

## Aqueduct.Bugbrooke.

The aqueduct at Bugbrooke where the grand union canal passes over the brook was built on faggots of wood and straw so a Mr Jack Pearson told me.

He said that a small dam was built Bugbrooke side down stream, in order to keep the water table up so that the air would not get to these faggots and straw footings, and

The construction would not sink any further than it would with its natural weight.

The area was very marshy and all blue clay with no solid strata to build on.

I was told that the bricks that went into the building of the arches for this construction and the canal bridges that were built near and around Bugbrooke were made in a field within three hundred yards of the workings on the Pattishall side of the canal.

This clay pit and Kilns was also used to make the bricks that went into the making of all the railway bridges that traversed the brook and the roads in the area.

The bridge for the railway was also built on faggots of wood and straw the same as the bridge for the canal.

Downstream from this bridge was also a dam to keep up the water table the same as the Canal Bridge.

The very large clay pit that was left from these working was drained and filled in around the 1950s .As my eldest brother Sid was one of the men to help do this job.

While completing this job they came across lots of old footings and parts of the old kilns and flues. They came across a very large culvert with a great deal of water running through it. This goes under the railway embankment between the brook and where the pit was.

On the odd occasions while I was employed by Mr Harold Ward the local undertaker and ladder maker at Bugbrooke. A Mr jack Pearson a fellow worker would have time off work to go and see about the dredging and altering of some of the bridges on the brook that passes through the village.

This was to do with Bugbrooke Parish Council as he served on it at the time. There was great concern over the continuing flooding of the village when there was a lot of rain.

I can remember as a child many a time seeing the water up to between Mr Mead's house and Mr Adams the farmer's gate, (The Byre), I was told that it came even further up than this, when the canal broke its bank at Weedon late in the year of 1939.

One of Mr Jack Pearson's worries was that if the small dam Bugbrooke side of the canal was removed, that the bridge would start to move, bank and all.

He said I expect when our generation is gone and forgotten, and the reason for the dam has been forgotten about, someone would have it removed to make the brook run faster from Ham Lane, as that part floods as well.

When the Wheel Pits were dredged he went to make sure and to tell the engineer in charge, of the reason for this dam and under no way must it be removed because of the possible consequences.

But since then and over time all what he said as come to pass and the dams have been removed, not only the one that protected the canal, but also the one for the railway bridge.

On this stretch of canal between Bugbrooke Wharf, and what is know as Rainbows Crossing, there are planks to be placed in groves in the event of the canal breaching the banks in this length.

Over the years my eldest and youngest brother had worked for the Grand union Canal Co. They told me that to put these planks down into the groves and block the flow of canal, is a lot harder than it looks, partly due to all the crustaceans that build up in the groves that the planks have to fit in, as well as the planks try to float when pushing them down into the water.

A great deal of manpower and strength is needed to put them into place. Also some very long poles to push and hold them down under the water, in order to get the next plank into place.

Unless you have a team of men that know the job in hand, can perform like Lifeboat men or Firemen, with plenty of practice, then you have got no chance of stopping it from emptying the whole pound from Whilton to Blisworth.

I have lain on the bank of the canal along by the Aquaduct on the side nearest to the railway, and if the water is calm you can see the water ripple from the bank from the vibration when an express train passes by.

Since the dam as been removed the canal bank has subsided on the side nearest to the railway, it sank that much the water started to run over the concrete wall on the side, and down the steep bank. It has been shuttered up with planks and topped up with concrete since, in order to stop the water from running over the top.

The roof of the bridge has also bowed a great deal since those early days. I have in the past informed my concerns for this part of the canal system with its weakened bridges. Two members of Bugbrooke Parish Council arranged a meeting with me to go and see the Aqueduct Bridge. I told them of my concerns, and I showed them how much it had moved over the years, I was thanked for showing them the problem, I do not know if anything was done, or if the information that I gave was completely ignored.

Like old Mr Jack Pearson, I dread to think of the consequences of a breach in this area of the canal. And what would happen to all the people living in and on the old flood plain. I was told when the bank broke at Weedon the water came up the brook not down or just built up as some people think.

It came up that fast in the village it knocked down lots of walls in the West End of Bugbrooke. These walls were never rebuilt, they were replaced with iron railings, and most of them are still there to this day. If the bank broke, all these new houses that have been built along the old flood plain would be badly flooded or damaged, not to think what all the motor cars and garden sheds would do, amongst the rest of the flotsam when they reached the bridges.

As it's not so much the water that does the damage as all the flotsam within it when it stops it from moving.

One cubic yard of water represents over one ton in weight.  
And for every cubic foot of water, is one horsepower.  
With twenty Severn horse power, to every cubic yard.  
There is a lot of power for any man to ignore in that canal.

I would like to see the bridge made safe, reconstructed, or a steel trunk fitted in for safety reasons. Another alternative that would make things safer would be to fit automatic guillotine gates at the Wharf and Rainbows Crossing, also on the very high banks at Weedon.

Stanley Joseph Clark.