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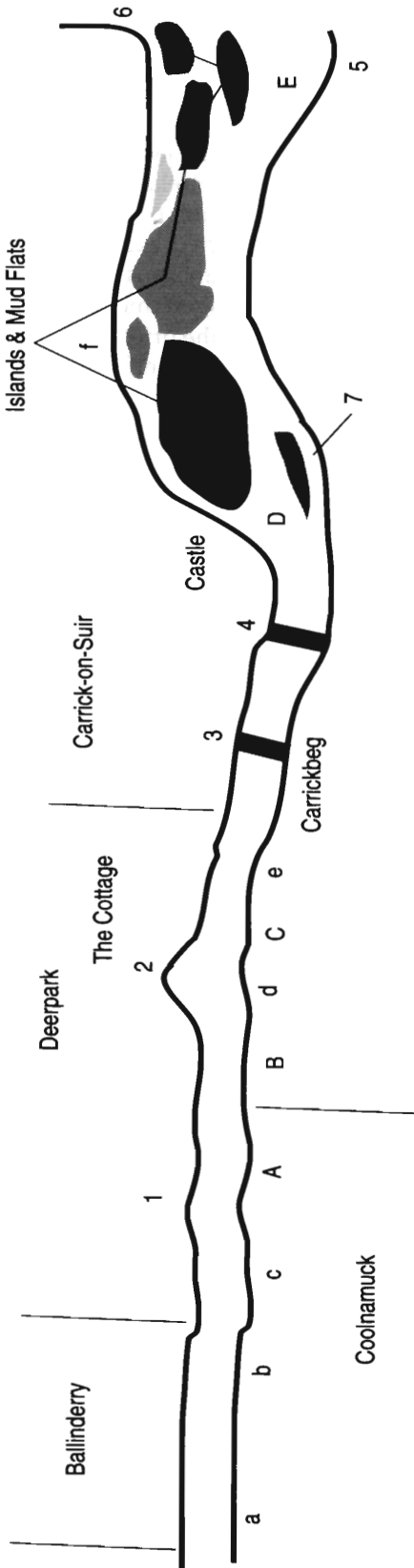
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SKETCH-MAP SHOWING WEIRS, FISHING HOLES ETC. IN MANOR OF CARRICK-ON-SUIR



Co. Waterford

WEIRS

- A Davin's Weir
- B Coradh Mhór
- C Cor 'na mBráthar
- D Castle Rocks Weir
- E Tinhalla Weir

FISHING HOLES

- a Poll a' Bhrádáin
- b Poll na Sailí
- c Poll a' Chapailí
- d Poll a' Mhadra
- e Poll Mallas
- f Poll na mBan

OTHER ITEMS

- 1 Towing path along this bank
- 2 Coll of the Cottage (i.e. Cúl)
- 3 Old Bridge of Carrick (1447)
- 4 New Bridge (1880)
- 5 Tinhalla Quay
- 6 Confluence of Suir & Lingaun
- 7 Navigation Cut

The Lower Suir — boats and boatmen long ago

by Patrick C. Power

The main area covered by this article is that dominated by the River Suir in Carrick-on-Suir, with occasional diversions east to Waterford city and westwards to Clonmel. This river was the chief ancient highway of County Tipperary, and also served parts of counties Kilkenny and Waterford. For all of its eastward progress the Suir forms the boundary between counties Tipperary and Waterford, as well as between counties Kilkenny and Waterford.

It also served the medieval merchant settlement of Clonmel, as well as Waterford city, the second largest in Ireland at one time. Carrick-on-Suir was built on an island originally, and incorporated by Matthew FitzGriffin of Knocktopher in 1245. Apart from the advantage which the island site had for human settlement, Carrick-on-Suir was just east of the furthest extent of the tidal waters on the river - about 3 km (1.8 miles) west of the town.

