

The neighborhood of Dublin

Its Topography, Antiquities and Historical associations

BY

Weston St. John Joyce

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With the exception of a few hackneyed resorts easy of access, the Dublin folk in my earlier days appeared to take but little interest in the surroundings of their city. That reproach, however, can no longer be made, and nowadays on popular holidays and week-ends, considerable numbers may be seen in places where scarcely one would have been found thirty years ago. With the evolution and perfection of the bicycle, the great improvement in the roads, the construction of light railways to Blessington and Lucan, the extension of our splendid tram service to Howth, Dalkey and Rathfarnham, and last though not least, the advent of the automobile, a new interest has been awakened in the beautiful surroundings of our metropolis, and a great vogue for the country has sprung up among all classes. The knowledge of this fact has induced me to write this book in the hope that it may stimulate that interest in those who already know the charm of our surroundings, and excite it in those who do not, and that it may be the means of enabling others to enjoy the pleasures I have derived from rambling among the many picturesque and interesting places in The Neighbourhood of Dublin.

Dublin,

Weston St. John Joyce.

May, 1912.

INTRODUCTION

BY

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THE neighbourhood of Dublin, from an historical point of view, presents in miniature the history of English colonisation in Ireland. Pent at first within the circuit of their wall-girt city, out of which they durst not go forth alone or unarmed the colonists at length took heart of grace and ventured to occupy outlying villages and important positions in which they built fortified houses and castles. Those who settled on the north enjoyed, for long periods, comparatively peaceful possession, protected as they were from harassing raids by the interposition of the city between them and the mountains. Not so, however, with those who established themselves in the chain of settlements and outposts skirting the southern border of the plains. These were subjected to continual incursions by the natives from the mountainous tracts of Dublin and Wicklow. Even with the advantages conferred by the possession of superior arms, equipment and defences, the hardy colonists, mostly old soldiers and men trained to the art of war, were continually obliged to abandon their homesteads and flee for safety to the city. The disparity between the ambition and the ability of the early English colony for conquest, is well illustrated by the fact that liberal as was the area of the Pale which they mapped out as their territory, there were at intervals large portions in which they could only remain by paying heavily in "Black Rents" to the Irish, or into which, more likely, they dared not venture at all.

The menace of the mountains was one of the most serious obstacles to the realisation of English ambition. Frowning down upon the colonists was a wild and almost impenetrable tract of mountain, desert and forest, within the sanctuary of which the natives were able to organise their predatory raids with such impunity that nothing short of a formidable expedition could hope to succeed in any measure of retaliation. This struggle, on the south and south-west, went on intermittently through the centuries, and at times, in consequence of the unsettled conditions of life resulting from this guerilla warfare, large tracts of arable land had to be abandoned and allowed to lapse into desert condition.

The opening of the 17th century saw some tendency to build country residences of the dwellinghouse rather than the fortified type, in the district around Dublin, though no doubt their occupants in many cases had reason to regret the venture during the lawlessness and disturbances which accompanied the Insurrection of 1641. From this period there seems to have been a steady growth of country establishments, not merely in districts which are now suburban, but also in areas beyond them. At the time that Rocque constructed his map (about 1750), the city had not extended, roughly speaking, further than the Rotunda on the north, James's Gate on the west. New Street on the south and Merrion Street on the east, and in what are now the populous urban districts of Rathmines and Rathgar, Pembroke, Blackrock and Kingstown, small villages and stately country residences stood among tillage lands, green pastures and waving cornfields which survived in part within the memory of many now living. In the beginning of the 19th century the wilds of Wicklow were opened up by a system of military roads, and the construction of the Dublin and Kingstown Railway some thirty years later, gave a great impetus to building along the southern shore of the Bay, in time converting it into a continuous residential district as far as Dalkey, while the extension of the railway system in subsequent years through the district, brought many places which prior to that had been almost inaccessible, within easy reach of the Dublin public.

It is desirable to associate history with topography, and accordingly, all through this book, the reader will find brought under his attention the historical events as well as the traditions in connection with the several castles, mansions, homesteads, church ruins, demesnes, forts, hills, valleys, &c., together with references to the historical or legendary personages associated with them.

P. W. Joyce.

DUBLIN,
May, 1912

Since this book was written the modern designation of Kingstown has been replaced by the original name, Dun Laoghaire.

Ringsend, The Great South Wall and The Pigeonhouse

RINGSEND, though now presenting a decayed and unattractive appearance, was formerly a place of considerable importance, having been for nearly two hundred years, in conjunction with the Pigeonhouse harbour, the principal packet station in Ireland for communication with Great Britain. The transfer of the packet service, however, to Howth and Kingstown in the early part of last century, deprived Ringsend of its principal source of revenue, and consigned it thenceforth to poverty and obscurity.

