

Leonard Woolvin, my uncle by marriage - he married my father's sister Grace in the early 1930s - ran, in partnership with his father James Woolvin, a Dock and Boat Repair business called Heywood Dock at Halesowen. I have not been able to pinpoint the site from old maps but as Walter Somers is at Heywood Forge it probably is now incorporated in their premises. I have an old invoice with James Woolvin's address on it.

When business declined, James retired and Leonard went to work on the boat repair dock at Stewarts and Lloyds which was situated at the end of their property just above Hawne Basin. There was a small building there which housed the Steam Box for bending wooden planks and the Tar Boiler for melting tar to seal the hulls. It stood by the canal for some years after the site was closed, before being moved to its present location by the canal at the Black Country Museum.

As usual in these circumstances I wish I had talked to him about how the boats were got out of the water and worked on, but he was just an uncle I saw very occasionally when I was young.

Being a Boy Scout in Birmingham in the late 40s, it was decided that a small group of us would do a night hike from the bus at the Birmingham Boundary to Kinver Scout Cabin. The map showed a bridge over the narrows on the canal just above Hawne Basin, which we made for, only to find it had been removed as part of the War Effort. It was suggested we try running jumps with our packs on in the dark, but we made our way to Mucklow Hil and crossed by the road bridge. The Footbridge was reinstated a number of years later.

Incidentally, when we finally arrived at Kinver Scout Cabin it was locked, so we climbed up to get on the balcony, only to land on a group of Kinver Rangers who were having a sleep out - we were not popular or very welcome!

Gerald Darby