

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO THE PROGRESS OF THE LONDON to CAMBRIDGE CANAL

Part 1

City of London Records

Journal 67 folio 317b (or 6)

4th November 1779

Thames and Canal Navigation Committee empowered to direct their Surveyor to prepare a plan of a Navigable Canal from Bishops Stortford to Cambridge together with Sections and Profile and to report his opinion of the probable expenses of carrying the same into execution and that Mr Whitworth may be directed to report his opinion whether any more desirable line can be found for a navigable connection from Cambridge to any other part of the River Lee and that the expense therefore do not exceed £250.

Coopers Annals of Cambridge 1781

At N.A.

Committee of Thames and Canal Navigation of the City of London caused a survey to be made by Mr Whitworth regarding the junction of the Cam and the Stort. Public meeting to consider the subject convened at the Crown at Great Chesterford on 26th October 1781 but some who were present objected to a chairman being appointed until it was explained who had called the meeting and this not being conceded nothing was done. (Cambridge Chronicle 20th October, 3rd November and 10th November 1781)



ON
INLAND NAVIGATION:
 ILLUSTRATED WITH

A WHOLE-SHEET PLAN,

DELINEATING THE COURSE OF AN INTENDED
NAVIGABLE CANAL

From *LONDON* to *NORWICH* and *LYNN*,

Through the Counties of *ESSEX*, *SUFFOLK*, and *NORFOLK*,

Denoting every **TOWN** and **VILLAGE**
 through which it is proposed to pass,

WITH

TWO OTHER PLANS,

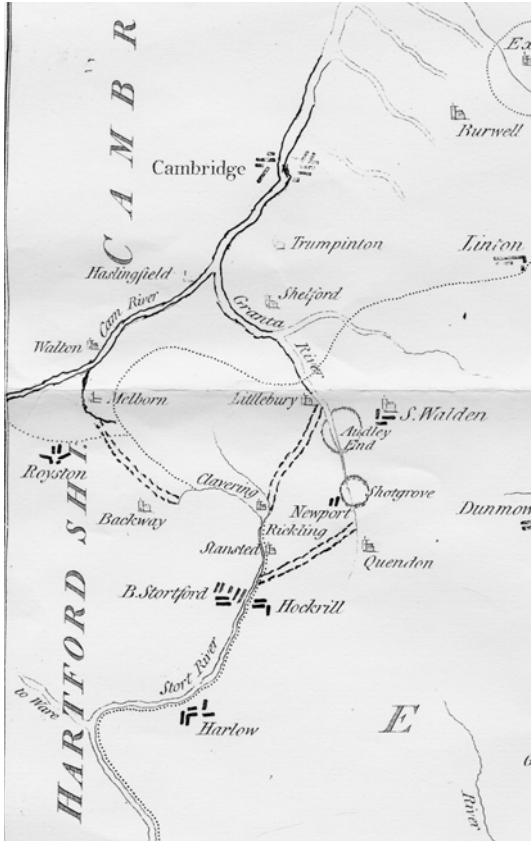
To prove the Practicability of executing the
 Whole with success;

;

And a **PLAN** for extending the Navigation
 from *Bishop-Stortford* to *Cambridge*, without
 passing through the Grounds or Parks of
Shotgrove or *Audley End*; by which the
 Opposition that has been always made by the
 Noble Owners of those Grounds is obviated,
 and a direct Conveyance from Cambridge to
 London, by Water, may be carried into
 Execution.

The Lands through which the Canal is
 proposed to pass, will double, and in many
 Parts treble their present Value; and, besides
 the great Advantage to Land-holders, its
 Utility and Benefit will extend to the Trade of
 these Counties in particular, as well as to the

Public at large, by the Means of a cheap and speedy Conveyance for Corn, and all heavy
 Articles, to Market, by Water, whether for Home Consumption or Exportation. There will
 be found a vast Saving, when compared to the great Expence of Land Carriage; which is
 clearly proved in this Treatise. Another important and National Object will arise from
 this PLAN, which is, that the Cities of London and Westminster may be supplied with
 Corn and Coals, which at all Times will prevent a Scarcity or Monopoly.



L O N D O N

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And sold by *Merril*; Cambridge; *Whittingham*, .Lynn; *Foreman*, Newmarket; *Fortin*, Swaffham Crouse,
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Leatherdale, Hadley; *Gedge*, Bury; *Frost*, Chelmsford; *Keymer*, Colchesler ; *Smithiman*, Braintree; and
Wallace, Brentwood.

M,DCC,LXXXV

[This is the section which refers to the Bishops Stortford to Cambridge Canal. It is only part of a much larger document.]

