

## **Boat tables or Gauging Certificates, CR1590/529**

We've decided on a transport theme for June's Document of the Month to tie in with the new exhibition at the Market Hall Museum, *Tales From The Riverbank*. In the British Waterways Board collection (collection reference CR1590), there are a number of these boat tables, or gauging certificates. These were created in order to charge tolls for boats using the region's extensive canal network. The gauge was calculated by putting weights into the boat and measuring the free board (or dry inches). This measurement would be taken in four places and averaged. More information about gauging can be found on the Birmingham Canal Navigation Society website [here](#).<sup>1</sup>

These single sheets contain a wealth of information about individual boats. The information given includes the registration number of the boat, the name of the company or individual who owned it, name of the boat, its size and details of the cargo carried<sup>2</sup>. Some sheets are loose, and some have been bound into volumes and then removed. The details in the catalogue entry also state that it is likely that multiple copies of the certificates were sent to the different toll offices, so there could be instances of duplication within the bundles<sup>3</sup>.

The example we have chosen is this certificate for the boat named *Sydney*, owned by Fellows, Morton & Company. Dating from 26<sup>th</sup> August 1884 it notes that *Sydney* is 70 feet 9 inches long, 7 feet wide and was loaded with 33 tons of cargo. The certificate notes the difference in the draught of water when light (11.22 inches) and when loaded up with 33 tons of cargo (44.82 inches). The draught is the depth of vessel below the waterline measured vertically to the lowest part of a set reference point, such as the propeller or the hull. So, the heavier the load, the greater the draught<sup>4</sup>.

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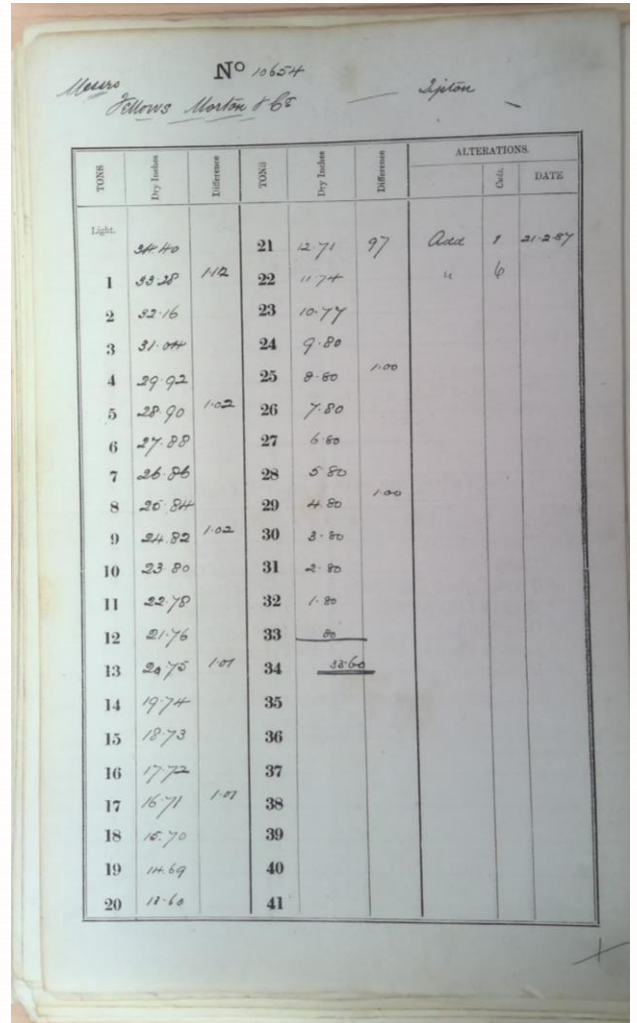
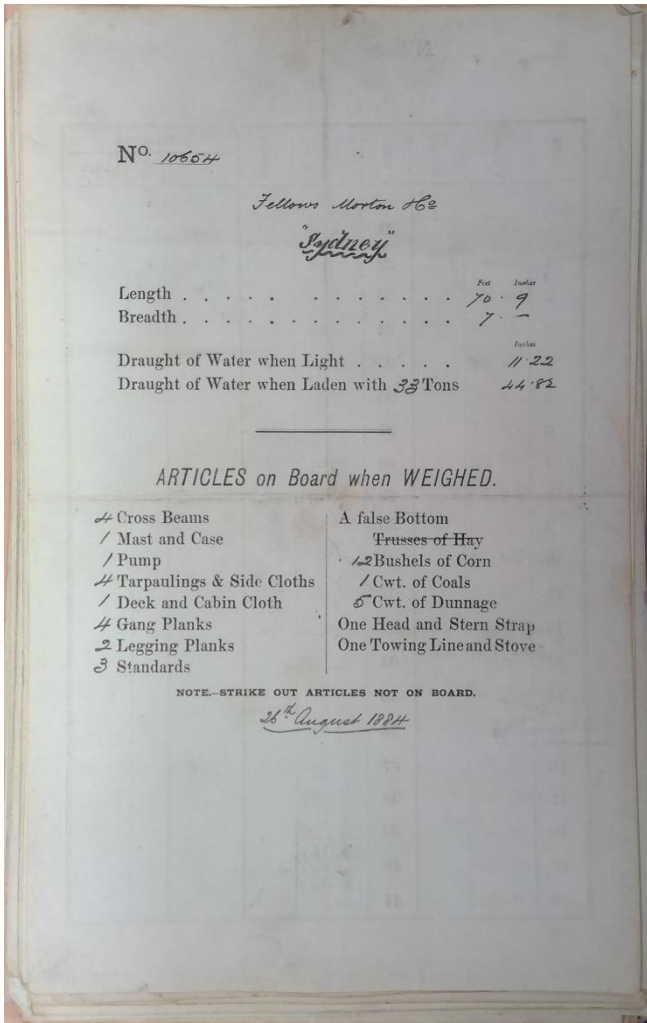
<sup>1</sup> Birmingham Canal Navigation Society website, <https://bcnsociety.com/gauging/#::~:~:text=The%20gauge%20was%20calculated%20by,the%20fore%20end%20and%20stern>. (accessed 24/04/2024).