Fishing Craft

On this part of the River Suir the principal fishing craft has been the cot. Fishermen often made their own cots, although sometimes a particularly good cot-maker made cots for others. The cot was formerly always pointed at each end and flat-bottomed. It was said that a round-bottomed cot was too lively in the water, only racing cots being made this way.

It was also easier to make a flat-bottomed cot. The hull was made of deal or larch. However, the other parts were made of oak, i.e. the frames and the front-post. These carried the hull or the "skin", as it has always been called.

The length of the cot formerly varied somewhat. It could be as long as 4.87 m (16 ft) or as short as 4.26 m (14ft). The freshwater cots were often the longer ones, although in Clonmel cots as long as 54.8 m (18 ft.) were not unknown. The cot was 60 cm (2 ft) at the widest, and stood about 39 cm (15 ins) out of the water. It was a frail and light craft.¹

When a cot was being made, three pieces of timber of the required length were laid side-by-side on a large plank, each of the three being 20 cm (8 ins) wide. For the purposes of this article, the length of an old cot examined in Carrick-on-Suir in 1986 is used which was 4.7 m (15½ ft) in length. The centre board was secured to the plank by a bolt in the centre, and then raised at each end by the insertion of a block of wood. The other two planks were similarly treated. This ensured that the cot had more movement in the water and was not sluggish.

The shape of the bottom was then cut by drawing a curving line on the timber from the front and rear centre of the middle plank to the centre parts of an outer plank. When the waste portion of this delineated area was cut, it provided a template to measure what should be cut from the other four areas in order to shape the bottom correctly.

After this had been completed, the "timbers" were fitted. These were of bent oak and consisted of two L-shaped pieces, leaning a little out of true at an angle of about 100°. They were nailed to the bottom of the cot with good steel nails, the lower part of each side-by-side. There were four such timbers in a cot, each spaced fairly evenly in the craft from fore to aft.

Two or three holes were bored in the lower parts of the timber. Called "lumber-holes" (limber-holes), their purpose was to permit water in the cot to move freely and evenly. The spaces between the timbers and before and after them were known as "floorings".





Old-style cot under construction by Michael O'Callaghan. Note that he has fitted boards between the timbers to further strengthen the floor of the cot.

Next the front and back-posts were fitted. They were also L-shaped, but with a much greater angle than the timbers. The side-planks of the cots were carried on the front and back-posts, and also on the timbers; there were two such planks on either side.

The lower ones were called "garber-planks", i.e. garboard-planks. Each was 22.8 cm (9 ins) in width, and was bent into the curving shape of the hull by clamps. Above these two were the "strike" (stake) planks, which might be as narrow in width as 15.2 cm (6 ins). The gunwhale was then fitted on the top of the strikes; it was 5.1 cm (2 ins.) square.

The last part of the cot to be fitted was the seating. There were three seats in all. The principal ones were the front seat at the end of the second timber and the one between the third and fourth timber. The third seat was fitted into the stern of the boat; it was small and as near the stern as possible.

This was the *cláirín* (little board), where the fisherman holding the snap-net sat; it was

fitted on small wood-pieces slung between the timbers. The only way to distinguish the prow from the stern in an old Carrick-on-Suir cot was the position of the *cláirín*, the fishing-seat at the stern. When the cot was finished, the bolts holding the bottom to the large planks were removed and the holes plugged with wood.

To render the cot river-worthy, oakum was used to caulk the wood. This was doubly necessary since the craft was not clinker-built. After the caulking the cot was dressed in a good coating of tar or bitumen to ensure its preservation in the water. The practice of caulking declined over the years, and is now replaced by tarring.

In the modern cot there is a blunt stern in the cot, to accommodate an outboard motor. Sometimes also lathes of timber are fitted to the interstices of the bottom-boards underneath to provide further water-proofing. The number of old-fashioned cots on the river has recently declined markedly.