In its halcyon days it was a pretty watering-place, much frequented in the summer for sea-bathing by Dublin folk who wished to be within easy reach of town, and in the middle of the 18th century it was described as being "very clean," healthy and beautiful, with vines trained up against the walls "of the houses." In after years it became the seat of several flourishing

industries, long since extinct. It is difficult now to realise that such a grimy and dingy-looking place could ever have been a really pretty and pleasant suburb of the city, but such it was a hundred and fifty years ago, when it contained a number of picturesque high-gabled houses, with well-stocked gardens and orchards, a few of which remain, even at the present day.

Ringsend must have sadly deteriorated by 1816, if we are to believe Lord Blayney's description in his *Sequel to a Narrative*.—" On approaching the town [Dublin] you pass through a vile, filthy and disgraceful-looking village called Ringsend." Other travellers who landed there about the same period, speak of it in similar terms.

The Dublin Weekly Chronicle of 15th October, 1748, contains the following quaint notice :—" Poolbeg Oyster Fishery being taken this year by Messrs. Bunit & Simpson, of Ringsend, they may be had fresh and in their purity at Mrs. L'Sware's at the Sign of the Good Woman in Ringsend aforesaid."

Various explanations have been given of the origin of this paradoxical name—one of the most plausible being that before the construction of Sir John Rogerson's Quay, a number of piles of wood were driven into the sand along the sides of the river, to many of which rings were attached for the convenience of vessels mooring there, and that the furthest point to which these piles extended became, in consequence, known as " The Rings end." It is much more probable, however, that it is a hybrid word—*i.e.*, " Rinn's end," *rinn* meaning in Irish a point of land projecting into the water, so that the whole name would thus mean " the end of the spur of land..."

Before the Dodder was confined between artificial banks, it flowed at its own sweet will in numerous streams over a considerable tract of marsh and slobland at Ringsend, and in time of flood caused much perturbation among the inhabitants—the waters of the river and the waves of the sea rolling without let or hindrance over land now covered by terraces and dwellinghouses. Gerard Boate, who wrote in 1652, after referring to the havoc wrought by the floods of this river, states :—" Since that time a stone bridge hath been built over that brook upon the way betwixt Dublin and Ringsend ; which was hardly accomplished when the brook in one of its furious risings, quite altered its channel for a good way, so as it did not pass under the bridge as before, but just before the foot of it, letting the same stand upon the dry land, and consequently making it altogether useless. In which perverse course it continued until perforce it was constrained to return to its old channel and to keep within the same."

The stone bridge referred to by Boate (built between 1629 and 1637) was where Ballsbridge now stands—the only route at that time between Dublin and Ringsend, except for those who hired what was known as a " Ringsend Car," to cross the shallows then intervening between that place and the city. All the tract lying east of City Quay, Sandwith Street, Grand Canal Street, and north of Lansdowne Road was then washed by the mingled waters of the Dodder and the sea, and could be traversed only with danger and difficulty by pedestrians. (See Prendergast's *Life of Charles Haliday*, prefixed to the latter's *Scandinavian Kingdom of Dublin*, p. cxx.)

The difficulty of access to Ringsend is alluded to as follows in *The Dublin Scuffle* (1699), by John Dunton, the eccentric Dublin bookseller, italics being introduced into the quotation for the purpose of emphasising the allusion :—" I had very agreeable company to Ringsend, and was nobly treated at the King's Head at this dear place (as all Post Towns generally are). I took my leave of . . . and two or three more friends, and now looked towards Dublin ; *but*

how to get at it we no more knew than the Fox at the Grapes, for though we saw a large strand, yet 'twas not to be walked over, because of a pretty rapid stream [the Dodder] which must be crossed ; we enquired for a coach, and found no such thing was to be had here, unless by accident, but were informed we might have a Rings-end carr, which upon my desire was called, and we got upon it, not into it. . . . I pay'd 4d. for one fair of a mile's riding."

On the 14th of November, 1646, the Parliamentary forces were landed at Ringsend, and on the 14th of August, 1649, Oliver Cromwell, who had been appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland by unanimous vote of Parliament, landed here with an army of 12,000 men, a formidable train of artillery, and a large quantity of munitions of war.

In 1670, during a great storm from the East, the tide overflowed here, and flooding the country as far as Trinity College, invaded the low-lying parts of the city and carried away a number of houses.

In 1672, the English Government, apprehensive of an attack on Dublin by the Dutch, who a few years previously had done great damage in the Thames, sent over Sir Bernard de Gomme, an eminent engineer, to report as to what works were necessary for the defence of the Port. After a survey, he submitted a plan and estimates, now deposited in the British Museum, for the construction of a great pentagonal fortress, to occupy a space of about thirty acres, immediately south-east of the site now occupied by Merrion Square, at a cost of £131,277. It was indispensable to the utility of this stronghold that it should be capable of relief by sea, which then flowed in to where now are Wentworth Place and Grand Canal Street.

Nothing, however, was done towards providing defences for the Port of Dublin until the erection of the Pigeonhouse Fort nearly one hundred and fifty years afterwards.

