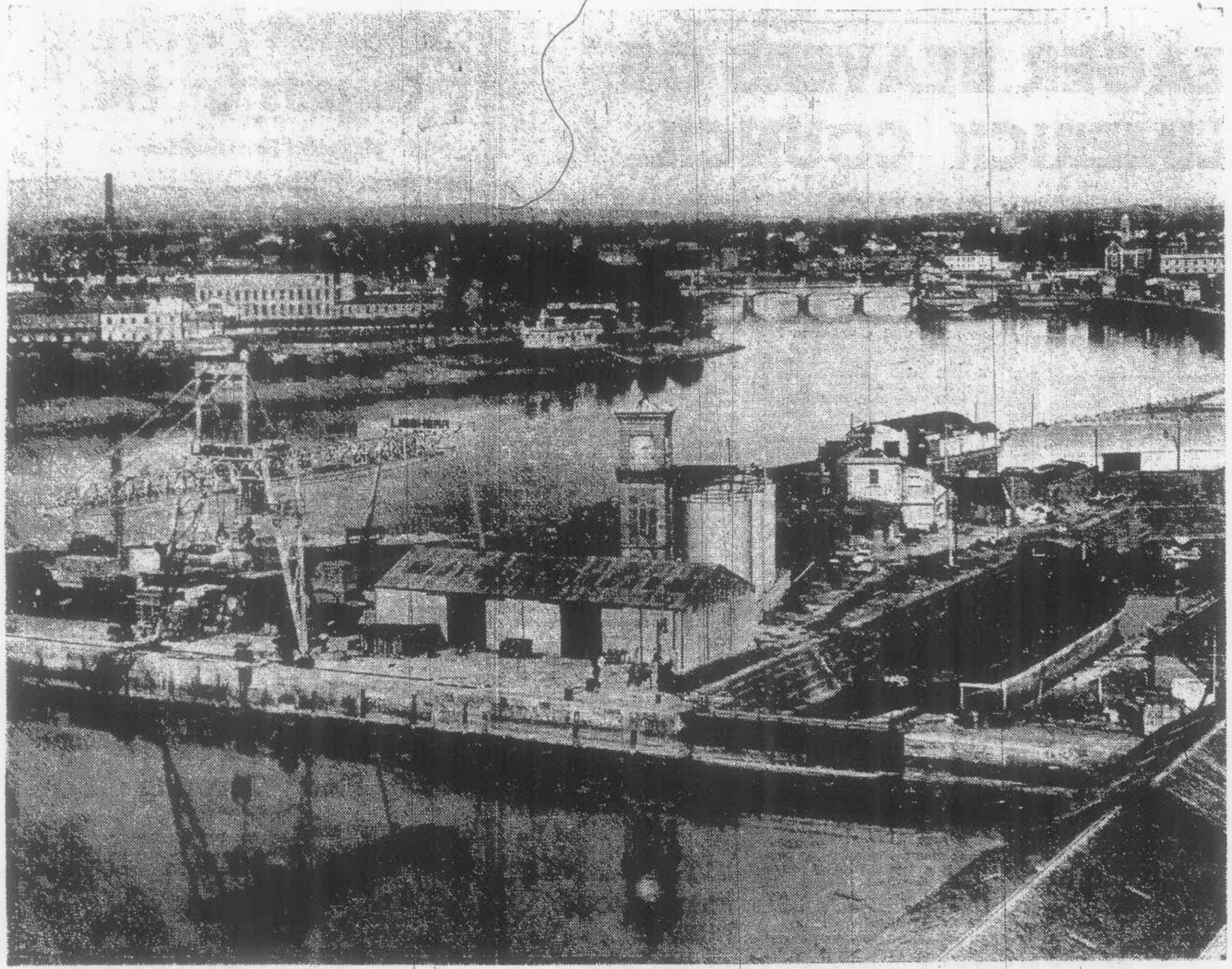
ON THE WATERFRONT: a Limerick Leader probe by PADDY MORONEY



Limerick's Goliath — the giant crane — ready for action at the port.

The 'backwater' that is now a top port

WITH TRAFFIC EXPANDING, in the wake of a dock rationalisation scheme, Limerick port is looking forward to a future of prosperity.

In just a few short months the port, which many were predicting would be a commercial backwater, has steered a course into the lead as one of the country's most efficient ship-loading facilities.

