

History of Port

The city of Londonderry was established and defined by Royal Charter of James I on the 29th March 1613. During the 17th and 18th centuries Londonderry Corporation was responsible for the upkeep and development of the port, which saw a huge increase in trade with the opening of the English and US markets to Irish linens and provisions, and the widespread emigration of Ulster people to North America. In 1771 the American colonies took more linen cloth and provisions from Derry than Britain did. The importance of the port can be judged by the fact that in 1767, 67 ships, with a total tonnage of 11,000 tons, belonged to the merchants of Derry.

As a result of this growth, the Londonderry Port and Harbour Commissioners were constituted in 1854 to address the challenges facing a port seeking to maintain and expand its trading connections. The port took on responsibility to manage all matters relating to shipping navigation and quays downstream from the then wooden bridge, at the bottom of Bridge Street, to the mouth of Lough Foyle.

Within 7 years the Harbour Commissioners had spent nearly £150,000 on improving harbour facilities. A line of quays, from the bridge to the new graving dock at the Rock, were completed together with construction of quays at Waterside from the bridge to the Londonderry and Coleraine railway station. To speed up delivery of goods and produce tramways were also built to link up with the railways.

By the early 19th century Derry had become one of the most important and thriving ports in Ireland. In 1835 the value of exports from Derry exceeded £1 million, making her the fifth largest port in Ireland.

In the 20th Century, as the most westerly base of the allies during the Second World War (1939-1945) Derry played a crucial role in the 'Battle of the Atlantic' as an escort base to shield convoys of merchant ships from U-boat attack.. Derry was also commissioned as a United States naval operating base in 1942, the first outpost of the US Navy's shore establishments in Europe.

In 1993, in order to take larger vessels, the port moved downstream to a deep-water facility at Lisahally with 365 metres of quayside and access through an eight-metre deep Lough Foyle channel. In relocating, the Port not only improved its competitiveness, but it also freed its former city-centre site for redevelopment. Today, outside of Ireland's three main ports in Belfast, Dublin and Cork, Derry is the leading smaller port and growing.

Londonderry Corporation

During the 17th and 18th centuries Londonderry Corporation was responsible for upkeep and development of the port. In order to maintain and improve the river, harbour and quays, the Corporation could gather tonnage dues (rate levied was based on tonnage of ship), anchorage (rate based on class of ship, such as one mast or two masts or more) and quayage (rate, for ships, based on cargo type and quantity).

The course of commerce didn't always run smoothly. The Governor of Culmore Fort was ordered, in February 1690, to cease interfering with ships trading with the port. The fort at Culmore, on a sand spit, 4 miles downstream from Derry, guarded the entrance to River Foyle from Lough Foyle.

At the meeting of Londonderry Corporation of 4 February 1690 the minute book reports "*An order Requiring and commanding the Governor of the Fort of Culmore, To Stopp no vessels, Ships, or Boats, comeing in, or going out of the same, nor to take any ffees or Perquisits from the owners, or Majesty there unless he have an express warrant from his Majesty for so doeing.*" It was then ordered "*That the said order shall be communicated by the Sherriffs to the Governor of the said Fort, for his Due observance, for the future.*"

A month later it was reported that the Carmen in the city were overcharging in drawing goods from the quay to the market place. The market place was then located at the Diamond in the centre of the walled city. The minute book, dated 20 March 1690, reports "*Upon a complaint made of the extravagancies of the Carmen in this City: Ordered That for what Loads they Draw from the Key, the Length of the Markett place, They shall receive no more than one penny half penny, And beyond the Guardhouse two pence.*"

Four years later, on 16 April 1694, the Corporation was attempting to resolve a dispute between Widow Nightingale and John Greham over the graving bank for dry docking ships which had been rented by John Nightingale, a Burgess of Londonderry Corporation who had died in September 1693.

