

Dublin brewery served by grand old craft



Recalling busy times at Dublin's Custom House Quay in days gone by

WHERE ARE THE BARGES NOW?

By Tim Magennis

"Hey Mister. Will ya bring us back a parrot". That, according to Dublin comedians and wits of the fifties, recalling the last glory years of the Guinness barges on the River Liffey, was the regular cry of Dublin jackeens perched precariously on the city's famous Halfpenny Bridge to the elegantly dressed barge captains in their dark blue corduroys

and shiny peaked caps as they passed underneath.

Mostly the captains used to ignore them, for privilege was theirs, the privilege of being established characters of Dublin of that time, pillars of the community, men with an urgent job to do in getting Dublin's primary export safely over a Liffey mile to the ships that would carry it to the furthest ends of the world.

Sic transit gloria. All too soon their years were numbered. The advance of brewing techniques led to the development of Guinness breweries elsewhere.

Post Second World War development of road transportation of the big, round Guinness barrels, the building of new ships and the use of iron lungs and eventually the massive stainless steel ships' tanks for the black stuff brought an end to this romantic trade. Still the memory remains.

Even today elderly folk with a knowledge of the tides on Dublin Bay might stand on O'Connell Bridge and imagine a re-run of the days when at high tide the Guinness barges would appear and pass under them with their smoke stacks lowered to accommodate the few remaining feet of space between vessel and the highest point of the bridge. Nostalgic stuff indeed.

Last river trip brought tears

Midsummer's Day 1961 saw the last commercial passage of a Guinness barge on the River Liffey. According to Al Byrne in his most entertaining book *"Guinness Times - My Days in the World's Most Famous Brewery"* it was 6 p.m. when the 80-foot long by 17-foot-one inch-wide barge, *Castleknock*, sailed from the Custom House with

a load of empties and slowly made its funeral way up river to the jetty at St. James's Gate.

"It was the last time Dubliners would see a Guinness barge doing its job on the Liffey. Truly, many a tear was shed and many a story told that night about a part of Dublin that was gone forever."

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