"Speed of handling" has become more than an advertising catch-phrase for the 60-man registered force, which replaced a casual-labour pool of some hundreds under the new scheme.

In a day

Said Mr. Bob Nesbitt, general manager of Limerick Cargo Handling Ltd.:

"Any exporter or importer can expect to get his goods cleared through Limerick port in a day — indeed, in less than a day.

"It takes us only 3 to 4 hours now to unload a ship, with the exception of the coal imports on 3,000 ton ships, which we do in three days."

A sign of the times, he said, was the arrival of a ship recently with 460 tons of wire rods. Unloading started at 8 a.m. and finished at 10.30 a.m.

Flexibility has been another key to the growing success story of Limerick port.

Its rationalised labour force is so arranged that it can be deployed in the most efficient way if more than one ship arrives in a day.

At present, an average of one ship per day arrives in Limerick: these can vary from the more commonplace coasters to the larger 10,000 tonners.

Allied to the advantages of a small, high-powered and well-organised labour force is the speed of customs clearance at Limerick.

Quicker

Senator Ted Russell, chairman of the Limerick Harbour Board and the longest-serving member of the City Council, maintains that customs clearance is much quicker in Limerick than in other ports.

Other ports, particularly those on the east coast enjoying the full impetus of the door - to - door containerised service, have begun to suffer delays in customs clearance.

"The time is coming when the longer journey to Limerick by sea can be offset by the quick customs clearance here," forecasts Sen. Russell.

Full facilities for container handling, including a giant Liebherr crane from Killarney, and full warehousing, [illegible] the infrastructure which has more than given Limerick port a new lease of life.

It has given the port a future.

For Captain Kevin Donnelly, youthful harbour master, the port represents an [illegible] handled shipping facility.

"We have an excellent [illegible] up," he says. "It is a [illegible] neat port. Our predecessors [illegible] set it out nicely and my [illegible] function is to arrange [illegible] ships at the quays in a [illegible] which will give them maximum benefit from the new [illegible] here."

Final comment, again from Mr. Bob Nesbitt: "We have a great deal of liaison [illegible] the harbour master's office which keeps the areas [illegible] from obstruction.

"They keep up informing of ship movements in advance and facilitate planning [illegible] plant hire and cargo [illegible] line."

It's cheaper by sea

ONE OF the advantages of shipping goods through Limerick port is that it saves money: this is a recent, and dramatic, reversal of a situation which obtained for some years.

Ironically, it was the recent oil crisis, which jacked up the prices of the fuel, which came to the aid of Limerick port.

The second factor was speed of handling.

Basically, it is cheaper to transport goods by water than by land: less horse-power is needed, and therefore less fuel.

Less diesel-power is needed to propel a ship carrying, say, 1,000 tons of goods to Britain, than a whole fleet of container lorries carrying the cargo in small loads.

This leaves aside the labour — cost of the lorry drivers, and the cost of transporting the lorries themselves by ship across the Irish Sea by roll-on, roll-off service. Or the cost of unloading the lorries at each Irish port for Britain and re-loading the cargoes on lorries again in Britain, and their long journey to their destinations.

Rail travel can cut these costs, but horse-power and port transhipment problems arise again.

Land costs

Senator Ted Russell, Harbour Board chairman: "The cost of road and rail are going up greatly as the cost of oil goes up."

The disadvantage of sea travel is that it is slow: about 12 m.p.h. as against a train's 50-60 m.p.h. by a more direct route.

But it is here that the situation at Limerick Port — the speed of handling goods — readjusts the balance.

On East Coast ports there is much congestion.

On the other hand, [illegible] clear dock areas [illegible] hands at Limerick [illegible] are no delays, even [illegible] customs clearance. Limerick [illegible] and saves money.

Declared Mr. Bob Nesbitt, general manager of Limerick Cargo Handling Ltd.: [illegible] at sea are much less [illegible] costs in port."

And Mr. Michael Hoctor, Harbour Engineer: "[illegible] factors and the economic [illegible] tors have to be balanced [illegible] the level of service [illegible] in Limerick."

As a result of increased efficiency, the economic [illegible] land of Limerick port [illegible] pushed out. It is now [illegible] 50-60 mile radius.

