

Watery Woodquay

Most of the area seen in this photograph was once part of a grant of land to Edward Eyre in 1670. It was all originally outside the city walls and was mostly made up of 3 islands which included St. Stephen's Island and Horse Island.

Wood Quay, or Barrachalla (Bárr an Chaladh) was so called because fuel used to be brought in there by boat. It was occasionally known as Galway's second docks. References to the placename go back to at least 1688. Originally, the water came right up to where McSwiggans is today. In 1841, it went as far as the entrance to Abbey Lane. There were regular calls for having the wood quay repaired, as it was a landing place for a lot of boat traffic that came down the river. Eventually, stronger quays were built which enabled the reclamation of the land we know as Woodquay today.

Our photograph was taken about 50 years ago from a very high crane Stewart Contractors were using when building the new post office in Eglinton Street. It provides us with a birds-eye view of the Woodquay area. It had obviously been raining and the reflection of light from the wet surface of the open space in Woodquay make it look as if the whole area was under water.

The roof we see at the bottom left of our picture was that of the Garda Barracks. Adjoining it is Daly's Place which was named after father Peter Daly, who in 1822, was made parish priest of St. Nicholas North, which today is the parish of St. Francis. The building on the corner of Daly's Place and Francis Street was occupied by Emerson and Conway, solicitors. Next door, on Francis Street was Blake and Kenny, solicitors, then a vacant plot known as Cooke's Garden, sometimes called Lally's Garden. The two houses opposite the Franciscan Church were occupied by Joe Simons, solicitor, later RG Browne, auctioneer, and by Togher's Private Hotel. Joe Togher used to work in the Post Office, and amongst other things, used to decode despatches from the British Army and the Black and Tans, and pass the information on to Michael Collins and the IRA. In 1838, Francis Street was called Wood Quay Street.

The houses on the near side of St. Anthony's Place were occupied (from the left) by Heffernans, Jordans, Smalls, Casserleys, O'Loughlin's Bacon shop where you could also buy turf, and Miss Dooley. Those who lived on the far side of the street were Flahertys, Miss Duffy, O'Tooles, Wards, two empty garages, Burkes, Forde's Butcher Shop.

The lane running from St. Anthony's Place towards the Town Hall is Abbey Lane, and amongst those who lived there were Pat Loftus, The Rooneys, a cobbler named Mattie Murphy, Kings, Whelans, O'Hallorans and Finnigans.

Recently published is Volume 62 of the Journal of the Galway Archeological and Historical Society. As usual it is a top class production full of interesting articles including "Galway and Mayo Fisheries in the mid 19th century", "Turbulent Priest, Archbishop Mannix", "Bobby Burke and the Tuam Parish Council of Muinntir na Tíre", "Genealogy of the Anglo-Norman Lynches who settled in Galway" and so on. It is well illustrated and costs only 30 euro for non-members. If you join the Society, the annual subscription of 20 euro includes the journal and postage. Highly recommended.

TK

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