The cot was propelled by a paddle and a pole. While the poleman stood at the prow of the cot, the paddler sat on the second seat in front of the *cláirín*. The paddle was about 1.21 m (4 ft) long, and

consisted of a small handle, mortised at the top of the paddle at right angles to it, and a blade, which was 22.8 cm (9 ins) wide and 35.5 cm (14 ins) long in the middle. Near the top the blade was shouldered.

The cost of a cot could vary somewhat. In the 1930s Tom Cuddihy of Fiddown made cots for £4 each. His boast was that he fitted the wood so well that his cots needed no oakum!



Caulking iron and hammer being used by Michael O'Callaghan, who learned the skill at Kehoe's graving dock in Carrickbeg early in this century.

Fishing Communities

The fishing communities between Carrick-on-Suir and Clonmel were five in number. The largest one was in Carrickbeg still survives, but uses the tidal waters for fishing for salmon. In any event this community is scattered since the late 1930s into new housing settlements, such as Treacy Park and Collins Park in Carrick-on-Suir.

A sub-community of fishermen were the farmer-fishermen of Ballylinch, east of the town. The last of these died in 1982 at the age of 88 - Jimmy Shea of the Three Bridges. In this place there were two Shea families, Jimmy's people and the so-called Waterford Sheas. All are now gone from the area.

The next community on the river was that of the Ballydine area, 8 km (5 miles) west of Carrick-on-Suir, which consisted of just one "cleer". A cleer was a pair which fished together for salmon, with two men to each cot. This community ceased fishing in 1947 when salmon-fishing on freshwater for commercial purposes was forbidden.

It should be noted that the chief source of money for all these fishermen was salmon-fishing,

which was confined to the period 1 February - 15 August of each year. Thus they had a limited time within which to earn a living from this fishing, as it was merely a seasonal occupation. Regarding the Ballydine fishermen, which had been reduced to one cleer of cots by 1947, it should be said that it appears to have grown around the ancient manor of the Mandevilles (*recte* Maydwells), who lived here continuously from the 13th to the 18th century and for some periods afterwards.

The next fishing community was that centred round Kilsheelan, the site of an early Anglo-Norman settlement. There were five cleers of cots here when commercial fishing ended in 1947. The Kilsheelan men fished the river from a point west of Gurteen to the old towerhouse of Poulakerry.

Further westwards was the fishing community of Derrinlaur on the Waterford bank of the river. Here there was a castle of the Butlers which had attracted around it a small village, which still exists. The fishermen here worked the river from near Kilsheelan to the confluence of the rivers Suir and Anner.

At the beginning of this century there was also a cleer of cots working the Suir from the confluence to Dudley's Mill outside Clonmel, probably the survivor of a larger community. The leader of this cleer was a man called Carey. When he died his wife, known to everyone as "Ma Carey", took his place until she became too old to fish.

The last fishing community to be recorded here was that of the Waterford part of Clonmel at the Old Bridge. Here there was a very numerous group of fishermen whose livelihood was ended for ever in 1947, along with the others from Ballydine upwards.

Nets

The fishermen formerly made their own nets for salmon-fishing. There were two types of nets in use, the snap-net and the seine-net. Of these, the snap-net was allowed only on the tidal waters; the seine-net was used on all the waters of the River Suir.

These nets were made of hempen material, while the ropes to manoeuvre them were made of horse-hair — taken from the horse's tail. It was said that when cow-hair (which had previously been used) became waterlogged it tended to stretch.

When a net was made, it was immersed in water which contained tan-bark in order to darken the whiteness of the hempen thread, thus making it less noticeable in the river-water. Later on the tan-bark was replaced by a block of concentrated tanning substance known as "crut", the local description of crud.

The nets were weighted by water-rounded stones. These were big enough to be held in a man's fist, and were scored with indentations which helped to secure the stones with hempen cords to the net.²

The snap-net used in the fresh water was 10.9 m (12 yds) long, while that used on the freshwater was 8.6 m [9 1/2 yds] in length. These dimensions were ordered by law, but were sometimes not strictly adhered to.

