



Longford Harbour as it was before 1960.

# THE MISSING LINK

Just over two months ago there were great celebrations in Clondara because after years of hard work and frustration the Royal Canal was reopened and barges or cabin cruisers could at long last travel the full distance, 91 miles, from Spenser Dock in Dublin to Richmond Harbour.

It is important to emphasize "re opened" as this waterway was first opened in 1817 and then 13 years later it was extended to Longford much to the great delight of the locals. In fact between five and six thousand people, led by the band of the First Regiment of Dragoons and turned out to escort the leading barge from Farneyhoogan Bridge to the harbour, which was situated at the rear of the Market Square.

The extension from Richmond Harbour through Kilashee and in to Longford is now closed and has been like this since 1960. If this were ever to be reopened it would be a dream come true for many Longfordians, particularly Noel McGeeney and members of the Canal Restoration Group.

Over the years Noel and

friends with the assistance of various FÁS Schemes have done a wonderful job on the stretch of the canal from the railway to Churchlands Bridge. It is now a very pleasant walk and is very popular with locals many of whom take their daily stroll along what is even, at this stage, a beautiful amenity.

As well as the commercial and recreational potential of the project we should remember that this is our heritage. Noel provided me with a short history and it makes fascinating reading.

19<sup>th</sup> century Ireland was cursed by emigration and for almost 40 years thousands of people from Longford and surrounding counties embarked on their heartbreaking journeys at the Harbour. Some, however, did not even reach Dublin. On Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 1845 a tragic accident occurred. Around 50 second class passengers boarded the *Malgrave* boat and hundreds of family and friends came to see them off. The barge moved out to the middle of the harbour to prevent friends boarding. The passengers all went to one side of the barge to

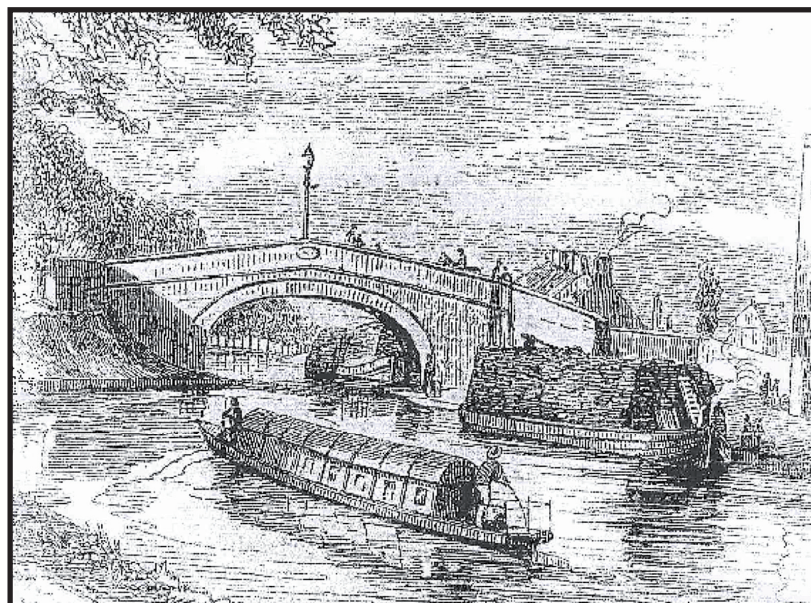


Illustration of Fly Boat.

wave back! This caused the *Malgrave* to capsize and seven people were drowned.

In those days travel by canal boat was an expensive business. Many journeyed to Longford on the famous Bianconi coaches which had a network throughout Ireland and I believe, a stable and depot at the rear of Main St. The town's people knew

when a boat was arriving because a bell ringer was employed to announce its approach and departure. This man's wages were considerably less than the fare to travel first class to Dublin. For a slightly reduced fare you could travel second class. Meals on board were extra.

In the first class cabin you would have to fork out 11 shillings but in second class it was only 10 pence, and that was just for breakfast. Travel time was an ongoing problem and to offset this fly boats were introduced. They could hold 110 passengers and travelled at the breathtaking speed of 10 mph and with scheduled stops, locks to negotiate and prevailing conditions the voyage took 19 hours.

When the railway reached Longford in the 1860's canal travel was severely affected but it wasn't until almost 1960, one hundred years later, that the 'powers that be'

decided that this wonderful amenity was out of date, served no useful purpose and they virtually destroyed it.

The people of Clondara have, with tremendous community spirit and enlightened leadership, shown how wrong they were. Can the canal be reopened and refurbished the whole way into Longford? Noel McGeeney and his associates certainly think so.

Could we follow the example shown by those in Richmond Harbour, and fight to have the "Missing Link" into Longford restored?

The timing may be wrong but haven't we the most talented and well educated people in the world and I'm sure among them there are brilliant young architects, engineers and gifted tradesmen out of work who would give anything to get involved in a project like this.