.....And here I hope it will not be deemed impertinent, or foreign to the general good of the counties and proprietors, to take notice of the several unsuccessful attempts that have been made by the proprietors of the Stortford Navigation, to open a communication from Stortford to Cambridge, and consequently from London to Lynn, by the rivers Lea, Stort, Granta, and Cam. The opposition it always met with from the Noble owners of Shotgrove and Audley End, as intruding on their private property, (the River Granta running through their parks) obliged the proprietors to relinquish so laudable an undertaking. But that a Canal can be carried from Stortford to Cambridge, without infringing on the private property of those Noblemen, I hope I shall be able clearly to demonstrate in the following pages; and not only show the practicability, but the probable expence which will be necessary to complete the same; and that in three different calculations, (according to the different routes) intended to show the difference of expence, which cannot be now an object considerable enough to prolong so noble and useful an undertaking. If it were necessary to widen and deepen the River Granta through those Parks almost up to its source, and then to have a cut of seven miles into a part of the River Stort, near Stansted; why not continue to widen and deepen the River Stort, up to Rickling or Clavering; and make a cut by Arkden, over Littlebury Green, to come into the River Granta at or near Littlebury; and widen and deepen that River to Cambridge, so as to entirely avoid intruding on either the private property of Audley End, or Shotgrove? The Cut would not be above a mile longer; no opposition could possibly be made to it; and the cleansing and deepening would be exactly the same, in point of extent and expence.

But, were I to propose to the proprietors a plan for extending their trade and profits to Cambridge, I would submit to their consideration the following route for the navigation.

I would cleanse, widen, and deepen the river Stort, from Bishop Stortford to its very source, between Mesden and Barkway ; and do the same from Cambridge up the river Cam, by Walton and Meldrith, even up to the source of the brook at Milborn: from which two heads I would make a circuitous cut to come near the town of Royston, which, lying on the confines of Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire, is a market-town of consequence, and as much attended as most market-towns in England, especially for corn and malt.

Part of the map which illustrates the various proposed courses for the Canal

To speculate, or attempt to lay down any specific quantity or qualities of goods, wares, and merchandises, of corn, malt, or other productions, that will be carried to and from London on this Navigation if carried into execution, is what I do not pretend to: without doubt the quantity will be very great, and amply repay the expence which will be incurred.

Now the difference of distance is so nearly equal, that the matter of expence is not adequate to the object of gain that must be expected from the continuance of the navigation to near Royston. Further, if the Noble Lords who made the objection to its

course the other way, should still make an objection to its going through their grounds at all; that objection will be entirely removed, by taking the route from Stortford, to go near Royston to Cambridge. If it will not be intruding on the patience of my Readers, I will, as near as possible, shew the distance each way, and the difference of expence.

The original intention of continuing the Navigation from Cambridge to Stortford, was by widening and deepening the River Granta from Cambridge along its course through Audley End and Shotgrove Parks to near Quendon; twenty-four miles; cutting from thence into the river Stort near Stansted, five miles and a half; and widening and deepening the River Stort from thence to Stortford, two miles and a half: making in the whole thirty-two miles ; twenty six miles and a half being to deepen and widen, at £600 per mile; and five miles and a half to new-cut; which, with purchasing land, making locks, bridges, towing-paths, &c. &c. at £1200. per mile, makes the whole expence, as originally intended, £22,500.

The next point is to show the length of navigation, and the expence, of the second proposed route, without entering the aforesaid Parks: and here the length of the River Granta from Cambridge to between Little Walden and Littlebury, is fifteen miles; to cut from thence across Littlebury Green, by Arkden, into the River Stort, near Rickling, eight miles; and from thence, to deepen and widen the River Stort, to Stortford, eight miles: making in the whole, this way, thirty-one miles ; twenty-three miles of which will be to deepen and widen, and eight miles to new-cut; which, at the above expence per mile,, will be £23,400.

I have now to give the length and expence of this navigation proposed from Stortford by the market-town of Royston to Cambridge; which will entirely remove any opposition from the Noble owners of the parks before mentioned. And here the length of the river Cam, from Cambridge to Walton, and to the head or source of the brook at the village of Melborn, is fourteen miles and a half; to new-cut from Melborn, to come very near Royston and Barlee, to the head or source of the river Stort, between Mefden and Barkway, will be very near seven miles; and from thence to widen and deepen the river Stort to Bishop Stortford, will be eleven miles and a half: making in the whole thirty-three miles; twenty-six miles of which will be to deepen and widen, and seven miles to new-cut ; which, at the expence first mentioned per mile, will be £24,000. But I beg leave here to observe, that, not being complete master of the nearest and most direct route, and not having the level, only a cursory view, I am persuaded, almost to a certainty, that I have exaggerated the length about three miles and a half, and the expence about £2400. This I did to shew the utmost expence that could possibly accrue; which, were it equal to what I have here mentioned, is within £1500 of the first proposed expence, on the objectionable (sic) plan; and if £2400, less, (which I verily believe it may be accomplished for the latter way, which will be attended with numerous advantages, and comprehend the whole trade of a large market-town) it will be only £21,600 consequently £900 less than the first-intended expence.

I hope to find petitions to Parliament, for branches out of the principal Canal, as frequent as they are now for turnpike-roads; and to see my Countrymen emulate our neighbours in France, who, although they abound in Canals from one end of the kingdom to the other,

yet, viewing the advantages which Holland derives from her inland commerce, are imitating her example, and are now, at an enormous expence,, absolutely cutting. three canals or branches (of great length) into their most navigable rivers, to improve their trade and manufactures. Immediately after the conclusion of the war, on reducing their army and navy, these Canals were immediately begun to find their soldiery and seamen employment. Happy would it be for Old England if her Ministers would copy the example, and not suffer their veteran as well as youthful soldiers and sailors to emigrate to foreign countries for employment and support, nor, through the bad policy of the state, leave some thousands to languish in idleness, or starve in prisons!