In April, 1690, on Good Friday, an engagement took place in the Bay, near where the Poolbeg Lighthouse now stands, between the *Monmouth* yacht with some smaller vessels in command of Sir Cloudesley Shovel, and a frigate anchored in the Bay laden with goods for France. King James, attracted by the firing, rode out to Ringsend accompanied by a great crowd of people and witnessed the engagement. The crew of the frigate were obliged to abandon it after a loss of six or seven in the action.—(Dean Story's *Impartial History*, p. 58.)

In 1703, Ringsend having become populous owing to the presence of many officers of the Port and seafaring men, and being so far from the Protestant parish church of Donnybrook, which was often inaccessible owing to the overflowing of tides and floods on the highway, an Act was passed by Parliament authorising the erection of the church now known as St. Matthew's at Irishtown.

In 1711 the Liffey between the city and Ringsend was embanked, thereby reclaiming the North and South Lotts.

In 1782 the bridge across the Dodder at Ringsend was swept away by a flood, and communication was not restored for seven years. Ferrar in his *View of Dublin* (1796), writing of this incident, says :—" Ringsend was in a very melancholy situation in the year 1787. It resembled a town which had experienced all the calamities of war, that had been sacked by an enemy, or that had felt the hand of all-devouring time. The unfortunate inhabitants were in a manner excluded from all intercourse with Dublin. They were attacked by the overbearing floods which issued from the mountains in irresistible torrents and completely demolished the bridge. The new bridge is a very handsome one, and cost only £815." The folly of this

economy is shown by the fact that the new bridge lasted only until 1802—thirteen years—when it, like its predecessor, was carried away by floods. At their wits' end, the authorities thereupon constructed the massive bridge which survives to the present day, no longer indeed exposed to the fury of the floods, the once turbulent Dodder having been sadly tamed in recent years by the diversion of its waters into the reservoirs of the Rathmines Township at Glennasmole.

The South Wall, one of the most remarkable and best constructed breakwaters of its kind in the world, extends from Ringsend into the Bay, a distance of 17,754 feet, or nearly three and a half miles. It was commenced in 1717 by a frame-work of wooden piles carried along the course of the river, for a distance of 7,938 feet, to the position now occupied by the Pigeonhouse, where the Ballast Board in 1735, placed a floating lightship ; and in 1735 this wooden piling was replaced by a double stone wall, the intervening space being filled with rocks and gravel, forming a wide roadway, flanked on either side by a massive parapet. Prior to this time all vessels approaching the harbour of Dublin after nightfall were obliged to remain outside the bar until the following morning, on account of the dangerous shoals off the shore known as the North and South Bulls, and even when vessels had entered the Port, there was no place of anchorage until they reached Ringsend.^

It was soon discovered that the wall, although affording some shelter to shipping, did not extend far enough to protect the harbour adequately during storms and high tides, and accordingly it was decided to supplement the work by an extension of the original wooden piles and framework to the deep pool known as Poolbeg, near the eastern extremity of the South Bull, and about two miles further out in the bay. This further portion is not quite in line with the rest, but is deflected slightly to the northward so as to follow the course of the river.

At the point then known as “ the pile ends,” where the original line of wooden piles ended, and the Pigeonhouse now stands, the port authorities erected a massive wooden house, strongly clamped with iron, to serve as a watch house, store house and place of refuge for such as were forced to land there by stress of weather ; and between this place and Ringsend, a number of boats used to ply in summer, conveying pleasure-seeking citizens of that day to what had grown to be a favourite rendezvous while the works were in progress. A man named Pidgeon who lived in the wooden house and acted as caretaker of the works and tools, finding the place become such a public resort, fitted out his quarters as neatly as possible, and, assisted by his wife and family, made arrangements for supplying meals and refreshments to visitors. He also purchased a boat to hire to his guests, had it painted and finished in an attractive manner, and as he dealt with only the best class of visitors, his rude hostelry soon grew to be a noted resort of distinguished citizens and wits, while the owner found himself on the fair road to fortune. His house came to be known to all the Dublin folk as “ Pidgeon's House,” or the Pigeonhouse, and even after he and his family had gone the way of all flesh, and the old building, having served its purpose, had fallen into decay, the name was perpetuated in the title of the stronghold that in after years rose over its ruins.

When the Packet station was established here, it was found necessary to build the Pigeonhouse harbour, where the packets landed and embarked passengers, for whose accommodation a hotel was erected in 1790. After the transfer of the regular service to Howth, the Pigeonhouse harbour continued in use as an occasional landing place, especially for the Liverpool packets. The Pigeonhouse Packet station in time becoming superseded by that at Howth, the Government in 1813, purchased the hotel and other buildings, and commenced the construction of the Pigeonhouse Fort, which ultimately cost over £100,000. The hotel formed the nucleus of the structure, and the submarine mining establishment, batteries and other additions were erected by the War Department. In its later years the Fort

gradually lapsed into disuse, and was finally dismantled and sold to the Dublin Corporation in 1897 for £65,000.