When working the snap-net, a cleer of cots collaborated. The two cots went down-river parallel to each other, with one man in each craft seated in the front seat paddling, while the others in the *cláirín* seats held the snap-net by the ropes trailing it in the water.

When they felt a bite they shouted to the paddlers, who then quickly and expertly drew the cots together by the prows, while the net-men pulled in the net. The motion of the cot was also slowed as rapidly as possible when the two craft were drawn together.

The seine-net was a much longer net, 36.5 m (40 yds) long and 1.82 m (6 ft) across. It had a long pole attached to each end for ease of handling. This type of net was introduced into fisheries where the traditional net had been the snap-net, and one time there were as many as 14 or 15 of these nets on the river, with which the tidal waters of the Suir were fished below the castle.



Their use was widely resented by the snap-net fishermen. This led to an inquiry into their use in 1869, which revealed that 213 snap-nets were then in use in the Carrick-on-Suir district, but only 14 using the seine-net.³ It was felt that the latter were taking more than their due of salmon, so it was ordered that seine-nets should be used only east of the confluence of the rivers Suir and Lingaun.

The seine-net was worked in the following way. A cleer of cots, with one man in each, fished with it. One cot, bearing the net-end, went ahead parallel to one bank of the river, while the other tailed behind until the length of the net was reached. Then the foremost cot was paddled to the opposite bank, where the fisherman landed. Taking his end of the net, he walked slowly along the bank towards where the other fisherman was.

The latter had landed also, and secured his net by the pole in the riverside mud. When he was joined by his companion, they both slowly and carefully pulled in the net, keeping it well down in the water lest any fish might escape. A large kill of fish was known as a *scoil*, that is, a shoal of fish or a school. The mesh of all the nets, both seine-net and snap-net, was 10.7 cm (4 ins.)

Fishing Pools and Weirs

The river Suir was always regarded as a fruitful source of salmon. As far back as Gaelic literature goes, there is abundant evidence of the good fisheries for salmon there. The extent of the Manor of Carrickmagriffin, which was carried out in 1415, mentions that there were *vj gurgites salmonum* in the manorial waters of the Suir there.⁴

This has been interpreted as "six weirs" by Edmund Curtis, although "salmon-pools" may have been meant. However, if weirs were intended, the locations of five of the six were remembered in oral tradition down the years. Here are the weirs that were remembered:⁵

- (i) *Tinhalla Weir*. This was at Tinhalla, a little west of the quay. To this day the remains of some of the timbers used in it can be seen, especially at low tide. Tinhalla is a short distance from the confluence of the Suir and the Lingaun.
- (ii) *Castle Rock Weir*. As its name suggests, this weir was opposite the castle at Carrick-on-Suir and was apparently removed after 1836. At the rocks also in these times women washed clothes in the river at low tide.
- (iii) *Cor na mBráthar* (the weir of the friars). This was in or about the area of the river where the trees of Deerpark Cottage are. From here onwards past the cottage the river curves in and out to form what is known as the Cool of the Cottage, i.e. *cúl* (nook) of the cottage. There are no remains of a weir there to-day.
- (iv) *Coradh Mhór* (Great Weir). This is almost opposite Deerpark Cottage. The remains of the old fishing weir were reconstructed as a pent-weir.
- (v) *Cor Uí Chriotháin* (O'Crehan's Weir). This was known as Davin's Weir; distinct remains of it can still be seen in the river. It is situated where the limit of the westward course of the tidal waters is reached. It was used until 1922, when abortive attempts to blow it up in April and May led the lessee Davin to dismantle it.

The weir was kept under surveillance by people who lived in a small round tower which still stands on the Waterford bank about 92 m (100 yds) downstream of the weir. Across the river from the weir in county Tipperary stood a small pier which was known as *Cois Cortha* i.e. Weirside. The presence of this last of the weirs in the manor-waters of Carrick-on-Suir was widely resented by local fishermen.