It would appear that John Greham, without any authority, had been collecting fees from ships dry-docking in the graving bank since John Nightingale's death! The Corporation, therefore, ordered that: *Mrs Nightingall have the graveing Bank paying to the Chamberlain yearly one shilling sterling and that shee keep it good repaire, with good Moreing posts. Ordered likewise that John Greham do pay Mrs Nightingall whatever sums of money he has received for Ships Graveing there since Mr Nightingalls death.*

In the 17th and 18th centuries, in a city dominated by merchants, shopkeepers and craftsmen, only freemen of the city were entitled to conduct business, own property and receive protection within the walled city. Freemen consisted of 2 classes – the first, those entitled to it by birth, apprenticeship, marriage or purchase, and the second those granted it by favour. The minute books record frequent complaints by freemen of 'strangers and foreigners exercising their trade' in Derry.

On 8 November 1683, for example, Alderman William Smyth informed Council that he had seized a cargo of tobacco "*for the Townes customs thereof not duely paid*" and "*the said Alderman ordered henceforward to levy Townes customs of all foreigners goods importes or exportes into or out of this port.*"

Growth of Trade in 18th Century

In the 18th century Derry shared in the tremendous growth of the linen industry, and this, together with her extensive trade connections created a small but vigorous town of 9,313 people by 1821.

During the 18th century Derry developed as a port of some importance building up extensive trade connections with Britain, Europe and the colonies in North America. In the age of sail Derry possessed a geographical situation that enabled her to exploit two features of the 18th century:

- The opening of the English markets to Irish linens and provisions
- The widespread emigration of Ulster people to North America

In 1788, for the first time, linen exports to Britain from Derry passed 500,000 yards. By 1821 over 4 million yards of linen cloth were exported annually to Britain through Derry.

It wasn't until the 25 year period after 1790 that Derry began to share in the growing provisions trade to Britain. As late as 1771 Derry's export trade to Britain relied entirely on hides, linen cloth and yarn. By the 1820s, however, considerable quantities of beef, butter, pork, ham, bacon, oatmeal and flax were exported through Derry.

The emigration trade established Derry as one of the chief Irish ports for transatlantic trade in the 18th century. In 1771 the American colonies took more linen cloth and provisions from Derry than Britain did, and thirty percent of Ulster-Scots, about 75,000 people, emigrated through Derry port to North America prior to 1776 and the American declaration of Independence.

The importance of the port can be judged by the fact that in 1767, 67 ships, with a total tonnage of 11,000 tons, belonged to the merchants of Derry.

Establishment of Derry as a significant Irish Port

By the early years of the 19th century Derry had become one of the most important and thriving ports in Ireland. In 1835 the value of exports from Derry exceeded £1 million, making her the fifth largest port in Ireland. There was a large coasting trade with Britain in linen and agricultural produce. In 1835 linen accounted for 30% of exports; the provisions trade of beef, bacon, pork, butter and eggs for 31%; hides and flax for 21%; and corn meal and flour for 12%. A heavy reliance on agricultural produce is evident. An examination of *Ship News* in the *Londonderry Journal* of 1838 shows Derry had trade links with 16 ports in Ireland and with 53 ports in Britain.

The registers of the Custom House in Derry, furthermore, show that 54 ships, over 100 tons in size, were bought by Derry merchants between 1834 and 1850. Twenty eight of these ships were built in Canada. Derry continued to grow as an emigration port. In 1833, 41 sailing ships, including 15 involved in the North American emigrant trade, and 3 steamships were registered as belonging to the port of Derry.

In this new mercantile city the business community believed that private enterprise, as opposed to the Corporation, could best provide the facilities, such as a graving dock and new wharfs, that the city needed to grow commerce and trade.

Establishment of Londonderry Port and Harbour Commissioners

It soon became clear, however, that private enterprise alone could not provide the necessary levels of investment required to upgrade port facilities. Hence, the Londonderry Port and Harbour Commissioners were constituted in 1854 to manage all matters relating to shipping

navigation and quays downstream from the then wooden bridge, at the bottom of Bridge Street, to the mouth of Lough Foyle.

