



Life on the Canal (Life in)

Anthony Burton

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The working life of Britain's canals lasted for no more than two centuries: it began in the 1760s and by the second half of the 20th century, commercial carrying had all but ended. At the peak of their prosperity there were some 3,000 miles of navigable rivers and canals in Britain and by the beginning of the 19th century they carried the bulk of the goods that brought in the raw materials for industry and took away the finished products. Then the railways arrived. But while the trade lasted it gave rise to a unique community - the boating families. The work was hard, especially for the women, who did their share of the boating as well as all the usual chores. The children had little or no education; it was only in later years that special schools were established for boat children. This was a very self-contained community, generations following each other onto the boats, and rarely mixing with, nor indeed being welcomed by, outsiders. This is the story of the 'boaties'. Includes maps.

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