The question of whether "gurgites salmon" meant "salmon-pools" must now be considered. As it happens, there are six salmon-pools known to fishermen long ago in the area. They were as follows:



- (a) *The Woman's Hole*, presumably *Poll na nBan*, was near the old Fever Hospital and was in what was known as the Old River. This is the part which curves in through Ballylinch and is separated from the main river by some islands. This fishing-pool is now silted. Women also went to wash clothes near this pool, hence its name.⁶
- (b) *Poll Malas* (Pool of M.(?)). This was before the old weir *Cor na mBráthar* is reached, going upriver.
- (c) *Poll a' Mhadra* (The Dog's Weir). This was situated after the weir mentioned in (i) above.
- (d) *Poll a' Chapail* (The Horse's Pool). This pool was reached just before Davin's Weir.
- (e) *Poll na Sailí* (Pool of the Sally-Tree). This is in the river at Ballinderry, where some sally-trees are still growing on the opposite. i.e. the Coolnamuck, side of the river.
- (f) *Poll na mBradán* (Salmon-Pool). This is situated at the bounds of Ballinderry, the most westerly townland in what was the manor of Carrick-on-Suir.

Poaching

Poaching was common on the river Suir, the prize of a good salmon being quite tempting to people who earned a precarious living on the water for only 6 1/2 months annually. Poaching was particularly common in the closed period at the week-end during the fishing season. The so-called "blackberry haul" in October was a favourite sport of the fishermen.

It was also customary to catch a salmon or two before the season opened on 1 February - in order to pay for the licence to fish! Poachers in the week-end closed-time especially loaded their catch in a sack, and placed stones in it to sink the lot in the river, to retrieve it later.

Trout were poached by the use of the purse-net, known also as the scoop-net; in Carrick-on-Suir this was called a nut-net. It was a multiple net, consisting of three nets suspended on a long poll. The middle one had a mesh 30.4 cm (12 ins), while the two outer ones had meshes of 1.9 cm (3/4 inch).

The pole with the nets on it was suspended from the stern of a cot, which was then paddled slowly downriver by one man close to the bank. Another man walked on the bank and acted as beater to drive trout from their shelter, so that they were trapped when they hit the small-meshed net and were driven into the larger mesh of the central net.

Transport River-Craft

Up to the 1920s the river Suir was the main highway for County Tipperary between Carrick-on-Suir and Clonmel, and was still being used up to the 1970s by at least one river-steamer from Waterford to Carrick to transport goods. Nowadays the river has fallen silent and is no longer a transport artery, its place having been taken by the modern roads with their articulated trucks and by the railway - which had never competed fully or successfully with the river.

The river-craft which plied between Waterford port and Carrick-on-Suir was the lighter, while the yawl was used on the stretch to Clonmel from Carrick-on-Suir. The lighter was pulled upriver by long sweeps on parts of the way. Sometimes the lighter was towed by a tug.

Lighters were made in Carrickbeg at the graving dock of the Kehoe family, which had plied this trade there since the 18th century. By the time that the 20th century had arrived they merely repaired lighters and yawls, while a man named O'Brien still made some craft. He was illiterate, but had the ability to gauge precisely the exact amount of wood needed to build a lighter or a yawl without detailed measurements. There is no vestige of O'Brien or the Kehoes there now.

The lighters were built of pitchpine with a frame of oak.⁷ They were constructed on oaken frames each set about 0.91 m (3 ft) in the boat, and built according to the dimensions of the craft at each stage. The lighter was 21.33 m (70 ft.) long and 1.86 m (16 ft) in the beam, but with square stern and pointed





A lighter being loaded in the quay near the castle at Carrick-on-Suir around 1890.

pro. The sides could be as much as 1.21 m (4 ft.) high. It was flat-bottomed and without a keel.

