

Archive Fact Sheet: Guinness Ships

Until the 20th Century, Guinness relied on shipping companies to export GUINNESS® from Dublin Port. By the 20th Century, the St. James's Gate Brewery was the largest Brewery in the world, with a thriving export trade and in 1913 the Company bought its first ship, the S.S. W.M. Barkley. Following on from this, eight more ships were bought between 1913 and 1977.

Between 1913 and 1993, when the last of the ships were sold, many changes were made to the fleet. New ships were bought, some were upgraded following advances in transport technology, and one was lost in the First World War.

The Guinness fleet shipped GUINNESS® in bulk to the English ports of Liverpool, Manchester and London. From those ports GUINNESS® was supplied to the rest of the British market, and was bottled for export to other countries. Many men were employed by the Company to work on the fleet, known at first as the 'Cross Channel Gangs', and the Guinness ships became a familiar sight in Dublin Port, and in the English ports where they brought their precious cargo.

The steam ships

S.S. W.M. Barkley (1913 – 1917)



**The S.S. W.M. Barkley
GDB/DB05/354.02**

In 1913 a strike at Dublin Port stopped exports of GUINNESS®, and it was then that the Company first decided to buy a ship. The S.S. W.M. Barkley, built in 1898 in Ailsa Shipping yard, Troon, Scotland, was bought second hand from John Kelly & Sons of Belfast in December 1913. The Barkley was a 569-ton coaster, with engines amidship. She carried GUINNESS® in wooden casks to Liverpool and Manchester for three and a half years, journeys that took 13 hours and 16 hours respectively. During the First World War in 1916 she was requisitioned by the British Admiralty. She was given back to the Company in 1917. At around 7pm on 12 October 1917, seven miles beyond the Kish Lightship, the Barkley was hit by a torpedo shot from a German U-boat. Five of the crew died, and nine were saved. The boat sank and was never salvaged.

S.S. Carrowdore (1914 - 1953)



**The S.S. Carrowdore
GDB/DB05/0359.03**

Spurred on by the success of the S.S. W.M. Barkley, the Company bought a second ship in February 1914. This ship, the S.S. Carrowdore, was a self-trimming 'collier' or coal ship, built by Scotts of Glasgow, for Kellys of Belfast. She had a gross tonnage of 598 and carried GUINNESS® in wooden casks to London. The S.S. Carrowdore also suffered damage during war-time. She was hit by a German bomb in July 1941, about fifteen miles from Dublin. The bomb ricocheted off the boat and exploded in the water, and the ship was saved, suffering relatively minor damage.

S.S. Clareisland (1915 - 1931) and S.S. Clarecastle (1915 - 1953)



**The S.S. Clareisland
GDB/DB05/0356.03**

The S.S. Clareisland and S.S. Clarecastle, two more Kelly ships, were built to specification in 1915. Along with the S.S. Carrowdore, they were commandeered for the duration of the First World War. During this time they were used mostly to carry hay, or coal for battleships. All three were back in the Brewery's service by 1919. The Clareisland had a gross tonnage of 633, and the Clarecastle initially had a gross tonnage of 627, which was later increased to 664. Both ships carried GUINNESS® in casks to Liverpool and Manchester.

S.S. Guinness (1931 - 1963)



**The S.S. Guinness
GDB/DB05/0370**

By 1930 the trade in London had grown so much that the Company decided to have a ship specially built. The S.S. Guinness was the first ship to be custom built for Guinness. She was built at Aisla yard, Troon, Scotland and was launched in May 1931. She had a gross tonnage of 1,151. When the S.S. Guinness was built, the S.S. Clareisland became redundant and was sold to the Antrim Iron Ore Co. in 1931. She was sunk off the Isle of Man Shortly before 1939.

The S.S. Guinness carried GUINNESS® to London, a 60-hour journey in good weather, until 1938. By this time the first overseas Brewery in Park Royal, North London, had been opened and had begun to supply the London area. From 1938 onwards the S.S. Guinness was used to carry GUINNESS® to Manchester.

From the sinking of the S.S. W.M. Barkley in 1917, until 1952 there were three ships in the Guinness fleet.

