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Story related by Byron Griffiths of Swansea to Clive Reed at St Mary's Church Swansea during a canal exhibition in 1988, when he was 87 years of age.

Mr Griffiths was born in 1901. When he was 15 years of age in 1916 he worked on the Swansea Canal, employed by Vivian's to unload coal from their barges which had come down from Graigola Colliery above Clydach. The coal was brought to the Spelter Works (Zinc Works) on Moriston Common, not far from the Imperial Hotel. A friend of Byron's was Tommy David, a bargee who brought barges down from Morriston.

Working on his own Byron had to unload 22 tons of small coal out of the barge onto the canal bank where other men filled wheelbarrows and pushed the coal into the Spelter Works. Byron's comment to me was "That the coal boats were bloody hard work". "If the small coal known as "Duff" was wet it set like concrete, and we had to use a pick to break it away from the coal cargo". "I stuck it for two weeks and left for lighter work". Byron worked in nearly every industry in the lower Swansea Valley up to Morriston. In tinsplate works, spelter works, foundries,

His father David Griffiths worked in Ynystawe Patent Fuel Works and at Tyr Canol Tinsplate Works in Morriston. Another bargee he remembered was Enoch Rees who worked on the canal about 1920. Byron also mentioned Abiah Roderick, the Clydach poet whose father was also a bargee.

Byron remembered seeing Miss Dilwyn (Amy), who always wore trousers and a cap and smoked a pipe, "We had them in those days as well" he said.

He remembered seeing limestone at the Ynystawe limekilns, and the Sioni Onion men living under the Strand Arches. After coming of the ships from Brittany into the North Dock they used to plait their onions under the arches before setting off to sell them, that was about 1918.

Whenever we (the family), had any small coal left in the coal house they mixed it with clay and formed it into balls called Peli.

I asked Byron about the construction of the barges, especially the end spaces. He said the ends of the barges never carried any cargo, the bargee would stand in the end to operate the rudder, and if they had a wet cargo the water would run into the ends to be bailed out with a bucket. Planks were inserted across the barge about 8 feet from the ends to form the bargee's space. The rudders were square with a straight handle, not anything fancy.

Clive Reed 1988.