## Sacraments – 2011

### First Confessions

(St. Mel's College Chapel)

<b>St. Emer's,</b>	Wednesday, March 23rd, 6.15 p.m.
<b>St. Joseph's,</b>	Monday, March 21st, 6.15 p.m.
<b>Melview ,</b>	Tuesday, March 22nd, 6.15 p.m.
<b>Gaelsoil,</b>	Tuesday, March 29th, 6.15 p.m.
<b>St. Michael's,</b>	Wednesday, March 30th, 6.15 p.m.
<b>Stonepark,</b>	Monday, March 28th, 7.00 p.m. (Curry Church)

### First Holy Communions

<b>St. Emer's,</b>	Saturday, May 21st, 2.00 p.m.
<b>St. Joseph's,</b>	Saturday, May 28th, 2.00 p.m.
<b>Melview ,</b>	Saturday, May 7th, 2.00 p.m.
<b>Gaelsoil,</b>	Saturday, May 7th, 11.00 a.m.
<b>St. Michael's,</b>	Saturday, May 28th, 11.00 a.m.
<b>Stonepark,</b>	Saturday, May 21st, 11.00 a.m. (Curry Church)

### Confirmation

<b>St. Emer's</b>	Saturday, March 5th, 11.00 a.m.
<b>Gaelsoil</b>	Saturday, March 5th, 11.00 a.m.
<b>Stonepark</b>	Saturday, March 5th, 3.00 p.m.
<b>St. Joseph's</b>	Saturday, March 5th, 3.00 p.m.
<b>Melview</b>	Sunday, March 6th, 3.00 p.m.
<b>St. Michael's</b>	Sunday, March 6th, 3.00 p.m.

### Commitment Ceremonies - Cathedral Centre

<b>St. Joseph's</b>	Saturday, January 15th, 7.30 p.m.
<b>Melview</b>	Sunday, January 16th, 10.00 a.m.
<b>St. Emer's</b>	Saturday, January 22nd, 7.30 p.m.
<b>Stonepark</b>	Sunday, January 23rd, 10.00 a.m.
<b>St. Michael's</b>	Saturday, January 29th, 7.30 p.m.
<b>Gaelsoil</b>	Sunday, January 30th, 10.00 a.m.

### Service of Light - St. Mel's College Chapel

<b>St. Joseph's</b>	Monday, February 14th, 6.30 p.m.
<b>St. Michael's</b>	Monday, February 14th, 8.00 p.m.
<b>Gaelsoil</b>	Tuesday, February 15th, 6.30 p.m.
<b>Melview</b>	Tuesday, February 15th, 8.00 p.m.
<b>Stonepark</b>	Wednesday, February 16th, 7.00 p.m. (Curry Church)
<b>St. Emer's</b>	Wednesday, February 16th, 6.30 p.m.

## Midnight Mass in St Mel's (view from the organ loft)

Extract from a poem by Michael J.Fannin, a native of Corteen written Christmas 1943 when he was held in a Prisoner of War camp during World War 11. He was part of the 'forced labour gangs' who built the aptly named 'Railway of Death' from Bangkok to Moulmein.

*The greatest feast of Christian life is here  
That holy night we Irish most revere,  
And I in Longford's fine Cathedral kneel  
In hushed expectancy, perhaps to feel  
The air bestirred by soft angelic wings  
When bearing down the Baby Lord of Kings  
Up here where Segers moves the many keys  
Thro' sheets of sacred notes with gifted ease  
I feel exhalted, privileged to view  
The scene below, so very old but ever new.  
The noble altar dazzling to the sight  
Enriched with priceless things and golden light,  
Its many precious ornaments adorned  
With seasonable holly, glistening, thorned-  
A symbol, maybe of that greater date  
When Mary held the tender Babe in lowly state.  
The sanctuary steeped in years of prayer  
Embellished now with thoughtful loving care  
Is ready at the stroke of midnight bell  
For him who guards the See of Saintly Mel.  
The hour is here; and all the chimes ring forth  
In gladsome song to greet the Saviours birth.  
I look below. The edifice is filled  
With fervent praying souls, bowed, silent- thrilled  
At this expression of their heritage  
Which shines in gold on Erin's ancient page.*

## "Deep Sinking"

"LEAVING the Park by Ashtown Gate, the Royal Canal is reached in a very short time, at the point where it adjoins Ashtown House. The names of the Royal Canal bridges in this western part of the county - Longford, Ranelagh, Talbot, Granard, Kirkpatrick, Kennan, Callaghan, Pakenham and Collin's Bridges - are in most cases from those of original Directors of the Royal Canal Company, the Earl of Longford, Lord Ranelagh, the Earl of Granard, Alexander Kirkpatrick, The Hon. Thomas Pakenham, and John Collins. Longford Bridge is at Ashtown, Talbot Bridge on the high road to Navan and Enniskillen, Callaghan Bridge, formerly Carhampton Bridge, is at Clonsilla Railway Station, and Collin's Bridge at Lucan Station. The "Deep Sinking", where the Canal is made between very high banks, is near Clonsilla, and was the scene of a disaster more than sixty years ago, when a passenger boat went down and many emigrants from Longford perished."

- "History of North Dublin," by Dillon Cosgrave, 1903.

The above insert is an extract from Dillon Cosgrave's History of North Dublin, which relates the story of another more serious tragedy which befell passengers who had embarked at Longford Harbour.