The Pigeonhouse fort appears to have been built partly for the purpose of a repository for State papers, bullion, and other valuables in time of disturbance, and partly for defence of the Port ; and in its earlier form, the construction of formidable batteries commanding the passage of the wall from the city, indicated that its designers were more apprehensive of an attack from land than by sea. In anticipation of a prolonged siege, efforts were made to obtain an independent supply of water for the garrison by the usual process of sinking tubes, but notwithstanding the assistance of eminent experts who were brought over from England for the purpose, and the expenditure of immense sums of money on the operations, the influx of salt water through the sandy soil baffled all attempts and obliged the Government to abandon the project.

In *The Dublin Chronicle* of 3rd August, 1790, we read :—“ On Friday morning twenty-seven poor haymakers attending at the Pigeonhouse in order to be put on board ship for England, were seized by a press-gang and put on board a tender—the commander of the press-gang telling them at the same time that if they were able to mow hay, they could have no objection to mow the enemies of their country, and they should have passage, diet, &c., gratis.” It is therefore not surprising that in another issue we learn :—“ Yesterday morning, at an early hour, a coach, in which some recruits were being conveyed to the Pigeonhouse in order to be embarked for England, was attacked at Ringsend by desperate banditti armed with swords and pistols, who after wounding the soldiers that accompanied the coach, rescued three of the men from them.”

The Dublin Chronicle of 28th January, 1792, referring to a breach which had been made by a storm in the South Wall, says :—“ Yesterday, his Grace the Duke of Leinster went on a sea party, and, after shooting the breach in the South Wall, sailed over the Low Ground and the South Lotts, and landed safely at Merrion Square. . . . Boats ply with passengers to Merrion Square.”

Although the original account of this occurrence mentions the South Wall, it doubtless means the wall or embankment on the south side of the river along Sir John Rogerson’s Quay, where a breach would have caused an inundation of the South Lotts, enabling boats to ply as far as what is now the lower end of Holies Street, near Merrion Square.

Sir Charles Hoare in his *Tour in Ireland* relates some interesting experiences of his visit to Dublin : —“ Monday, 23rd June, 1806. Sailed from Holyhead in the *Union Packet*, Captain Skinner, and after a rough and tedious passage of twenty three hours, landed at the Pigeonhouse, from where a vehicle, very appropriately called ‘ the Long Coach ’ (holding sixteen inside passengers and as many outside, with all their luggage) conveyed us to Dublin, distant about two miles from the place of landing.” He states that in addition to the duty which was exacted after a troublesome examination at the Custom House on the South Wall, he had to pay no less than twelve different officers of Customs. After leaving the Custom House, he had to dismount from the vehicle and cross the bridge on foot, as it was considered to be in too dangerous a condition to drive over with a full vehicle. “ There is nothing commanding in this approach to Dublin ; a number of narrow passes and bridges barricadoed, still remind the traveller of the late rebellion.” He adds that a most daring attack upon the long coach above alluded to, was made a short time previously by a gang of armed banditti, who obliged the passengers to dismount, and then plundered them one by one, while on another occasion the officer carrying the mails was fired at. Sir Charles Hoare suggests that “ a horse patrol”

should be furnished by the Government to escort the coach from the General Post Office to the Packet station.

The process of exacting fees and payments on various pretexts, from the passengers at the Pigeonhouse, was known to the initiated as “ Plucking the Pigeons.”

The statement as to the duration of the passage from Holyhead—twenty-three hours—may perhaps be considered an exaggeration, but a perusal of the newspapers of the period will show that this was not by any means an extravagantly long time for crossing ; indeed, our forefathers thought themselves rather lucky if the voyage was accomplished in that time, instances not having been at all uncommon in stormy weather or with contrary winds where it extended to a week or ten days. When we consider the limited accommodation in these frail vessels, and the prolonged miseries of sea-sick passengers, can we wonder that none but the most enthusiastic travellers cared to leave their own shores in those days ? Perhaps, indeed, the vigour of the language with which Ringsend has been assailed by successive writers who landed there, may to some extent be accounted for, by the condition of these unfortunate travellers’ nerves and stomachs after the miseries of sea-sickness during a voyage of from eighteen to thirty hours duration in the packet boats of that period.

According to a diary kept by a Welsh gentleman in 1735, during a visit to Dublin, the passage from Holyhead took nineteen hours, and on the return journey when the packet had got within a few miles of Holyhead, a contrary wind sprung up which obliged the officers to abandon all hope of reaching land on that side, and forced them to turn back to Dublin where they had to wait several days before the wind was favourable. It is interesting to learn that the voyage cost 10s. 6d.—pretty much the same as at present—but when forced to turn back by stress of weather and make an extra voyage, as in this case, the cost of provisions only was charged. The passengers landed at Ringsend and paid 1s. a head to the boatman who took them ashore in his boat, and two of them hired a coach to drive them to the city, for which they paid 2s. 10d. The passengers complained of being kept four hours waiting before being landed.

