

“To what extent do the 2 sources show how Stoke Bruerne was affected by the coming of the canal in 1805 and the railway in 1840?”

During the Industrial Revolution, the village of Stoke Bruerne endured two major changes, which caused both long, and short term affects and altered the village socially and physically. The two sources display Stoke Bruerne very differently from each other. However there are many factors to be taken into consideration when drawing a conclusion for this question, mainly about the reliability of the source and how it is backed up by information we gained from the site visit and other sources available to us.

Source A was a passage taken from “A Tour of The Grand Union in 1819” written by John Hassell, fourteen years after the canal had been completed. Source A starts off by describing the general appearance of the village. Hassell described Stoke Bruerne as “picturesque” and “rustic,” the village still had a rural feeling to it, and he has said that it was very similar to country Welsh villages and had buildings very similar in make to those he found there. It was said by the writer of the Stoke Bruerne guidebook that the slate on the roofs had actually been taken from the mines in North Wales. The canal had obviously brought trade to the village from other areas of the country.

However, the more drastic effects on the village were on its wealth and fame. There was a lot of traffic around the canal, “succession of moving objects” and “navigation attendants and their cattle bustling to pass a lock” and there appeared to be a lot of business and jobs. There was “freighted boats” and accommodation for the diverse visitors that came to the village, described as a “motley group,” the guidebook expressed a frequency of boats and traffic, the “boat after boat” passed through Stoke Bruerne every day. The business of the canal at Stoke Bruerne was also evident when in 1836, the weight of traffic on the locks at the village (70 in total per day) caused the Grand Junction Canal Committee to construct a second pair of locks in order to deal with the amount of boats (Guidebook and site visit, where second set of locks were evidently removed).

In addition, women had been taking on “laboriou s avocations” implying that there were lots of jobs, as normally the more physical jobs would have been done by men. In addition, there appeared to be a good supply of food, and enough food to go spare, as the writer was offered an “excellent piece of corned beef.” With the large amounts of cattle (for trade) in the area and the visitors, the economy of Stoke Bruerne appeared in the source to be extremely healthy. This is very clear from the table of dividends for the years from when the canal was completed (1805) to when the passage was written (1819) that dividends rose from 1% to 8.5% and eventually to a high of 13% in 1825. In addition, tonnage and revenue between the completion date and the time of the source increased from £68,555 to £169,992. The Stoke Bruerne guidebook described the canal to cause a “flood of wealth” into the village, which was also said to lead to better “living conditions” in the town.

In general the source presented a prosperous village that had adapted to its new wealth incredibly well. The general feeling of the village and its newfound wealth and fame have been evident in many sources other than Source A, so in these areas the source is reasonably useful. However, it is necessary to consider the reliability further.

The source was taken from a larger source called "A Tour of the Grand Junction Canal," perhaps a tour guide, which may have been used to invite people to visit the area, and if so I can therefore infer that the source would have been incredibly biased in order to attract people, nor do we know a lot about Hassell's connection with Stoke Bruerne and the canal; it is important to know the full purpose of the source to conclude its dependability.

The source shows a generally one-sided view of the place; the people there seemed friendly, it was prosperous and had jobs, but the source says very little about the social changes that it endured. On the site visit the guide had spoken about "social clashes," with new people coming into the village it was often difficult for the inhabitants to adapt. Many were said to have found it difficult to adjust to the influx of skilled people in the village and were unable to compete job-wise. Others simply did not like the diversity of the boat people who passed through generally. There is no mention of any accidents or the dangers that the locks brought about, whereas some excerpts from the logbook of the village school had repeatedly mentioned problems of children coming very close to falling into the lock. In addition, even though the village was obviously flourishing financially, there is no indication as to who the money is going to, we do not know if the wealth was spread about or if it was simply made by people quick enough to start up small businesses like the inn for example. As the source shows a very one-sided, biased argument it does not particularly stand out as superior on its own in displaying the full consequences of the canal other than the good points. If there were a negative source written at the same period that could be used in conjunction with the source, then it would be possible to achieve a more rounded answer. As it happens, other sources would be needed to determine a final answer, there is lots of truth in the source, as a lot of its implications are supported by other sources, and as the effects of the railway are expressed in Source B, it shows clearly how the village was geared up for success and wealth and consequently unprepared for the following time of hardship after the completion of the railway.

Source B was taken from a book called "On The Canal" in 1858, by John Hollingshead 20 years after the completion of the railway. The source shows an almost unrecognisable village from the one described in Source A, it sees Stoke Bruerne as a small, inward-looking settlement that had no provision or hospitality for tourists.

Source B talks of Stoke Bruerne as a "small street of cottages, with many outlying barns...that does not covet patronage of strangers". This single sentence shows how the town had changed in the space of 40 years from when Source A was written. The small cottage street had once had according to the guidebook had an inn, post office, 2 forges, stables, and dairy, wharf office and many other buildings including the Mill. The suggestion of outlying barns implies it is no longer a small commercial centre but has reverted back to an agricultural society. The lack of patronage to strangers does not fall in line with hospitality expressed by the writer of Source A, as he seemed very pleased with his "good hostess" and her ability to spare quality food. The source also implies in the first sentence that the town had once been very famous, as it referred to the nearby "celebrated Blisworth tunnel."

The wealth implied by Source A was contradicted in Source B, the butcher was smaller than the cabin of a narrow boat, and contained no meat, only a piece of suet "the size of a nut" whereas before in Source A there had been quality meat to spare. The loss of wealth at the time was supported by both the guidebook, tables of dividends and tonnage and minutes of the Grand Junction Canal Committee meetings. Blagrove had mentioned the loss of business and described how many businesses moved to the railway, such as the removal company Pickfords in 1847. In addition, in 1840 the decline of the mill began was

said to begin, a year after the source was written the double locks were closed due to a decreased number of boats passing through and a general decline in trade as the wharfingers office was changed to a cobblers and the brickworks were closed.

The Dividends decreased immediately after the railway was built to 10% when the source was written from a previous high of 13% a decade before. In

addition the tonnage revenue decreased immediately when the railway was built, from £152,657 to £138,263 the following year after the completion of the railway, revenue then fell to £81,357 at the time of source. However, it is important to note from these tables that the canal is still making a profit and paying out money.

Further supporting the problems, the Grand Junction Canal Committee showed an eventual lack of funds and apathy in meetings when continual faults in the tunnel had been reported and eventually no action was taken to fix the cracks and the tunnel was simply left to fall into repair.

Overall the source displays a reasonably poor, quiet village unable to cater for visitors. This overall tone is frequent in many other sources and most points are backed up wholly. However, we do not know why the source was written and the links that Hollingshead had with the village. In addition, the source displays a very one-sided answer, like source A, which would mean again that it is not a valuable source on its own.

In general, the two sources give an *image* of the village after the construction of the canal and later the railway. However, any information given about the village other than the atmosphere are simple implications. There are no definite statements, such as the village was wealthy, I was simply able to deduce facts from the sources which I could then further back up with other sources. Without other sources on the village, both the sources would be fairly useless. However with other information the sources are quite useful and appear to be reliable, as many of the points made are backed up by other sources.