No longer is Limerick [illegible] part of the coal [illegible] merchants. It is [illegible] economic entity which [illegible] Nenagh, Ennis, Tipperary [illegible] towns well up [illegible] the [illegible] lands.

TIP-TOP DOCKERS

FOR THE 60-man registered dock labour force, the new port rationalisation scheme has worked smoothly, much to the satisfaction of all.

Two leading personalities on the workers' side—Mr. John Bashford, of the I.T.G.W.U., and Mr. Paddy Benson, of the Limerick Dock Labourers' Society—have already expressed their favour of the scheme.

Said Mr. Bashford, who is secretary of the Limerick No. 1 branch:

"The dockers are happy and satisfied, but we would be happier if things were coming on a bit faster.

"We are happy at the way things are moving, and we are confident for the future.

"We know that on our side the dockers will do their part as they have been doing their part up to now. Relations with management are exceptionally good."

Teething pains

He added: "We have overcome the teething pains. Paddy Benson, who is the chairman is son of Paddy Benson, who has also been chairman for a number of years. So you can see, a family tradition is being maintained."

Mr. Bashford appealed to the business community: "In my opinion, we would like to see the commercial [illegible] manufacturing interests [illegible] along with [illegible] learn what the [illegible] the moment."

Mr. Paddy Benson [illegible] the working arrangements [illegible] the dock itself [illegible] the reduced number [illegible] which makes it [illegible] handle cargoes [illegible].

"We have proved that [illegible] work force is second [illegible] and, with new [illegible] equipment, the [illegible].

"We know that [illegible] about performance [illegible] than any port in Ireland [illegible] modern equipment [illegible] it would be unbeatable.

"If a local trader [illegible] exporter wants his trading through Limerick port, the [illegible] handling crews will [illegible] and willing."

Keeping the region in contact with Continent

THE FIRST THING to say about Limerick port is that it keeps the region in direct contact with Britain and the Continent.

The advantages of a direct sea link — the economic benefits are explained elsewhere—are likely to yield dividends in the years ahead.

But the implementation of a dock rationalisation scheme since March has already induced importers and exporters to use Limerick.

Since the scheme began, some 15,000 to 20,000 tons of goods have come to the port which otherwise would not have come, according to Harbour Engineer, Mr. Michael Hoctor.

This represents an extra 25 ships in three months: 100 in a full year. In other words, shipping should go up by one-third in the coming 12 months.

Encouraging

"It is encouraging to notice general cargoes increasing," commented Mr. Hoctor.

Mr. Bob Nesbitt, general manager of Limerick Cargo Handling Ltd., explained how Limerick provides a direct link with other countries.

"We get fertilizers from the Continent, from Ghent, Sharpness, Antwerp and Rotterdam.

"We import wire from Caen, in France, and general cargoes from Antwerp, Rotterdam and Lowestoft.

"Grain is shipped in from Europe and Britain, timber from Scandinavian countries, Finland, Sweden and Norway."

A frequent import at Limerick is liquid glue from Rotterdam: oil is imported from Milford Haven, in Britain, and Whitegate, in Cork.

The oil imports from Cork show how much more economical it is to ship by sea rather than by road.

Continued Mr. Nesbitt: "Coal is imported from Poland, steel wire from Hamburg, potash from Germany, France and Spain."

In effect, cargoes can reach any destination from Limerick. For entrepot trade, Rotterdam is the great European centre.

Enquiries

Any general enquiries about the port can be dealt with by either contacting Limerick Cargo Handling Ltd. or the new commercial officer of the Limerick Harbour Commissioners, Mr. A. O'Connor.

Not only has Limerick container, crane and warehouse facilities, but it also has riverside sites awaiting development.

There are today very few ports in Europe with undeveloped sites right beside the port complex itself.

The proximity of these sites to the dock area means great economy in fuel transport bills.

Limerick port's a leader

ON MARCH 25 this year a new scheme came into operation at Limerick port. The casual dock labour force of several hundred was exchanged for a full-time rationalised work force of [illegible] men.

This followed agreement between three major parties: the Limerick Port Users' Association, the I.T.G.W.U. and the Limerick Dock Labourers' Society. The new 60-man force is employed by a recently formed company — Limerick Cargo Handling Ltd. — a non-profit making body in itself: any dividends are ploughed back into the company.