Nathaniel Jefferys in *An Englishman’s Descriptive Account of Dublin* (1810), gives the following amusing description of the proceedings at the Pigeonhouse landing stage, about a hundred years ago :—“ Upon the arrival of the packets at the Pigeonhouse, the passengers are conducted to the custom-house ; and it would be a great injustice not to acknowledge that the manner in which the examination of the luggage is done (by giving as little trouble as possible to persons frequently fatigued by a tedious passage and sea-sickness) is very gratifying to strangers. As soon, however, as this ceremony is over, one of a less accommodating description takes place, which is the mode of conveying passengers to Dublin in the Long Coach. This carriage is upon the plan of those elegant vehicles upon low wheels, which are used on the road between Hyde Park Corner and Hammersmith in the neighbourhood of London ; and from the state of its repair and external appearance, it bears every mark of having retired on the superannuated list from that active duty, previous to its being employed upon its present service. This coach is usually very crowded, from the anxiety of the passengers to proceed to Dublin ; and from the manner in which some of the company may easily be supposed to have been passing their time on board the packet—from the effect of sea-sickness, the effluvia arising from twelve or fourteen persons so circumstanced, crammed together in a very small space, like the inmates of Noah’s Ark, the clean and the unclean, is not of that description which can at all entitle the Long Coach to be considered as a bed of roses. Three shillings for each passenger is the price of conveyance, and this is exacted beforehand. . . . The inconveniencies of this ride are, however, of short

duration, for in about half an hour the passengers are released from this earthly purgatory by their arrival in Dublin.”

The average duration of the passage from the Pigeonhouse to Holyhead was eighteen hours, and from Howth only twelve hours, which was reduced to seven hours when steam packets were introduced.

The Pigeonhouse has undergone considerable alterations in recent years since it has become the generating station for the city supply of electricity, and the tall red-brick chimney which has been added is now a conspicuous feature in the Bay. Most of the old buildings still remain, but the Pigeonhouse of our boyhood days is gone—the sentries no longer guard its portals, its deserted courtyards and dismantled batteries echo no more to the tramp of armed men or resound with salvos of artillery. The monotonous hum of the dynamos has succeeded, and the whole place, though doubtless fulfilling a more useful purpose than during its military occupation, possesses much less interest than it did as a link with old-time Dublin.

Canals and Canal Travelling in The Last Century. [1]

A PERUSAL of the journals and pamphlets of the period when the various projects for canal construction were under discussion, would lead one to the belief that the many ills and misfortunes from which this country suffered, would be speedily exorcised by an elaborate system of inland navigation. The dark and gloomy bogs would be drained into these new waterways and transformed into smiling expanses of cornfield and meadow, the turbulent rivers would no longer overflow their banks, but be kept within bounds by a similar disposal of their superfluous waters, commerce would be extended into the remotest districts, and the whole country, the whilom scene of poverty and strife, would be henceforth the abiding home of peace and plenty.

By dint of such optimist writings, frothy speech-making, and skilfully-manipulated statistics, the public were at length worked up to the necessary pitch of enthusiasm, and induced to subscribe their money in the confident belief that they were on the high road to fortune. The shares went up and down like other speculations, but mostly downward, people talked of “going into the canals,” just as their descendants now speak of investing in railways or trams ; and the only question was whether it was to be “Grands” or “Royals.”

Once launched, the scheme was carried out on a scale of the utmost extravagance, not to say magnificence ; hotels built out of all proportion to any reasonable estimate of the traffic, canals twice the width of those constructed elsewhere, boats to match, uniforms for the officers, and so much money lavished on bridges, aqueducts, culverts, and other incidental works, that the capital was spent long before the conclusion of the undertaking.

The Grand Canal was commenced in 1755 and in 1807 the depot for passenger traffic was established at Portobello, where a palatial hotel—now a hospital—was erected for the thousands of passengers, who, it was anticipated, would be constantly going and returning by the boats ; while James’s Street Harbour was as now, the headquarters of the Company and the goods traffic. At the Bog of Allen this canal divides into two branches, one going to the Barrow at Athy, and the other to the Shannon near Banagher. Near Sallins it crosses the Liffey by the Leinster Aqueduct, which was constructed at a cost of £7,500.

Some forty years later, work was commenced on the Royal Canal, which was really an offspring of the other, originating in a dispute among the directors. Both canals were rather

unfortunate at their inception, having been, as stated, constructed on too expensive a scale for the amount of traffic. One of the most costly items in connection with the Royal Canal was the great aqueduct over the valley of the Rye Water at Leixlip, which cost no less than £30,000, and by the time the canal had reached Kilcock, only 20 miles from Dublin, about £200,000 had been spent ! More capital had then to be raised, and, as in the case of the Grand Canal, the difficulty of paying interest on the total amount drove the directors to levying tolls so high as to constitute a severe check upon the commercial success of the undertaking.

