

Archive Fact Sheet: Guinness Liffey Barges

In the 1870's the Guinness site expanded northwards to bound the river Liffey and in 1873, the Company built their own jetty on the river Liffey. This enabled barges to load and unload wooden casks of GUINNESS directly at the gates of the Guinness Brewery for the first time.

The first Liffey barges used by Guinness, which were steam operated, were built at this time. These early barges were all named after rivers around Ireland eg Lagan, Shannon, Slaney, Foyle, Moy. The first barge, the Lagan, was built by Harland and Wolfe at their Belfast shipyard. The Dublin engineering foundry, Ross and Walpole, built all other barges.

In 1927 Guinness introduced a new type of barge known as the 'Farmleigh' type barge. These second evolution of barges were named after placenames around Dublin eg Farmleigh, Castleknock, Killiney. The barges were built by Vickers (Ireland) Ltd in the Liffey Dockyard, with design input from the Guinness engineers.

These new type barges could carry 87 tons of cargo, roughly three hundred hogsheads of GUINNESS. The one mile journey from the Brewery's jetty to Dublin Port took approx. 15-20 minutes travelling underneath 8 Liffey bridges. One major feature of the new barges was the ability to lower the funnel of the barge in order to pass under the bridges at low tide.

The barges were part of everyday Dublin life, transporting wooden barrels full of GUINNESS from the Brewery to the waiting cross channel steamers at Dublin Port and bringing the empty barrels back to the Brewery to be refilled. Dublin school boys used to stand on the Ha'Penny bridge calling out 'Hey Mister, Bring us back a parrot' at the passing barges underneath, as they thought that the barges were sailing off to exotic places laden with GUINNESS.

The last barge sailed down the Liffey on 21 June 1961 and the fleet of barges were all sold off. Some of the Farmleigh type barges were sold of to Haulbowline, Co. Cork and others were sold to Messrs. Scott and Sons, Toomebridge Co. Antrim where the barges were used to dredge sand from Lough Neagh.