The rudder was 4.87 m (16 ft) long. Forward there was a well-room for baling and on deck a "caboose", as it was called, where a fire was kept lighting in a cast-iron box-stove supplied by Graham's of Waterford. In all, it was considered that there was 10.97 m (36 ft.) of useful cargo-room in the lighters, which were known to carry as much as 44.8 tonnes (40 tons) of cargo aboard, distributed in two parts of the hold. There was no cargo in the centre of the lighter.

The lighters travelled the 25.74 km (16 miles) from Waterford in about 4 hours on the tide, i.e. 6.43 km (4 miles) an hour. They were pulled by two sweeps, long oars each 5.47 m (36 ft.) long, and about 15.24 cm (6 ins.) in diameter. While wielding the sweeps the two men working from opposite sides of the lighter walked six steps forward, dipped their sweeps into the Suir water and then walked slowly six paces backwards gripping them.

The skipper sat at the fire in the caboose and used the tiller only when going under Waterford and Fiddown bridges. The sweep-men made the tiller unnecessary for the rest of the way. The last sweep-drawn lighter from Waterford to Carrick-on-Suir operated in 1955.

The yawls differed from the lighters in two respects. They were shorter - 18.28 m (60 ft) - and each had an oaken post, about a third of the way back from the prow, with a forked head. This was about 1.82 m (6 ft) high, and was set in an iron collar in the bottom of the yawl. It was about 22.8 cm (9 ins.) in diameter. On deck it was secured to both sides of the boat by strong ropes. This oaken post was used to secure the hauling horses.

Usually four horses were used for each yawl. They walked along the towing-path to Clonmel, one behind the other. The leading horse, chosen for both strength and courage, had two traces secured to him which went back to a 1.82 m (2 ft) swingletree of oak-wood. From the centre of the swingletree a rope led out which was lashed to the forked post on deck.

The other three horses walked between the traces and were tackled to it. The horses each had bunches of hay tucked under the winkers on the riverside to ensure that they did not see the river-water. It was hard and arduous work for the animals, pulling against the current all day.

One man led the four horses, sometimes mounting the leader, particularly at Sir Thomas's Bridge at Ferryhouse, where the whole team went into the river in order to pass underneath the arch. On

days with the river in full spate, the water could reach to the horses' collars. On board the yawl the skipper lashed a long yard to the tiller to give more leverage and generally making it easier for him to keep the yawl from grazing against the stone wall of the towing path.

In the summer-time during low water due to the season the horses were sometimes led down the steps and into the water at the Cool of the Cottage. The steps into the water and out of it are still in position.

About 15.68 tonnes (14 tons) or a little more were carried in each yawl. Sometimes one or two lighters were towed after a yawl with ropes. In this case four extra horses for each extra craft were used, and the swingletree rope in each case was lashed to the towing post. The yawl might be loaded up to 44.8 tonnes (40 tons) on a high river in the winter, with 12 or 13 horses hauling the craft.

The journey to Clonmel generally took 5½ hours, while the horses came back by road in about 2½ hours. The length of the sailing to Clonmel was about 19 km (11¾ miles). The river-craft were polled back by two men; but sometimes, if the state of the river as well as some cargo warranted it, one horse was used to tow the yawl back to Carrick-on-Suir. Before the building of the towing path in 1756-66 men hauled the noddies of 7.4 tonnes (7 tons) laden on the County Waterford bank of the river.

The yawls and the lighters were baled by means of what was called a skeet. This was made of sally-wood, and was a frail but a very effective instrument. Temporary closing of crevices in timbers was done by inserting sawdust into the cracks. On the lighters one method of closing or sealing cracks in the timbers was to throw some ashes from the fire into the water at the prow when the craft was under way; this tended to be forced into the cracks.

