster, Rastrick and Company had developed a range of standard castings, which ran into many hundreds. This included large beams for steam engines, cylinders and fly wheels down to domestic goods such as bedsteads, cooking pots and garden line posts. There are also clues to the future of the company by the inclusion of "rails for rail roads and railway sleepers" in its list of products. The majority of these goods were despatched by canal to inland locations or to seaports such as Bristol and Liverpool for onward travel to destinations like the West Indies and North America.

The most famous products which left the company's wharf were two locomotives made in 1828/29: the "Agenoria", which operated locally and the "Stourbridge Lion", the first locomotive to run on rails in North America. The remains of the "Stourbridge Lion" rest in the Smithsonian Museum in Washington DC. The company originally made and despatched five steam engines for



were extracted and the river became a prime power source with mills of many kinds including cloth, gun boring and the forging, rolling and slitting of iron. Much of the iron was turned into nails and chain at this time.

In the 16th century glass making developed in the area with its abundance of coal and high quality clay for furnace bricks and glass melting pots. Originally glass bottles, phials and window glass were produced but later, with the development of lead crystal glass blowing, cutting and engraving skills, the Stourbridge area gained an international reputation for the production of decorated domestic ware.

Stourbridge was also a market town with a variety of trades but much of its importance grew from the development of the iron trade by Richard Foley in the 17th century. As a result of his skills and ingenuity, Stourbridge became a meeting place for iron masters, glass masters and other influential bodies concerned with the development of trade and industry.