With the first meeting of Londonderry Port and Harbour Commissioners, on 14 August 1854, a body representing the city's business community was now established with the capacity and commitment to address the challenges facing a port seeking to maintain and expand its trading connections.

Within 7 years the Harbour Commissioners had spent nearly £150,000 on improving harbour facilities. A line of quays, from the bridge to the new graving dock at the Rock, were completed together with construction of quays at Waterside from the bridge to the Londonderry and Coleraine railway station.

The Harbour Commissioners developed tramways to facilitate the delivery of goods and produce between the railways, ships and warehouses. *The Irish Builder* of 1 January 1868 reported that the Harbour Commissioners had almost completed, at a cost of £3,000, the laying down of a tramway, 2 and a-half miles in length, along their line of quays on both sides of the River Foyle between the Londonderry and Coleraine Railway Terminus at Waterside and the Lough Swilly Railway Terminus at the Rock Mill, with sidings alongside the principal warehouses. By 1924, traffic hauled on this tramway amounted to 179,097 tons annually.

A site for a new graving dock, for the dry-docking of large vessels, was identified downstream from Gilliland's mill at the Rock. The graving dock, set at an angle to the river and lined with granite walls and fitted with heavy oak gates, was built at a cost of £25,000 and took its first vessel in February 1862. The graving dock's first customer was Bartholomew McCorkell's *Zered* and its second was J & J Cooke's *Doctor Kane*. Thus, Derry's chief transatlantic shipping firms were the first to benefit from the new service.

Development of Transatlantic Passenger Trade

The Harbour Commissioners soon demonstrated a willingness to develop new opportunities, especially in their efforts to attract transatlantic mail and passenger steamers to Derry. The Allan Line, in 1856, was contracted by the Canadian Government to provide a mail service between Quebec and Liverpool. In November 1859 the Canadian Post Master General agreed to establish a weekly mail service that also included Ireland.

Sidney Smith, the Canadian Postmaster General and Hugh Allan, owner of the shipping line, were hosted to a reception by the mayor and Harbour Commissioners in Derry on 5 May 1860. Sidney Smith declared that 'the Canadians had been the first to discover the plain geographical truth that Londonderry was the nearest port to the Canadian continent.' The Harbour Commissioners facilitated the establishment of this Canadian mail and passenger service.

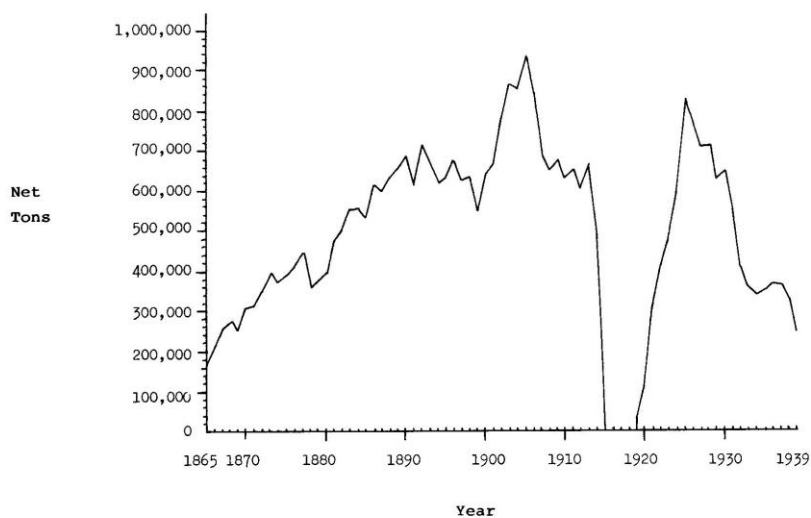
In 1861, the Allan Line introduced weekly steamship sailings from Liverpool, calling at Moville, to Quebec and Montreal during the summer and to Halifax, Nova Scotia and Portland, Maine during the winter. This service, from Liverpool via Moville to Canada continued until the First World War.

