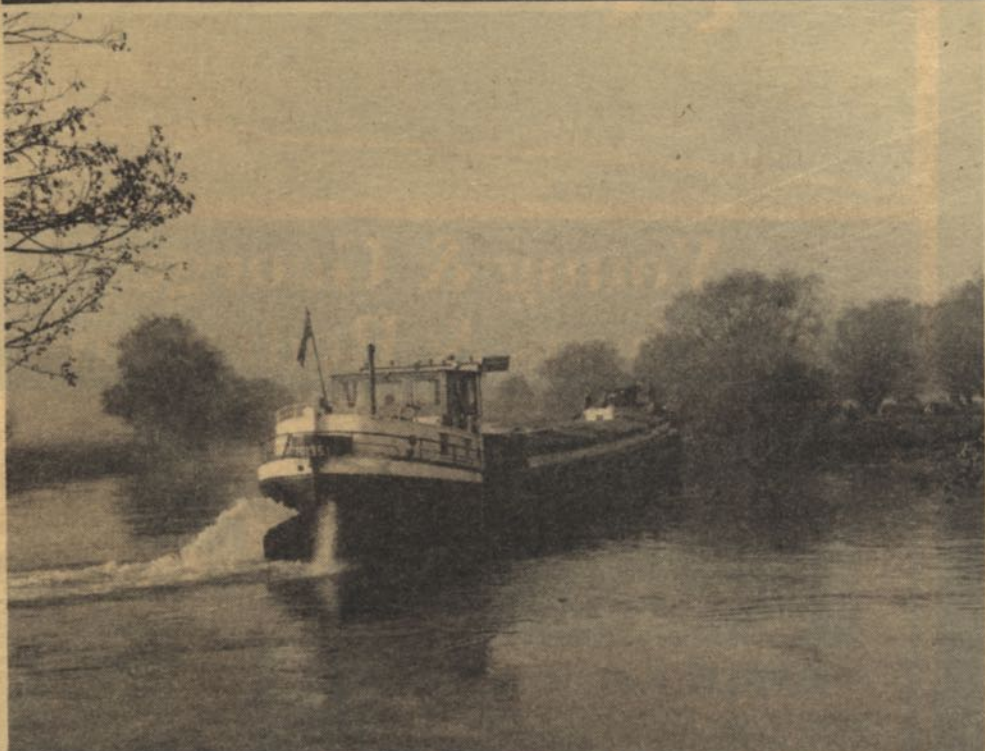


# Frank and his barge arrive in Hereford



ADMAG EXCLUSIVE



This week, Frank Barton defied the cynics and critics and completed his voyage up the Wye to Hereford. It has been an expedition rife with setbacks and frustrations.

Silver Cloud is a 230 ton Dutch River Barge which was purchased in Rotterdam in December 1988 for £25,000. Powered by a 120 horsepower, 6 cylinder diesel marine engine and fully equipped to meet all the safety regulations, this was an expedition undertaken after months of careful research and a great deal of preparation. Silver Cloud has been extended by the Germans who planned to use the 124ft barge for an invasion of the United Kingdom. She had subsequently been used in Holland for transporting cargo.

Frank and his partner Pat Hucker brought the barge to Plymouth in

February 1988 and journeyed round the Lizard to Penzance. On Easter Sunday they continued to Padstow, encountering Force 6/locally 7, gales at Lands End, then going under the Severn Bridge and reaching Tintern at last light on Tuesday March 28th. Here the boat was raided by six customs officials who scoured the boat for two hours - somewhat ironic as the barge had been through customs at every port en-route from Rotterdam. This delay resulted in them missing the tide and subsequently breaking a cast iron propellor blade on the rocks. Eventually they located a replacement bronze propellor which had to be fitted under water - not an easy task!

Throughout the dry summer months Silver Cloud has been moored 2 miles above Monmouth. Two weeks ago, Frank and his crew negotiated Symonds Yat winning the barge above the rapids for 2 hours. They remained in Symonds Yat for seven

days before leaving for Ross on Wye last Wednesday, going under Kerne Bridge at night with the aid of their navigation lights, mooring just below Wilton when they ran out of water. An abortive attempt was made to continue on Thursday but the stern ran aground. On Friday they reached Wilton Bridge arriving in Ross on Monday.

Frank and his crew left Ross for the final leg of the journey on the morning of Saturday 11th November arriving at Carrots Hole, Hampton Bishop at 5pm the same day. Here they stayed overnight with a damaged bow rudder, leaving for the Wye Inn, Hereford at 10am Sunday 12th November.

On board with Frank, on Sunday morning, were his daughter Fiona, John and Medeline Jones and the two boatmen who joined the crew at Symonds Yat, Tony and Gerald Gardner and their sons John and David.

To all the crew, and the many people who helped

en-route, not forgetting the farmer who loaned 10 gallons of diesel at Holme Lacy Bridge, Frank would like to extend his heartfelt thanks.

This is the first time a barge of this size has come up the Wye for over 100 years. For Frank, reaching Hereford is the culmination of months of planning, measuring bridges and gauging water levels.

Frank, who owns a repair garage and filling station at Rotherwas, is still hoping his plans to turn the barge into a floating restaurant, moored in Hereford, will be passed by the Council.

He has endured much criticism and won much admiration for his determination and skill in navigating 'The Wye Invader' as it has been nicknamed, up the Wye. Although this has been a longer haul than envisaged, due primarily to lack of water, this venture can now be deemed a success. We await the next chapter in this saga with interest.