The following description by the Rev. Cæsar Otway in 1839 sets forth the facts with the common sense and breezy humour which characterise his writings : —

“ Rising out of Leixlip the road leaves the line of the Liffey and runs parallel to the small stream of the Rye Water, over which is thrown, at an immense expense, the largest aqueduct in Ireland, constructed by the Royal Canal Company, a speculation got up by an angry capitalist to rival the Grand Canal Company, from whose direction he had retired in disgust, and whose vanity and pique was the cause of this great absurdity, and of loss and bankruptcy to thousands. It is said that the enormous cost of this aqueduct was gone to in compliment to the late Duke of Leinster, who desired that the canal should pass by *his* town of Maynooth ; it certainly would have been more advantageous to the commerce of the kingdom and the prosperity of the company had they not deflected here to the south, but rather kept northward through the plains of Meath, made Lough Sheelan instead of Lough Owel, their summit level, and met the Shannon more towards its source, rather than run their line parallel, as it now does, at only a few miles distance from the Grand Canal, each starving and interfering with the other, and acting like two rival shopkeepers, who instead of setting up at remote districts of the town, frown balefully at each other from opposite sides of the same street.”

A copy of the time-table of the boats, with rules and regulations for passengers, issued by the Grand Canal Company about the beginning of the last century, affords interesting and amusing reading. From it we learn that three boats plied each way daily between Dublin and Tullamore, that the Speed averaged between three and four miles an hour, and that the fares were 10s. 10d. 1st cabin, and 5s. 11½d. 2nd cabin, with proportionate charges for intermediate distances. Meals were served on board in very homely fashion, the dinner almost invariably consisting of boiled mutton and turnips.

Roast dishes never figured on the menu, as there was no means of roasting on board, and the meat dinner was served up every day in the week, Fridays included, whether the passengers comprised priests, parsons, Protestants, Catholics, or vegetarians. No wine was sold to passengers in the second cabin, and the charges for meals there were somewhat lower.

The maximum number of passengers was 45 1st class and 35 2nd class, “ and should any persons above that number force themselves into the boat, the boat-master is not on any account to proceed until they are removed.”

These passenger boats were constructed somewhat like the conventional Noah’s Ark, but much longer in proportion. The cabin extended nearly the whole length of the vessel, and was divided into two parts, 1st and 2nd class, each having two rows of seats with a table between, on which meals were served and games were played by the passengers. The roof of the cabin was flat so as to form a deck, which, being railed around and furnished with seats, something like the top of a modern tram-car, was in fine weather much the pleasantest part of the vessel. Only first-class passengers were allowed on the deck. Resuming our perusal of the “regulations,” we find that wine was sold only in pints, “ and not more than a pint to any one person, nor to those who do not dine on board—nor to children—nor is the allowance of wine

to one person, without his or her express desire, to be transferred to another.” The precise meaning of this last proviso is not quite clear, unless it was intended to prevent the forcible appropriation of one person’s drink by another.

A praiseworthy desire on the part of the Company to uphold the notions in vogue at the time as to tobacco, is evidenced by the rule that “ No smoaking of tobacco is to be permitted in any part of the boat.” Fancy how modern travellers would relish the prospect of being deprived of the solace of “ the weed” during a journey of twelve or thirteen hours’ duration !

We further learn with interest that “ Dogs in each cabin are to be paid for as passengers,” and in order to preserve inviolate the sanctity and aristocratic atmosphere of the first-class, “ No servant in livery is to be admitted,” “ Nor is any second-class passenger to be admitted on deck on pain of paying as for first cabin.” To prevent any interference with the navigation of the boat, “ It is requested that no person will stand on the deck so as to intercept the view of the helmsman,” and it was further laid down that there was to be “ No gaming on Sundays under penalty on the boat master of two guineas for each offence”—a rather curious method, it may be observed, of punishing offenders.

Passengers who became refractory either from drink or other cause, and refused to conform to the regulations, were frequently put ashore by the boat’s officers, or, as we say nowadays, marooned, and there left to the mercy of the natives, to make the best terms they could with them till the arrival of the next boat.

The rule, “ No spirit, mixt or plain, to be sold on board,” was on the whole a wise one, when we consider how limited was the accommodation, and how uncomfortable even one intoxicated passenger could make all the rest in the small cabins.

These great waterways in time became a favourite mode of travelling to the larger towns in the interior of the country, although not to a sufficient extent to make them a commercial success, and general traffic became much extended by means of coaches, caravans, and other conveyances in connection with the boat service.