This was followed, in 1866, by the Anchor Line's Glasgow to New York steamships calling at Moville. This service to New York, except during the First World War, continued until 1939. In 1916 the Anchor Line and another Glasgow company, the Donaldson Line, merged their services and formed a joint company, Anchor-Donaldson, to operate the route, via Moville, to Canada.

From the 1860s to 1939 the growth of traffic (measured in tonnage) through Derry port was largely dependent upon the transatlantic steamers calling at Moville to pick up passengers and mails on their way to Canada and USA.

The tonnage of transatlantic passenger steamers calling at Moville from 1865 to 1939 is illustrated below. This graph illustrates a steady growth in tonnage of transatlantic steamers calling at Derry, rising from 200,000 tons in 1866 to a peak of 940,000 tons in 1905. Although the tonnage of transatlantic liners calling at Moville never surpassed this figure again, it did remain at a consistently high level in the years between 1910 and 1930 (apart from during the First World War years of 1915 to 1918 when all emigration ceased) of over 600,000 tons per annum until 1931, when a dramatic fall off in transatlantic liners calling at Derry is evident. Indeed, in 1925, the tonnage of liners calling at Moville peaked at 825,000 tons, a figure that was only ever exceeded in the years between 1902 and 1906 inclusive.

**Tonnage of Transatlantic Passenger Steamers Calling at the Port of Londonderry
1865 to 1939**



Source: Table 12, p96, in *The Making of Derry: an economic history* by Brian Mitchell

By making Derry a 'port of call', where steamers took but a few hours to embark and disembark passengers and mail at Moville, on voyages from Liverpool and Glasgow to North America, the city's position as a premier emigrant port in Ireland was confirmed and reinforced. By 1900, the Railway Companies in Ireland were offering cheap rail tickets to those intending emigrants, embarking at Derry, who boarded trains at railway stations north of an imaginary line which stretched from Sligo on the west coast to Dublin on the east coast. In effect, it was assumed that if you lived north of this line you emigrated from Derry, and if you lived in the southern half of Ireland you embarked at Queenstown (now Cobh).

Emigration from Ireland fell dramatically from 1931 as legislation ending uncontrolled immigration to the US became fully operational. The outbreak of war in 1939 meant the end of this emigrant trade. With the return of peace the transatlantic liners didn't come back to Derry. Train loads of emigrants from all over Ireland now headed for Cobh.

Shipbuilding

Although the construction of the graving dock (in 1862) assisted Captain Coppin's ship repair business and salvage work the Harbour Commissioners made no initial plans to establish a shipyard and restore a shipbuilding industry in the city. In the era of wooden ships it was difficult for a ship-builder in Derry to compete with North American competitors with access to vast timber reserves.

Captain Coppin, who launched his last ship in Derry in 1860, was no longer interested in ship-building. Coppin now abandoned his patent slip, built in 1830 by Pitt Skipton of Beech Hill, at the bottom of Clarendon Street and moved his ship-repair business to the new graving dock. The patent slip was then incorporated, by 1864, into the Harbour Commissioners' line of quays.

By 1880, however, a strong business case was being made for the re-establishment of a shipyard in Derry. The graving dock was generating unsatisfactory revenue returns for the Harbour Commissioners, with the closure of Captain Coppin's ship repair business at the graving dock in 1873, while, in Belfast, there was clear evidence of the transformational effect of a successful shipbuilding industry.

The Harbour Commissioners now invested £25,000 in turning the slobland adjacent to the graving dock into a shipyard. In October 1886 Charles Bigger (son of William F Bigger who owned one of the largest bacon manufacturing firms in the city) applied to the Harbour Commissioners for lease of their shipyard.

In its five years of operation the Foyle Shipyard launched 25 vessels (4 in 1887, 5 each in 1888, 1889 and 1890, and 6 in 1891). Charles Bigger specialised in building large steel-hulled sailing ships. The yard, which was soon employing 600 men, was fitted out with five launching berths, each capable of taking vessels 500 feet in length. Between 1889 and 1891 the Foyle shipyard built five large steel-hulled sailing ships for Derry shipowners; one, the *Osséo*, for William McCorkell & Co and four for William Mitchell's Foyle Line.

