

# SEVERN PROJECT

## Tales from the Riverbank

**Photographer (1910s) – Item - camera film**

*(Turns round with camera)*

**Photographer:** If you can all just get a bit closer. Tarquin, Tarquin, need you to move in and you Elspeth and you Algernon, close in a bit and still and all say “Gorgonzola”. Wonderful. I’m sure that will be a most splendid picture. Do you know I do find this such a wonderful invention, the camera, don’t you agree. Now we can record all our days out and all our adventures and it’s so quick with the new films.

We should think soon about reboarding the Lapwing, the pleasure cruiser, I’m sure the captain will be just so disappointed if we remain here for too long, but.....Oh very well, just one more sandwich.

Have you travelled on the Severn before? No. Its my third time of journeying of course you have to realise that it is a working river. Whilst we are out here to have fun then there are the poor souls who have to travel up and down here with their barges carrying coals to Birmingham and the like. Dirty people most of them, but of course that could possibly be just the coal.

The Lapwing is a most pleasurable little boat I must say, with its steam funnel chugging away as we go down the river. I think its wonderful that one can board at Gloucester and come down here to Saul Junction. Have you walked along the path by the Stroudwater Canal. No. Well surely you’ve visited the tea gardens at Framilode. No. You’ve just crossed the river to play amongst the sand have you. Ah!!

Do you know, sometimes the captain’s wife provides afternoon tea? She actually draws hot water from the boiler that is giving us the power and makes sandwiches and we all sit upon the deck in the sunshine.

Apparently the same family have run these pleasure cruises since 1852. The Francillons. Have you heard of them? No. I have to confess neither have I. We don’t mix in the same circles. No. But they have always had a boat called the Lapwing and another called the Wave. Not always the same boat, no. Good lord this isn’t a 75 year old boat. Only 25 years. They replaced them in 180 so I’m told and 242 passengers can travel aboard.

Of course its not as popular as it used to be. Some say its on account of the new omnibuses but I think people are not seeking so much pleasure since the Great war. These boats were used in the war. The Admiralty requisitioned the Lapwing for duty. Even a boat is not immune to evils of the Great War. The Wave took women to work in the munitions factory newly built in Quedgeley. Did any of you ladies work there? No. No Canary girls amongst you then? That’s what they are known

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as on account of their skin turning yellow from the chemicals they handled. I served my country, I was at the Front and I'm pleased to say that I survived, so many of my friends did not. We were glad to return home 5 years ago in 1918.

Have any of you travelled up from Gloucester on the river? No. Neither have I and I have to say I'm somewhat perturbed about making that journey on account of the accident in 1919. You don't know about that? A boat, the May Queen I think it was called was coming down from Stourport at quite a speed, probably too fast. There is no need for speed on the river, leisurely pace at all times but....I digress.....As the May Queen passed a ferry boat it's speed caused the ferry to lurch and all 17 passengers on the ferry were thrown overboard. That day 9 people drowned.

But we shouldn't dwell on death and misery we are here for a relaxing pleasure cruise. None of you have noticed a basket of pigeons have you? No. Good. On one of our trips along the river the boat suddenly pulled in at one of the small villages. We thought it quite quaint to stop but the captain informed us to all remain on board, then he brought out these large baskets of pigeons and opened them, leaving the birds to fly off into the sky. It was I understand a pigeon race as they can always find their way home. I have to say though I am not fond of those birds. Dirty creatures.

I have thought you know of becoming one of those "actuality" photographers. Have you heard of them. Those who record real life for posterity. I tried taking a photograph of some of the dockers at Sharpness but they told me to "go away". Those weren't quite the words that they used but you can guess the language.

(SEVERN BORE STUFF)

Don't want to be a bore of course but when one knows about the Severn, one has to know about the bore. Did you know that this river here has the highest tidal reach in the world? No. You are amazed aren't you?

I have also taken a journey on a paddle steamer out of Bristol Channel, from the mouth of the Severn to Weston Super Mare. A most enjoyable trip on a White Funnel boat. And then at Weston there was the pier and much enjoyment until time to get back aboard and paddle our way back up the river. I have a friend, George, he enjoys the rowing boats and has been known to take day excursions under his own steam so to speak. I have seen him return quite red in the face and suffering from exhaustion. It would not do for me to be rowing. Not my thing, I'm afraid.

Do you know I think that's the captain's whistle, we must return to the boat. Good day.