The Fr. Matthew

The only effort in the 19th century to modernise the river-traffic on the River Suir from Carrick-on-Suir to Waterford was the use of the steam-tug, the *Fr. Matthew*. This was the property of Messrs John Grubb & Son, and first plied on the river in 1877. The managing director of this company was J. Ernest Grubb. It was he who carried out the purchase and use of the steam tug, which was capable of towing four fully-loaded lighters from Waterford together i.e. 179.2 tonnes (160 tons).

The schedule of charges for "towages" in 1919, which still exists, gives interesting information. For example, the cost for a towage then could vary from £5.19s.3d in September for Samuel Morris of Fiddown (the coal-merchant) to £8.2s in the following month for the same firm. Each person using the services of the *Fr. Matthew* supplied not just the laden lighter but also the towing-rope.⁸

Grubb named his tug the *Fr. Matthew* in admiration for the Capuchin priest who preached teetotalism in the early part of the last century. Grubb likewise refused to carry any alcoholic drinks in the lighters towed. Every other type of goods was carried and people were carried to the fairs in Waterford city. When the tug first appeared on the river, Grubb's other workmen went on strike and were encouraged by other carriers on the river to Waterford; but the strike collapsed after a few weeks.

In the early months of 1877 new improved stabling quarters for hauling horses were built in Carrick-on-Suir. These cost £800, and there were places for 18 to 20 horses. The stables were of wood, supported by metal pillars and light-arched wood. From the entrance a hallway stretched, which was lighted by gas.⁹ It was the most modern premises for this purpose in Clonmel, Carrick-on-Suir and Waterford.

When Grubb retired in 1912, the firm was bought by Thomas Walsh & Son in June 1912. They continued the Clonmel—Carrick-on-Suir haulage business until 1921, when it was discontinued. In 1927 they sold the Waterford—Carrick-on-Suir section of the business to Edward Dowley & Sons, an already established river-firm.



In 1912 Dowley & Sons had purchased the *Knocknagow*, a steam-boat designed to carry 44.8 tonnes (40 tons) of cargo, and also to tow lighters as the *Fr. Matthew* had done. It cost £1,600 and also towed sand-barges. This vessel is believed to have paid for itself in a short time, if the tradition of the rivermen be correct. This was the only steam-driven river-boat on the Suir which both towed lighters and carried cargo also.

When the firm of Thomas Walsh & Son went out of business in 1927 the *Fr. Matthew* was sold to the Torpeys of Carrickbeg, an old river-family. After some years it ended up as a rotting hulk on the quayside mud in Carrick-Suir.

The steam-driven *Knocknagow* was replaced in the early 1930s by a second craft of the same name. This was diesel-driven, could carry a cargo of 89.6 tonnes (80 tons), and remained on the river until 1973, when E.J. Dowley & Sons sold it. It is still in existence but in bad condition on the River Nore. The boat had to carry ballast of large stones fore and aft, which was replaced about 1936 by cement.¹⁰

After World War II, a curious type of barge was bought by E.J. Dowley & Sons in England. Made of concrete, it was 30.48 m (100 ft.) long, 7.31 m (24 ft) in the beam, and about 4 m (13 ft.) high. It was a "dumb-barge", in the words of a riverman and was towed by the *Knocknagow*. A skilled riverman could direct it downriver, with the ebbing tide. This barge also ended on the mud below Carrick-on-Suir.

The large commercial craft to sail the tidal waters referred to above was a sand-barge owned by William O'Callaghan of Carrickbeg, which ceased work on the river in 1983. Long before this the lighters had ceased to ply between the port of Waterford and Carrick-on-Suir. They were from another age, and had survived longer than might have been expected. Nobody succeeded the firm of Edward Dowley & Son.

River Developments

In the early 16th century the river from Clonmel to Carrick-on-Suir was seriously obstructed by weirs, which hampered the trade between Waterford port and the important inland merchant settlement of Clonmel. In 1537 the regulation about a King's Gap in a weir to facilitate navigation was made. This was later at the northern bank of the river for reasons that will soon be made evident.