Although the shipbuilding industry in Derry failed to develop on a scale that became self-sustaining, it was nevertheless a very important industry. Three attempts were made to establish a shipbuilding industry in Derry in the Harbour Commissioners' shipyard at Pennyburn. They were:

Derry Shipyard	Years of Operation
Charles J Bigger's Foyle Shipyard	1887-1892
Londonderry Shipbuilding & Engineering Company	1899-1904
North of Ireland Shipbuilding Company	1912-1924

In May 1912, Trevisa Clarke arrived in Derry and within a year his company, North of Ireland Shipbuilding Company, built three ships and employed 450 men with a wage bill of £1,000 a week. In the Spring of 1919, there were 2,200 men and apprentices employed in the shipyard, the largest ever male labour force in the city's history.

The war years, 1914-1918, were boom years in Derry, for the first time in its history there was full employment. In 1918, with its order book full, the North of Ireland Shipbuilding Company joined a consortium which included Swan and Hunter of Tyneside.

In 1922, the future of shipbuilding in Derry looked secure; the workforce stood at 2,600 and the yard had the third largest output in Ireland. Yet by October 1924 the yard was closed, and it never re-opened. The last ship ever built in Derry was the *SS New York News* which was launched on 24 May 1922.

Although the shipbuilding industry never became a permanent fixture in Derry, it did provide a significant contribution to the economy of the city. As a major male employer, the shipbuilding industry acted as a counterbalance to the predominantly female workforce of Derry's shirt industry. In addition, shipbuilding, with its need for skilled labour, employed shipwrights, platers, caulkers, boilermakers, drillers, turners, riveters, plumbers, carpenters and electricians; and acted as another balancing feature in a city with a vast number of unskilled workers.

Cross-Channel Trade: Passengers and Livestock

Derry's cross-channel trade was the port's core business and it displayed steady, if not dramatic, growth during the 19th century and into the early 20th century. In this period, inward coastal tonnages rose from around 200,000 tons in 1860 to just under 300,000 tons by 1910. Cross-channel traffic remained high in the inter-war years.

The cross-channel passenger trade from Derry was at its peak in 1910. At this time (*Derry Almanac* of 1910) a passenger steamer left for England, from Derry, six times a week with sailings to Heysham, with Laird Line, every Monday and Thursday, to Fleetwood every Tuesday and Friday, and to Liverpool, with Belfast Steamship Company, every Wednesday and Saturday; and there were 6 passenger sailings, on the Scotch Boat, each week to Greenock and Glasgow, with G & J Burns Ltd steamers departing every Monday and Thursday and Laird Line sailings every Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.

The decline in passenger services to England began in 1912 when the service to Fleetwood ended. Ten years later, in 1922, the steamers to Liverpool ceased carrying passengers but continued as cargo and livestock boats until 27 September 1965. The Heysham steamers

stopped carrying passengers in the early 1930s but remained in operation for cargo until 11 October 1963.

In 1922, the two old-established Glasgow companies, G & J Burns and Laird Line, who had pioneered passenger, goods and livestock routes between Scotland and Ireland amalgamated to form Burns and Laird Lines Ltd. Both Burns and Laird and Belfast Steamship Company became part of the Coast Lines Group which through acquisitions, from 1913, grew to be the largest coaster company in the world.

Passenger sailings from Derry to Glasgow, however, thrived in the inter-war years. In 1930 (*Derry Almanac* of 1930) Burns and Laird ships sailed from their Princes Quay berth, every weekday at 6.30p.m., for Glasgow. Indeed, a Derry-Glasgow passenger service continued until September 1966 when Burns and Laird transferred their last remaining passenger steamer on this route, the *Lairdsloch*, to the Dublin-Glasgow service.

