

AV 11

LIFE ON THE BARGES

TOM BOWLES

TIME	TRANSCRIPT
00.00 - 00.08	I never went to school; my Dad took me on the barge. Well, as far as I can remember, I must have been about 5 or 6.
00.08 – 00.30	Down at Brentford Bridge he showed me this barge, a new barge, and he said, “Would you like to live on that?” And I said “Yes!” And from then on, we travelled all round the docks, up the canals, up the Thames, and lived on the barge. And I went to school down in the Butts at Brentford, when I got the chance, which was very rare.
00.30 – 00.47	My father was the captain of the barge, ‘cos it was a resident barge, we lived on this barge. She had two cabins, one each end; we lived in the fore end, and Mum and Dad lived in the stern end. And we lived, and ate, and everything on this barge.
00.47 – 01.54	Then I went to work at – Reg, my Dad, got me a job at the Thames Steam Tanker and Lighterage Company, just here at Brentford Bridge, which was a big, a very big firm on the River Thames. And I joined them just before the 1926 strike, and I was 16 then. We used to served all Hayes and Southall with cargo, and we used to take sleepers up there, shiploads of sleepers, for the railway, for the Great Western Railway, to lay all the tracks. We used to take sugar and oranges to Kearley and Tonge’s, which was a jam factory in Southall, sugar, cocoa beans and nuts to the Nestle’s >sic< milk people at Hayes, where they made all the Cadbury’s milk and etc., and all that sort of thing – oh, and timber to HMV, the gramophone, at Hayes, all kinds of timber we used to take there ‘cos they used to make the gramophones and all that sort of thing, pianos and all that sort of thing. Oh, all kinds of cargo we used to cart about!