

**From DUCHETIANA by Sir George Floyd Duckett**

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In a letter to Lord Hawkesbury in 1789, Mr. Jackson states "In 1766 I obtained an Act of Parliament to make the River Stort navigable along the borders of Essex to the town of Bishop Stortford". The "Public Ledger" Newspaper August 30th 1770 and Gentlemen's Mag. of 1769, p.508, Vol. 39, record the opening of the same "Stort River opened Tuesday, 24th October" - "The new navigation of the River Stort being finished, the first barge came this day to Bishop Stortford with colours flying, drums beating, attended by a band of music. On this occasion, Mr. Plumer, member for the county, gave an ox and Mr. Adderly, who formerly kept 'The Crown' at Hockerill, a pipe of wine".

The Public Ledger - states - "A correspondent lately returned from the Norfolk tour informs us that he had great pleasure during his stay at Bishop Stortford in Hertfordshire in viewing the improvements made there by a navigation opened into the River Thames for barges of 40 tons burden. He observes it has been opened about six months only yet the direct communication with the Metropolis has already drawn to it a considerable trade, etc.

Following extracts from George Jackson's diary:

October 14th: Stayed at Bishop Stortford, consulted on many points to be observed on 24th when it is agreed to open the river to Bishop Stortford. Mr. Plumer (M.P. for Herts.) had made an offer of a bullock to be roasted on this day. Returned to town the 15th.

16th October: Went to Limehouse ordered 36 firr poles, 50 22 deal, for the purpose of hoisting colours, building a booth, etc. To Eade & Wilson to request the loan of guns and colours. To Curtis etc. for an order for a load of malt that a barge may return fully loaded directly. They were so kind to promise. Sent to Baynes to wait on them with samples. From this to 24th must necessarily employ myself in sending notices and preparing for the exhibition. Gave notice in writing to 26 of the commissioners (being all the gentlemen living near the river whose names I could recollect) that the river would be opened and barges arrive at Stortford the 24th., inst.

20th October: went to Bishop Stortford having my daughter Elizabeth (afterwards Mrs. Berney, wife of Thos. Berney of Bracon Hall, Norfolk) with me.

21st. October: My other daughter's sister, Mrs. Ward and Mr. Fisher came to me to be present at the opening of the river.

22nd. October: Attended my family and friends at church. Having spent these three days in considering on the business to be done and the ceremonial to be observed on the arrival of the barges, I gave orders early this day.

23rd. October: and attended the clearing away of the orchard hedges etc. belonging to Griggs House and White House, building a booth in North Street, erecting poles for colours, planting a battery for 21 guns. It was the general opinion that the assembly of

people would be great. The booth was covered and made large enough to dine 150 and as many open tables were prepared for the populace as the place would contain.

24th October: Hoisted two colours at the door of our friend Adderly in respect to him as the origin of the navigation and as a small token of our acknowledgments for the many civilities and help by advice received from him in our progress in the execution: placed also at his door 11 small brass cannon mounted on carriages - Hoisted the royal standard on the church steps - Two colours on Castle Hill - One at the head of cut on the Stortford side. The barges appointed to arrive were the Adderly, Melecent (so called in compliment to our good Mrs. Adderly and the Hope - Each was dressed with jack, ensign and pendant. Their approach was preceded by the skiff, having colours fore and aft, rowed by Mr. Glyn Junr. carrying his father, who had executed the work and Mr. Yeoman, the engineer. The skiff arrived at 12 noon and Mr. Yeoman announced the expected arrival of the barges; the number of spectators was exceeding great indeed - many gentlemen of rank in the two counties of Essex and Hertfordshire. The battery of 21 guns was placed to command the river downwards and the opening on the sides of Hockerill and Stortford. On Yeoman's announcing the coming of the barges and congratulating the multitude around the battery, observing that now the town of Stortford is open to all the ports of the world, he was returned with three huzzas. The two first barges were supposed to have had each 500 passengers. These came first and moored in each cut. Then followed the barge with 15 chaldron of coals; on this barge passing, the 21 guns were fired and the huzzas sounded to the skies. The firing was returned by the guns at Mr. Adderly's door. This being over, measures were then taken to collect the victuals that were provided. Almost every house which had convenience had taken something to roast or boil. It was difficult, on account of the crowd, to get all together. There were three oxen dressed, one of which was given by Mr. Plumer, Knight of the Shire, who was present on the occasion, weighed 176 stone the four quarters, seven large hams were also dressed. The whole with turnips, carrots, greens and bread was supposed to be sufficient to dine 6,000 allowing each a pound. The table in the booth was scarce well covered and the company sat down before the crowd broke in and took all the meat away. It became a scramble after that. It was with great exertion I saved the wine. When this was a little appeased the bread was cut in lumps and given to the people, and after this the ale, being in hogsheads, was filled into large tubs and carried into the streets, where the people might drink that could - Some getting drunk soon and giving room to fear a riot and one of the tubs when full being thrown over, we desisted from serving out the rest. About 100 gentlemen retired to 'The George' to drink the wine, where everything was regular. There was a ball for the ladies at Mr. Jos. Smith's. The town was much illuminated. The day, having proved windy, which extended the colours their whole fly, it was allowed that the view of the church, Castle Hill, the head of the river and the three barges in the different openings was exceedingly agreeable. New songs had been prepared for the occasion in honour of the navigation. The whole confusion was ended without the smallest accident or quarrel that I have heard of.

25th. October 1769: left Stortford carrying with me the noise of bells, music, singing roaring and dancing all together, making such a headache that I was more indulged in the quiet of my sister's\* house than I was ever before sensible of.

\*Dorothy Jackson married to Jeffery Jackson of Woodford Bridge.