The export of livestock was crucial to the growth and prosperity of cross-channel trade. In 1884, 57,623 cattle, 14,791 sheep and 19,305 pigs were exported through Derry to English and Scottish ports. Livestock exports continued to prosper through the inter-war years. Cattle exports, for example, to the ports of Glasgow, Heysham and Liverpool, through Derry, jumped from 49,280 in 1918 to 91,000 in 1924.

Dredging the Foyle: *Hercules*

From the 1870s the Harbour Commissioners faced up to the challenges posed by the great increase in ship size. With the increasing size of grain carriers from USA and of transatlantic liners it was vital to keep deep-water channels to Moville and Derry quays free of silt. There was the ever-present ‘danger of diversion to other routes’ if the port of Derry could not accommodate the largest ships.

In 1884, in the annual review of ‘The Trade of the Port’ it was noted that, although there was a fall in number of vessels entering the port from 1,651 to 1,558, tonnage of ships arriving was greater, chiefly because of large vessels engaged in the grain trade. The grain trade was the backbone of Derry’s Foreign Trade at this time and, as a consequence, the Harbour Commissioners deepened the harbour channel whereby vessels of heaviest tonnage could discharge their cargoes.

In February 1887 the *Hercules* bucket dredger, built by Harland and Wolff, was delivered to the Harbour Commissioners. It was one of the largest and most powerful dredging machines in the United Kingdom at the time, and it was immediately set to work to cut a deep-water channel through Lough Foyle and Rosses Bay. A crew of 13 were required to operate the port’s dredger.

Owing to the work of this dredger, vessels drawing up to 25 feet could come right up to Queen’s Quay. Grain for William McCorkell & Co. Ltd was discharged here and stored in their large silo mill on Queen’s Quay. McCorkell’s Mill remained the most distinctive landmark along the quay until it was demolished in January 1991.

At the annual meeting of the Harbour Commissioners on Monday 16 January 1911 it was reported that the *Hercules*, during 1910, had been at work at ‘the Abercorn Quay, the Rock Jetty, and the channel through Rosses Bay, at a total expenditure of £3,053. The depth of

water in the channel was satisfactory, and they had at the quay at present a vessel with about 6,000 tons of Indian corn', which was the largest cargo of Indian corn ever discharged in Derry.

Twenty years later, in 1930, the Queen's Quay berth was still being dredged by the *Hercules* to 25 feet L.W.O.S.T. (Low Water of Ordinary Spring Tides) to enable discharge of large vessels. The backbone of foreign trade in the inter-war years continued to be large shipments of maize from north and south America, initially destined for Watts distillery but increasingly as a cheap source of animal feed, and William McCorkell & Co. became one of its chief suppliers. The other major foreign import was timber, now coming as often from Norway and Sweden as from Canada.

An overview of the trade of Derry port, in terms of numbers and tonnages of vessels entering the port, in the inter-war years is summed up in the table below:

Trade	1928		1929	
	Vessels	Tons	Vessels	Tons
Home Trade	1,230	319,000	1,141	307,773
Foreign Trade	64	89,667	59	87,517
Transatlantic Mail and Passenger Steamers	72	713,551	64	632,241
Total	1,366	1,122,278	1,264	1,027,531

World War Two, the Royal Navy and USA Base 1

In the *Londonderry Sentinel* of Tuesday 3 July 1945 Commodore G W G Simpson, Commodore of the Western Approaches, discussed the importance of Derry in the Battle of the Atlantic. He stated: "The Naval base at Londonderry has been responsible for the maintenance and direction of approximately half the escort vessels in the North Atlantic... For more than two years Londonderry has laboured and cared for well over 100 escort vessels and prepared about 50 for the landings in Normandy on D-Day."

Owing to her position as the most westerly base of the allies during the Second World War (1939-1945) Derry played a crucial role in the 'Battle of the Atlantic' as an escort base; its function to shield convoys of merchant ships from U-boat attack. The Admiralty took the decision in September 1940 to develop the port of Londonderry as a major convoy-escort, refuelling and repair base.

