

1945, WN 52/20 Standardisation, 14 March

Weekend Thoughts on the Standard Craft
For the Chairman of the Engineering Committee
by
W H Pryce
Sheffield

Sing me a song of the standard craft
With her shapely sheer and her clean run aft
A moderate beam and a decent draft
A-sail on the inland sea.

What do I care for a London barge
With a sails so brown and her sprit so large
Her leisurely gait and to slow discharge
As she lies at a Thames-side quay.

I still must care for the Humber keel,
Whether she's built timber or steel,
Long wooden tiller or steering wheel,
She comes of an ancient Race.
But whether she's fitted with sail and mast,
Her frames are strong and she's built to last,
As broad as she is long and not too fast,
She's hardly a vessel of grace.

I don't want to narrowboat,
A silly short and shallow boat,
No bigger than a Barrow boat
To serve the Narrow way;
A butty boat, a tow-boat,
A little, lean and low boat
All painted like a showboat
In colours bright and gay.

Give me a stately standard craft,
With 5 yards beam and 5 foot draft,
A short, and sturdy propeller shaft
And rudder tucked in at the back;
With diesel engine and oil to burn,
With ample hold with space to turn,
And 92 feet between stem and stern,
To travel the standard track;

On a new Canal of a new design,
With sloping sides of the safe incline
And an ample channel of one in line
To furnish a passage fleet;
A double tow path without a stile
And bank protection of sheeting pile
And long straight reaches for mile on mile
And headroom of 12 clear feet.

This is my Song of the standard craft
With a shapely sheer and a clean run aft,

A moderate beam and a decent draft,
And all you could wish aboard.
On a new canal with a new design,
With lovely locks in a long straight line,
Very much better than yours or mine,
Or any you'll find abroad.

A nice little launch for the engineer – ME,
To make my inspections and have a look see,
With all the doings on boards for making your tea,
And finished in teak and gilt.
But if ever I meet with a standard craft,
I'm perfectly sure I'll go perfectly daft
And fall overboard and get mixed in the shaft
And have to be dredged with the silt.

W H Pryce