Notwithstanding the fact that in its earlier stage this means of conveyance was slow, many people much preferred the canal boat with its “ State cabin” and pleasant deck, to the dusty, hot, and jolting stage coach, with its closely-packed “ six insides ;” and the canal boat had the additional advantage that if one got tired of sitting, it was always possible to get out and walk. Indeed, if the Companies’ advertisements were to be believed, the advantages of this mode of locomotion were numerous and surpassing. The facilities for viewing the country were greater, although, truth to tell, canal scenery is not generally of an exciting character. Then the passengers were not delayed for their meals, and, in addition, the travelling was sure to be soothing to the nerves, the motion being nearly as imperceptible as the progress ; while the leisurely rate of speed afforded such opportunities for observation as to make the journey as pleasant as a walk among the meadows and green pastures through which the canal passed. Finally, it was set forth as an overwhelming advantage over land travelling, that the passengers were safe from molestation by robbers ! This appears to have actually been the case, although why, it is not now easy to explain, and when one considers the number of well-to-do passengers, who must have carried money and valuables with them, it seems surprising that this method of travelling did not bring into existence a specialised variety of pirates to prey on the canal traffic. There are numerous parts of both canals, far removed from houses or locks, where four or five determined men might easily have held up a boat, and after leisurely plundering the passengers, made their escape without difficulty. In the board-room of the Grand Canal Company are still preserved, as interesting relics of the past, a

number of fine blunderbusses and heavy pattern pistols with which the officers of these boats were armed to repel any predatory attacks by land or water.

In the course of years a demand having arisen for more expeditious travelling, the companies designed a new pattern of boat called a “ fly-boat,” lightly built and sheeted with iron, very narrow, and towed by three or four horses galloping at the rate of nine miles an hour. In Mr. and Mrs. Hall’s *Ireland* (1845) such a boat is described, but it is stated that it was by no means a pleasant kind of conveyance, as on account of its narrowness the passengers were painfully cramped inside. This is the experience of many old people, still alive, who travelled in these fly-boats, and who say that comfort was to a great extent sacrificed to speed. Furthermore, it was found impossible to provide accommodation for cooking on board, and short intervals had to be allowed at the companies’ hotels for the necessary meals, while, owing to the narrowness of this type of boat, there was no deck over the cabin, as the weight of passengers there would have rendered it top-heavy.

Dr. James Johnston, an observant English visitor, in his *Tour in Ireland* (1844), describes the busy scene at Portobello between 6 and 7 o’clock on a summer’s morning, passengers of all descriptions, with their luggage constantly arriving on foot and on vehicles at the harbour. This writer states that in fine weather passengers sat on the railed deck over the cabin, but on passing a lock, all hands had to be sent below, and the doors closed, to prevent the spray from coming in, while a cascade of water splashed all over the forecastle, and he adds that “ the dress of the postillions, the measured canter or gallop of the horses, the vibrations of the rope, the swell that precedes the boat, and the dexterity with which the men and horses dive under the arches of the bridges, without for a moment slackening their pace, all produce a very curious and picturesque scene such as I have never seen equalled in Holland on any of its canals.”

The following advertisement from *The Sligo Journal* affords an interesting glimpse of “ expeditious travelling” in the year 1823 :—

“ Royal Canal.—Cheap, secure, and expeditious travelling to and from Dublin to Sligo. A boat will leave Dublin every day at three o’clock p.m., and arrive at Tenelie (or 39th lock) at nine o’clock the following morning, whence a most comfortable caravan starts and arrives in Boyle that evening at 5, passing through Longford, Rouskey, Drumsna, and Carrick-on-Shannon, The following morning a car will leave Boyle for Sligo and return to Boyle the day after. The fares of the boat, caravan, and car from Dublin to Sligo, a distance of no miles (Irish), is only sixteen shillings.”

That this mode of travelling was actually considered thoroughly satisfactory is shown by the following interesting extracts from Warburton, Whitelaw and Walsh’s *History of Dublin* (1818) :—“ The many advantages, comforts and conveniences which the traveller finds by the establishment of clean and commodious passage boats, constantly moving-along the various lines, passing at stated hours from stage to stage, uninterrupted by any change of weather, and with a rapidity and security which, added to the reasonable terms of accommodation, affords one of the most pleasant, comfortable, and expeditious modes of travelling to be found in any part of the world. Of these there are at present ten plying on the Barrow and Shannon lines of the Grand Canal, and with such expedition that the passage from Dublin to Shannon Harbour, 63 Irish miles or above 80 English miles, is performed in one day between the hours of four in the morning and 10 in the evening, and at an expense exclusive of entertainment, of 21s. for the first cabin and 14s. 1d. for the second . . . The passage to Athy of over 54 miles takes 12 hours and 35 minutes. . . . In passenger boats of both canals the entertainment is excellent, and the price of every article, so as to prevent

imposition, hung up in the cabin. There is no charge for attendance, and to preserve sobriety and decency of manners, the use of spirits is prohibited.”

“ Before the Rebellion of 1798, vast quantities of military stores were conveyed to different parts of the kingdom by the Grand Canal, and when the French landed at Killala, the Marquess Cornwallis embarked a considerable number of troops at Dublin and Sallins, and proceeded with them 56 English miles to Tullamore, where they arrived in a few hours fresh and fit to proceed on their march to Athlone.”