The company has 3 representatives from the Harbour Commissioners, 2 from the Port Users' Association and 3 from the I.T.G.W.U., representing the interests of the dockers.

The move, which is aimed at increasing the efficiency of the port, is paying off already and sets a lead for the rest of the country.

A HOT TIP

If you must have a bet

Contact

GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS

Social Service Centre
Henry Street

Tel.: 44111

Marketing institute's Limerick branch announce programme

MR. DONAL SCANLON, chairman of the Limerick Region Branch of the Marketing Institute of Ireland, this week announced details of his council's proposed programme of lectures, events and seminars for the 1974/75 season.

First on the list is an open forum at Cruise's Hotel, Limerick, at 8.15 p.m. on Thursday, September 19. The topic: marketing viewed by the consumer and the marketing man. the speakers: Miss Joan Morrisson, Consumer Council, and Mr. J. J. O'Reilly, national director, RGDATA.

The forum will be presided over by Mr. Scanlon.

Members of the public are invited.

Details

Here are details of the MII programme:

Thursday, October 17: Lecture and panel discussion on the future of marketing of agricultural and farm foods. Dr. T. Walsh, director general, An Foras Taluntais, is the speaker. The event takes place at the National Institute of Higher Education at 8.15 p.m.

Mr. B. Begley, agricultural economist, N.I.H.E., is chairman.

Thursday, November 7 or 14: A lecture and discussion on the development of North American traffic, past and present. Mr. David Kennedy, CEO of Aer Lingus-Irish, is to speak at the National Institute of Higher Education. Chairman: Mr. Ray Joyce, SFADCO.

Thursday, December 12. A lecture on modern trends and changes in Irish retail grocery retailing. Mr. Bruce Calswell, manageing director, Irish Modern Distributors, Murgraves, and J. Galvey & Sons Ltd., is the speaker at the National Institute of Higher Education. Time: 8.15 p.m. Chairman: Mr. J. Locke, Musgraves Ltd.

Wednesday, January 15: A panel type of discussion on marketing, Golden Vale style.

Speakers: Mr. James O'Donovan, marketing director, Golden Vale Products; Mr. Fergus O'Rourke, marketing manager, Eire, and Mr. Wm. Tonks, export manager. Venue: National Institute of Higher Education. Time: 8.15 p.m., Mr. D. Scanlon is chairman.

Thursday, February 20: A lecture on the advertising and P.R. contribution to marketing by Mr. F. Young, joint managing director, Wilson Hartnell Ltd., Dublin, at the National Institute of Higher Education at 8.15 p.m.

Mr. Roy Hayhurst, N.I.H.E., is chairman.

Thursday, March 20: A lecture on Mainitaining and Increasing your market share—keeping up profits. Mr. J. Lepere, B.Econ. Sc., planning director, P. J. Carroll and Co., is the speaker at the National Institute of Higher Education at 8.15 p.m.

April (date to be fixed): A lecture on advances in packaging by Dr. R. Breslin, Inst. of Industrial Research and Standards, at the National Institute of Higher Education, at 8.15 p.m.

In May, a one-day seminar is to be held.

Miss Dorothy Carter, Clarke Avenue, Janesboro', who celebrated her 21st birthday recently. She is daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Carter.

Sisters Elizabeth (right) and Denise Morgan, pupils of Miss Trudi Thompson, of Crecora National School, who won first and second prizes, respectively, in the under 6 child art competition at the Limerick Show. L.L. photo

Abolish rates on sporting clubs

A PLEA for the abolition of the rate burden on sporting clubs was made by Mr. Jim Crowe, member of the executive of the Irish Amateur Rowing Union, at the annual dinner of Athlunkard Boat Club last Saturday night. His plea was supported by the Mayor, Alderman Pat Kennedy, who was guest of honour at the function.

"Rowing and athletic clubs are all doing a good job for youth, but they are all in debt," said Mr. Crowe; "They work hard to meet financial commitments, but they are fighting a hard, and in some cases, a losing battle."

He went on: "Rates are a terrible burden on any sporting club; you will have read in this week-end's Limerick Leader the case of a club whose rates have actually been more than doubled. For years past we in Athlunkard Boat Club have campaigned for the easement or abolition of rates. And I have asked the Mayor to remember the special position of rowing clubs when the question is raised in the City Council."