The motorised vessels (M.V.'s)– the Guinness ladies (1952 – 1993)

All the M.V.'s in the Guinness fleet were named after members of the Guinness family. The first 'M.V.'s were designed to hold transportable tanks which were crane lifted into their air-conditioned temperature controlled holds. The later M.V.s were bulk liquid carriers, with holds in the form of tanks into which GUINNESS® was pumped directly from the quayside.

Transportable tanks, introduced in 1953, were a new form of container developed specially to transport GUINNESS® and replace wooden casks. They were made of aluminium or stainless steel, and carried over 500 gallons of liquid each, or around 4032 pints.

M.V. Lady Grania (1952 - 1976)



M.V. The Lady Grania
GDB/DB05/0393.01

The M.V. Lady Grania was the first commissioned motor vessel. She was named after Lady Grania, niece of the company's Chairman, Lord Iveagh. She was built at Ailsa Yard, Troon, Scotland and sailed to Dublin in December 1952. She was 197 foot long with two holds and an after-hold for 120 fourteen barrel tanks (53,760 gallons) and a fore-hold for 1,100 hogsheads (59,400 gallons). In 1971 The Lady Grania was used in an experiment to see whether GUINNESS® could be successfully transported in the actual hold of a ship. She was fitted with special tankers, into which the beer was pumped directly. This experiment proved very useful, and enabled the company to convert another ship, The Lady Patricia into a tanker ship.

M.V. The Lady Gwendolen (1953 - 1976)



M.V. The Lady Gwendolen
GDB/DB05/0419

1953 the M.V. Lady Gwendolen was built by the Ardrossan Dockyard Company. She was named after Lady Gwendolen Florence May, the Countess of Iveagh C.B.E. – wife of the Company's Chairman Lord Iveagh. The Lady Gwendolen had a gross tonnage of 1,164 and 197 foot long like The Lady Grania. Both The Lady Grania and The Lady Gwendolen were built to specifications drawn up by the Brewery's own Chief Engineer, W.D. Robertson.

Then the S.S. Clarecastle and S.S. Carrowdore were sold off to Davidson's of Belfast, they were both finally broken up in 1958. The S.S. Guinness left Dublin for the breaker's yard on the Clyde in 1963, soon after the Lady Patricia had arrived.

In 1976 The Lady Grania and The Lady Gwendolen were sold. Grania was registered as the Lady Scotia and was stranded off the pacific coast of Mexico during Hurricane Carla in 1981. Gwendolen went to Cypriot shipping company and renamed the Paros, sunk off Nova Scotia in 1979.

M.V. The Lady Patricia (1962 – 1993)



**M.V. The Lady Patricia
GDB/DB05/0443.02**

Lady Patricia was built in 1962 by Charles Hill and Sons of Bristol at a cost of £280,000. She was intended to replace the S.S. Guinness, the only stem ship left in the fleet. She was named after Lady Patricia, daughter of Lord Iveagh, Rupert Guinness Chairman 1927 – 1962. She had a gross tonnage of 1187, speed of 11 knots and could carry 296 transportable tanks (148,000 gallons). In May 1973, after experiments had been carried out on The Lady Grania, The Lady Patricia went back to dockyard in Bristol and was converted into a tanker ship, probably the world's first. She set sail for the first time as a tanker ship in November 1973.

M.V. Miranda Guinness (1977 – 1993)



**M.V. Miranda Guinness
GDB/DB05/0515.02**

M.V. The Miranda Guinness made her maiden voyage from Dublin Port to Runcorn in Cheshire, on 26 January 1977 under Captain John Quirk. She was the world's first specially commissioned bulk liquid carrier. She was named after the Countess of Iveagh, Miranda Guinness, wife of the third Earl of Iveagh, Benjamin Guinness (Chairman 1962 – 1986). The M.V. Miranda Guinness went into service twice weekly on routes between Dublin and Liverpool's Merseyside. She was built to Lloyd's 100 A2 classification in Bristol, had twin diesel engines, a speed of 16 knots. She had fifteen stainless steel tanks carrying a total volume of 6,500 barrels, almost 2 million pints of GUINNESS®.

Innovation and quality are the foundations of St. James's Gate Brewery and in the search for more efficiency and greater quality control in the handling of GUINNESS® exports, the Guinness ships were replaced by transportable tanks. In April 1993, M.V.'s The Miranda and Patricia sailed out of Dublin for last time. They sailed to the Manchester Ship Canal where they were sold.