<sup>2</sup> Boat tables or Gauging certificates, Warwickshire County Record Office, CR 1590/529.

<sup>3</sup> Information gathered from Warwickshire's Past Unlocked <https://archivesunlocked.warwickshire.gov.uk/CalmView/> (accessed 25/04/2024).

<sup>4</sup> Charles Piozet, and the Div. of Personnel Supervision with assistance of the Bur. of Ships *Nomenclature of Naval Vessels: Glossary of Shipbuilding Terms*, <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhrc/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/n/nomenclature-naval-vessels.html#glossary> (accessed 25/04/2024).

The certificate then goes into detail about the cargo being transported, which in this instance includes machinery and equipment such as cross beams, a pump and planks. The boat was also carrying corn and coal<sup>5</sup>. The reverse of the certificate gives details of the draught when loaded with different weights and any alterations made.



Front and reverse of the Gauging Certificate, Warwickshire County Record Office, CR1590/529

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

### **Fellows, Morton & Co.**

Fellows, Morton & Co. were a canal transportation company founded by Joshua Fellows in West Bromwich, although they maintained depots in other places in later years, including in Warwickshire<sup>6</sup>. According to Charles Hadfield, the company quickly became one of the largest and well-known canal transportation companies in England<sup>7</sup>. In January 1839, Fellows was granted permission to toll credit on the Warwick and Napton Canal, enabling travel to London. By the 1860s, the fleet of boats operated by the company had grown to over 50, with long-distance carrying being the main business of the company.

In 1876, a Frederick Morton joined the business, and its name changed to Fellows, Morton & Co. William Clayton joined the business in 1888, but passed away before the formal merger took place. His son Thomas took his place, with the company name changing again to Fellows, Morton & Clayton Ltd in 1889.<sup>8</sup> The company continued to thrive until 1948, when they went into voluntary liquidation<sup>9</sup>. Their assets were taken over by the British Transport Commission the following year<sup>10</sup>.

One of the company's boats still survives to this day and is based at the Black Country Living Museum in Dudley, not far from where the company began. More information about the group who maintain the boat can be found on their website [here](#).

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<sup>6</sup> Information gathered from Fellows, Morton and Clayton, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fellows\\_Morton\\_%26\\_Clayton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fellows_Morton_%26_Clayton) (accessed 27/04/2024).

<sup>7</sup> Charles Hadfield, *British Canals: An Illustrated History*

<sup>8</sup> Information gathered from Graces Guide, [https://gracesguide.co.uk/Fellows\\_Morton\\_and\\_Co](https://gracesguide.co.uk/Fellows_Morton_and_Co) (accessed 25/04/2024).

<sup>9</sup> Alan H. Faulkner, *FMC: A Short History of Fellows Morton and Clayton Ltd.*, Belmont Press

<sup>10</sup> The Dock and Harbour Authority, Volume 30, 1949.