At the outset Mr. Crowe said that 1974 had not been a successful season for rowing in Limerick. He fully agreed wtih the reasons that had been given for this by "Aspirant" in the "Leader" rowing notes, and he would add to them some opinions of his own. He did not believe that the present system of training was suitable for commercial clubs. Before weight training and circuit training were in vogue, oarsmen put in their work on the water from March 1st to regatta time, and he would like to see this given another trial.

In 1941 the record for the senior eight, rowed on June 8, was 6 minutes 20 seconds and this was achieved without circuit or indoor training.

The Mayor, Alderman Pat Kennedy, said the rowing clubs were providing a very useful service to the youth of the city. He would do all in his power to press for an easement, if not abolition, of rates on the clubs.

HISTORY

Outlining the history of Athlunkard since its founding in 1898 by Jack Gilligan, Larry Shanahan and Brian O'Connor, he said the club had kept pace with developments down through the years; they had built fine premises and provided social amenities and useful facilities, and had a group of dedicated officials second to none.

Rowing demanded dedication and enthusiasm, and he called on the young people, especially those from the schools at secondary level, to take up the sport.

He appealed to the oarsmen to accept the responsibility of office; the executive side of the sport was also very important, and young members should be able to take over where the older members left off.

Concluding, he paid tribute to the oarsmen of the club, and complimented the ladies' committee on the excellent dinner they had provided that night.

The guests were welcomed by Mr. Jack Cowhey. They included Alderman Kennedy, Rev. Fr. Walsh, C.C., St. Mary's; Messrs Felix O'Neill, oJe Harold, Gerry O'Dowd, Frank O'Brien, Shannon Rowing Club; Dick Roche and John Gaffney, president and secretaary of Limerick Boat Club; Cyril Mullins, president St. Michael's and Paddy Treacy; Bertie Wixted, vice-president, I.A.R.U.; Austin Reid, Munster representative, I.A.R.U.

COMBINE

Mr. Cowhey suggested that the captains of the Limerick clubs should come together with a view to forming a senior eight to represent the city. "We are up against top-class opposition now, and it will take our combined efforts to meet it," he said.

Mr. Dick Roche, president of Limerick Boat Club, agreed with the suggestion to bring the captains or their representatives together. He thought the four clubs should each engage a coach on consecutive week-ends and that the seminar be open to all. Later in the season the clubs could individually bring down a coach, and in that way each club would have the benefit of five seminars for the cost of two.

He advocated the reintroduction of league rowing for tours in the early season; rowing had deteriorated in quality following the abandonment of the leagues.

If things continued as at present, they would have great difficulty in getting young people to join clubs. "We must forget our isolationism and get together in the interests of rowing," he said; "rowing has a great tradition in Limerick and it must not be allowed die because two or three people think they are doing the right thing."

INFLUENCE

Rev. Fr. Walsh said Athlunkard Boat Club was a great influence for good in the parish. The club was noted for its hospitality and the warmth of its welcome for visitors.

Mr. Bertie Wixted said the rowing clubs were not getting the best material from the schools. "We do not want what is left over after the needs of rugby and other sports have been filled," he added.

The Government grant of £3,500 to rowing was, he insisted, totally inadequate; a big portion of this was given back on VAT charges on equipment. The grant of £1,000 to the Olympic Council was also totally inadequate; last year it had cost £2,500 for representation at Moscow.

He disagreed with Mr. Crowe's observations on training: "Sophisticated training is necessary if we are going to have anything near perfection."

He heartily endorsed the Mayor's remarks on the social benefits of rowing and their claim for a reduction in rates. "We trust that any concession that may be made will apply to all athletic clubs; athletics in general are handicapped by lack of finance," he concluded.

Mr. Louis Murnane, president of Athlunkard Boat Club, welcomed the attendance. The club had, he said, over the years given the use of their hall to other parish organisations. The hall was now badly in need of repair and as a function centre it would be a valuable asset to the parish. He congratulated the cadet crew on their wonderful win in Limerick, and the ladies crew on their fine performances. The great work that the ladies were doing for the club was much appreciated.

During the function the captain's prize for 1974 was presented by Mr. Tom Mulqueen to Mr. Jack Kiely for his club work on and off the water.

Mr. Joe McAuliffe presided at the piano during the enjoyable social which followed.