

# BARGES NAMED AFTER RIVERS AND DISTRICTS

## From previous page

Information supplied by the learned archivists of the Guinness Storehouse, St. James Gate, Dublin, shows that the original Guinness jetty at the brewery was built in 1873 and that the first of the steam-driven barges, appropriately called the *Lagan*, was built in Belfast by Harland and Wolfe.

The entire fleet of 13 was named after Irish rivers. The *Shannon*, built in Preston by Messrs. Allsop, followed six years later and then came, in rapid succession, ten barges built in Dublin by Ross and Walpole.

Their names were *Liffey*, *Lee*, *Boyne*, *Slaney*, *Suir*, *Foyle*, *Moy*, *Vartry*, *Dodder* and *Tolka*. Another, Number 22, was the *Docena*, bought second-hand in England in 1920.

## Gone to the war

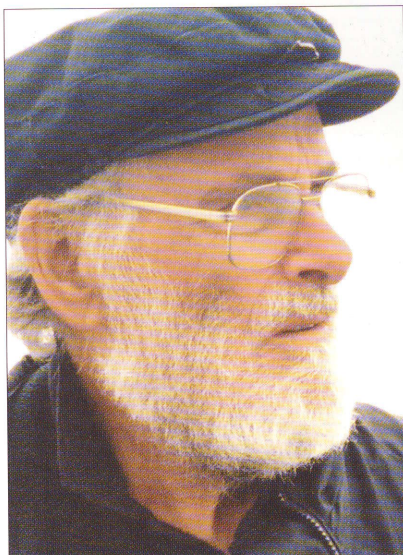
The Guinness records show that the *Liffey* and the *Boyne* were commandeered by the British authorities during the First World War and the latter saw some service on the canals in France.

They also indicate that the *Shannon* was a mechanical monster being steam-powered and twin-screwed with a propeller and rudder fore and aft. She could not swing around at the jetty but went up and down the river without having to turn around.

*"Her engine room was amidship and she had a loco-type boiler fitted crosswise over the drive shaft. The engine room was very hot and very uncomfortable for the drivers who had to come up a ladder from the port side on to the deck and go down another on the starboard side to keep minding the boiler, oiling the engine and looking after the pumps".*

The author of the Guinness notes added laconically: *"I am not going to tell you what we called her."* In 1920 all drivers belonged to the Stationary Engine Drivers and Cranesmen's Union and were paid the same rate as winchmen and cranemen in all the British ports.

The author of what the Guinness journal of the day, *"The Harp"*, describes as an informal historical survey is John Doyle, Foreman i/c Boat Engine Drivers, and we are



Tim Magennis,  
author of this article

indebted to him for his colourful picture of the frantic activity on the Liffey at that time.

*"There was not a day at that time but at least eight barges sailed fully loaded from the jetty to Dublin Port."* He adds that this busy programme was carried out despite the problems of the time.

The years 1920 and 1921 was the period of the Black and Tans and at one time all drivers and all boatmen had to carry a pass from Dublin Castle for being out during curfew hours, as the work started on the jetty at any time between three o'clock in the morning and three p.m. according to the tide.

*"Sometime in late 1921 we were on early sailing and some of the boats were for Custom House Quay. That was the morning the Custom House was set on fire. Indeed some of the boats had some of their cargo discharged when it started and they were ordered away by the military. There was another time in 1922."*

*The Civil War started with the attack on the Four Courts and there was an early sailing that morning too. There was some discussion as to whether we should sail or not but we did and they were sniping at one another across the Liffey. I need not tell you the only men on deck were the skippers."*

*There was a lot of firing going on in O'Connell St. too."* Doyle recalls, adding: *"We sailed all during that week and we got an extra week's pay as danger money".*

Among the many incidents recorded by Doyle was when the *Docena* came downriver fully loaded and encountered very choppy water at Butt Bridge. She made an unsuccessful attempt to reach the security of Custom House Quay.

As the barge sank the crew scrambled to safety. A huge recovery exercise was mounted and every available barge that had discharged set about picking up the cargo.

Doyle adds: *"I believe they got half the cargo but for months afterwards there were messages coming in about casks being washed up on beaches all around the coast. But by the time they were recovered they had been emptied."*

Towards the end of 1927 came the advent of a new fleet of barges. They were well-equipped, easily manoeuvred and ideally suited to the work and the entire fleet of ten was built by Vickers (Ireland) Ltd. in the Liffey Dockyard.

The first vessel, the *Farmleigh* was launched in November of that year, the other nine appeared in quick succession up to January of 1931.

The names of the other craft were *Knockmaroon*, *Chapelizod*, *Fairyhouse*, *Castleknock*, *Clonsilla*, *Killiney*, *Sandyford*, *Howth* and *Seapoint*.

These were intensely busy years for the Liffey barges and up to the mid-thirties the handsome fleet was

To page 28

## WATERWISE

- Do not allow children near water unsupervised.
- Ensure other members of the family can swim and are confident enough in the water to save themselves if they fall in.
- Make sure everyone in the family wear life jackets for aquatic activities.
- Make sure all the family wear suitable protective clothing: the commonest cause of drowning is incapacitation caused by the cold.