The supersession of the horse by mechanical traction—a process in steady progress all over the civilized world—has commenced on the Grand Canal, and at the present time the Company have five boats propelled by 15 h.p. “ Bolinder” internal combustion engines, while it is expected that in the course of a few months the number will be considerably increased. As their introduction has so far proved a success, both as regards cost of working and economy of time, and as a speed, inclusive of stoppages, of about four miles an hour with a full cargo can be obtained, it is highly probable that the present generation will see the last of the horse on this service.

As the railway system gradually extended through the country, passenger traffic on the canals decreased ; now one district and then another was tapped by the railways, until by the middle of the last century nearly all the passenger boats had ceased plying, and for years afterwards they were to be seen lying neglected and forgotten in the docks, their once trim decks and cosy cabins discoloured from age and decay. Whatever their ultimate fate—and let us hope it was a kindly one—they formed a most interesting link between the good old go-as-you-please times, and the modern age of hurry and bustle, when, instead of being satisfied with sixty miles in a day, people are beginning to grumble at sixty miles an hour.

These long tedious journeys were not without some counter-balancing advantages, for they afforded opportunities for observation of and acquaintance with, one’s fellow-passengers, not possible in modern conveyances, and many a friendship thus formed, long survived the manner and the means of its origin.

Peace to your timbers, ye quaint old boats—ye were the very embodiment of the times to which ye belonged !—ye knew not the storm nor the stress of modern life, the feverish hurry of our present-day existence ; and if we now in our vaunted superiority feel disposed to laugh at your primitive design and leisurely progress, let us pause and consider whether we are after all, so much the better and so much the happier for the improvements in travel and communication with which the present scientific age has provided us.

[1] This special article appeared in *The Weekly Irish Times* of the 13th January, 1906, and is reproduced, with some alterations, by permission of the proprietors of that paper.

EQUIPMENT

BOOTS, etc.—For walking in the country there is nothing so comfortable as a pair of old, well-cared boots or shoes, with thick soles kept soft and waterproof with dubbin. For cycling in warm dry weather, canvas shoes are very cool and light on the feet.

A pair of light anklets are very useful in wet weather or in boggy country, and throw off a good deal of the rain which falls from a waterproof. They should be of soft pliable material to enable them to be rolled up and carried in the pocket when not required.

GLOVES.—The only really satisfactory protection for the hands in very cold weather is a pair of woollen gloves inside leather ones—the latter, of course, must be a large size. Some prefer the wool outside, but my experience is that the gloves are warmer and wear better with the leather outside. Mittens (without fingers) if thick enough, are the warmest of all, but are rather clumsy.

WATERPROOFS.—A light cycling cape is the most convenient and portable protection against the weather, and can be had light enough to carry in the pocket. Also—a square of waterproof cut from an old mackintosh is very useful as a seat in damp weather, and when folded takes up little room.

MAPS.—It is recommended that this book should be read in conjunction with some good map of the District. The best is the Ordnance Survey map of the Dublin District, 1 inch to the mile, mounted on fabric, price 3s. It extends from Portrane on the north to the southern slopes of Bray Head on the south, and to near Naas on the westward. A smaller scale is of little use except for cycling or motoring on the main roads.

CAMERA.—If you are a photographer, do not encumber yourself with a heavy camera—you will be tempted either to leave it at home or else to use it recklessly so as to have some value for the trouble of carrying it. A camera should be of such size and weight as can be carried for a whole day without inconvenience, should no opportunity arise for using it. Most of the photographs reproduced in this book were taken with a folding Kodak, fitted with an ordinary lens, and weighing little over a pound. Even with the smallest cameras, very pleasing mementos may be obtained of places or persons, and enlargements made therefrom up to half plate size.

If a camera be taken on the carrier of a bicycle, which is not to be recommended, it should have a thick padding of felt, at least half an inch thick around it. A frame bag is, however, a much better way of carrying it. It goes without saying that a camera for the pedestrian or cyclist should be of the film variety.

GLASS.—A glass of some kind is a pleasant companion in a country ramble. The best, of course, are the prismatic kind, but they are now very expensive. A magnifying power of 6 will be found the most generally suitable. In the case of the old style of glass (Galilean) a higher power than 4½ is not advisable on account of the smallness of the field. Do not buy an inferior glass of any description—they are injurious and uncomfortable.

The neighborhood of Dublin : its topography, antiquities and historical associations (1921)

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Originally published by Gill & Son., in Dublin in 1912, this republication of the fourth impression of *The Neighbourhood of Dublin: its Topography, Antiquities & Historical Associations*, published in 1939 was written by Weston St. John Joyce. Weston St. John Joyce (1858-1939), a civil servant by occupation, was also a regular contributor to *The Evening Telegraph* and later the *Weekly Irish Times*, to which he contributed numerous illustrated topographical articles over a period of nearly three decades. These articles were collected and published in under the title *Rambles Near Dublin*.