

into the boat for a meal, there was always a long pause beforehand while he washed and spruced himself up. Then afterwards he would gladly sit quietly, reading waterways books or engineering magazines for enjoyment.

It was a mystery how he made ends meet. He sharpened saws for Hoods and did some odd jobs, which brought in a little income. He worked on a number of famous boats over the years, among which Cressy, immortalised in Tom Rolt's book *Narrow Boat*, became the best known. (We have a panel of his painted roses similar to that which he did as a frontispiece for the book.) But he only ever once asked us for money, and that was for the down payment on a new engine for Clara which he duly installed. Apart from that we always had to ask him how much he would accept for his work. This (fortunately for us) was always less than any other craftsman would have earned.

Once I drove him to the saw-mills at Silverstone and he proceeded to buy a tree to replace his stock of planks. Nothing so vulgar as money seems to have been mentioned to anyone.

His only close family was his elder brother George, who lived in Easington. For many years George had left the dock, but latterly he came back to help Herbert, arriving on his bicycle and whistling gently. George was rather deaf, and a ritual argument would be kept up between the brothers as Herbert gave instructions about what he wanted and George failed to hear what was required.

Herbert's other unusual relationship was with British Waterways who, so far as one could tell, could never quite make up their mind what to do with Herbert. He did not own the freehold of the dock and observed an uneasy truce with British Waterways, who doubtless felt uncomfortable about the eyesore into which the exterior of the dock was degenerating. Yet they could not evict someone who had been a feature of the waterways for considerably longer than they had.

How Herbert would have reacted to the present state of the dock is anybody's guess. He would certainly have been delighted at the continuation of boatbuilding and the preservation of the dock. But he would have been amazed at any idea of his work becoming a spectator sport – he was too private a man for that – and horrified at the possibility of the dock being preserved in aspic. It used to be a living workplace and that is how it should remain. So he would have shared my pleasure when in the summer of 2006 I met Clara again, under new ownership, emerging from Tooley's Dock in the year of her 100th birthday. Another good example of continuity.