The first and only substantial step ever taken to develop the river from Carrick-on-Suir to Clonmel was made in 1756 and in the years afterwards after some delays.¹¹ The northern bank of the river was faced with a stone-facing, to create a towing-path for horses. This is still in place, in spite of neglect since 1922.

This enabled horses to be used instead of men to haul the little noddies, which carried up to 7.84 tonnes (7 tons). Later on the more heavily-laden yawls were used, as hauling by humans ceased. On the Waterford bank strong dykes of earth were constructed to contain the river. The site of the towing-path, evident to this day, illustrates how widely northwards the river spread before the path was built.

The route to Clonmel was 17.7 km (11 miles) long, and in normal weather conditions the river tended to run at 9.6 km (6 miles) an hour. No attempt was ever made to canalise any portion of the route after this time; neither was there any other subsequent development.

The later improvements took place in the tidal waters of the river from Carrick-on-Suir to Waterford. In 1836 a company was formed, of landlords and businessmen who had interests in the hinterland of this part of the river. It was called The River Suir Navigation Company.¹² This was not a trading association, but a rather a company which aimed at improving the waterways of the river in the region.

Between 1836 and 1845 it cut a canal on the south bank of the river from the castle in Carrick-on-



Suir — the so-called Navigation Cut, which is still there today. It is nearly 5,400 m (7,000 yards) long and had no locks. The river directly eastwards of this was dredged and deepened, thus leaving the northern branch, which flowed behind some islands at this point, untouched and prone to silting.

The quays of Carrick-on-Suir were also to be maintained by this company. Tolls up to one penny a ton were charged up to Fiddown; after this to Carrick-on-Suir the toll was increased to a shilling a ton, according to the terms of the relevant Act of Parliament. Landing of goods on the Navigation Cut was forbidden, as also sailing through it under sail. Vessels were not allowed to be moored within 91.4 m (100 yards) of either end of the canal.

Although river-traffic to Clonmel ceased officially in 1921, a revival took place for some months in the autumn of 1922, when both railway and roads were rendered useless by the Civil War. The last river-men to ply the old trade to Clonmel from Carrick-on-Suir were Larry and Tom Brett, Dan O'Callaghan and Jim Fennessy.

Apart from cot-fishermen and some rare pleasure-boats, the River Suir from Carrick-on-Suir to Waterford is little used by boats today. The westward stretch is hardly ever used. It has become a wasted resource. However, it is hoped that some use of this beautiful area of water will be made in the future.

FOOTNOTES

1. From the reminiscences of Michael O'Callaghan of Carrick-on-Suir, who still makes cots although now about 80 years of age.
2. Reminiscences of the late Jimmy Shea of the Three Bridges, Carrick-on-Suir, born in 1895, and Michael O'Callaghan.
3. *Clonmel Chronicle*, 21 April, 1869.
4. Curtis, (ed.): *Red Book of Ormond* (Dublin, 1932) p.119.
5. Memories (1958) of the late Paddy Meagher of Carrickbeg, born *circa* 1885.
6. See note 5.
7. Memories of Michael O'Callaghan, who worked at the graving dock a youth. He informed the writer that in the present century Kehoe's graving-dock did not build any river craft, but repaired yawls and lighters and barges from as far away as the Barrow and the midland canals; all could travel to Carrick by water then.
8. Account-book in private ownership in Carrick-on-Suir.
9. *Clonmel Chronicle*, 27 March, 1877.
10. Memories (1982) of Michael Dowley of Carrickbeg, who sailed in the second *Knocknagow* and ,with another man, fitted the concrete ballast fore and aft in the boat.
11. See Irish Parliamentary papers for 1755-57.
12. Private & Local Act of Parliament, 6 & 7 William IV, cap. 90, passed 14 July, 1836.

