

they float downstream for hundreds of kilometres until they are gathered into bundles and rafts in deeper water - at the mouth of the Vaga River or in the Northern Dvina. Although it is thought that there are no free-floating logs on the Northern Dvina, in actual fact there are. However, for the moment we shall return to the Vaga River.

The Vaga used to be navigable, and shallow boats made their way along it, splashing the water with their broad wheels. Today's powerful river boats only sail down the Vaga in the spring, right after the ice breaks up, to deliver freight to remote areas while the water is deep, and to pick up rafts of timber prepared in the winter at raft-construction points of the Levkov and Shenkursk Timber Industry Farms, and to the Dvino-Vaga Floating Timber Office.

Without normal navigation conditions and relying only on their experience and intuition alone, the crews of ships administered by the Northern Inland Shipping Authority and the Dvinosplav organization are managing to transport only 22 medium-sized rafts of small wood totalling 4,000-5,000 cubic metres in volume, to the mouth of the Vaga River. Here, at the Shidrovo terminal boom they are gathered together into large caravan rafts and taken on to Arkhangel'sk. The 100,000-120,000 cubic metres of timber currently transported out of the Vaga River in rafts is only a drop in the bucket by comparison with the million cubic metres of wood loosely floated downstream on the river.

We have not gone into the history of free floating logs on this river. Former timber floaters say the network of floating facilities which still exists today was created in the pre-war and war years. The most intense use of the Vaga for this