The base in Derry was called HMS Ferret in accordance with the Royal Navy's tradition of naming shore stations as though they were ships. A large repair and machine workshop was erected alongside the graving dock on Strand Road; 'dolphins' or mooring points were erected along the quays on both sides of the River Foyle in the city centre; downstream, at Lisahally, stores, workshops and 2,300ft jetty with a 2ft gauge railway were erected; and, at Kilnappy, just outside the city, a 47 acre ammunition dump was constructed. The Royal Navy barracks were located at Ebrington Barracks in the Waterside district of Derry. By April 1943, HMS Ferret consisted of 149 escort and anti-submarine patrol vessels, 2,000 shore-based personnel and 20,000 British and Canadian sea-going personnel.

Furthermore, Derry was also commissioned as a United States naval operating base on 5 February 1942, the first outpost of the US Navy's shore establishments in Europe.

Londonderry, known as BASE 1, was one of four bases in the United Kingdom financed by the Lend Lease Act, on which US Navy construction work started in the summer of 1941.

Derry now became the US Navy's operating base and terminal for convoy escort vessels; in other words for the refuelling, repair and servicing of her fleet of destroyers and submarines. The shore facilities consisted of an extended jetty at Lisahally, ship-repair facilities, a large administrative complex at Magee College, 200-bed hospital at Creevagh, ammunition depot at Fincairn Glen, and accommodation quarters at Springtown Camp and at Beech Hill.

A Royal Navy presence in Derry remained through the 1950s and 1960s as they retained a base in Derry, known as HMS Sea Eagle, as an anti-submarine training school. In addition to Royal Navy ships passing through the port, warships from the navies of USA, Canada, Norway, Holland, France and Portugal would make short visits to the city when they were carrying out NATO exercises. For example, in October 1956, three destroyers of the Canadian Navy – *Huron*, *Iroquois* and *Micmac* – during a cruise to European ports, proceeded up the River Foyle to Londonderry. During exercises out from the port on 10th October, a Neptune aircraft was lost with its entire crew of nine.

It was not until 1970 that HMS Sea Eagle closed and Ebrington Barracks reverted to its original purpose as an army barracks.

Relocation to Lisahally

From the 1960s it was becoming clear that the city-centre location of the port was not sustainable for long term development. Ship size had changed so much that the Harbour Commissioners' quays were no longer suitable for larger vessels.

In the 1960s coal was still being imported in small ships, carrying between 500 and 900 tons of coal, which was discharged by steam crane. Fifty years later, ships are arriving at Lisahally from Colombia carrying 20,000 tonnes of coal. In the 1960s the work of a docker was still very physical as he had to shovel a ton of coal into a bucket which was then lifted by crane; today it is done by a grab which can lift 12 tons in one go. In 1963 there were over 500 men registered as dockers in Derry (compared to 303 in 1978 and 137 in 1986).

In the 1960s William McCorkell, the main grain importer for animal feed, received its grain from America, via Liverpool. The grain came to Liverpool in large ships from America and was then transferred to smaller ships, carrying some 6,000 tons of grain, which could berth at McCorkell's mill at Queen's Quay. Today the bigger ships, filled with grain, come directly to Lisahally from the Mississippi.

With increasing size and draft of ships and the termination of passenger services (the last passenger sailing from Derry, on the Scotch Boat, had ceased in September 1966), usage of the Abercorn Quay and Waterside Quays gradually diminished. Furthermore, the lands along the quays, on both sides of the river, were seen as desirable for the implementation of a new traffic management system for the city. Hence, Waterside Quays, in 1969, and Abercorn Quay, in 1973, were acquired from the Harbour Commissioners for road development schemes.

It wasn't, however, all gloom. In the 1960s Du Pont and a power station were developed at Maydown and their need for substantial oil imports gave the port a significant boost.

In 1976 the decision was made to permanently close the dry dock (which had opened in 1862) at Rock Quay as the demand for this facility was very slight relative to the expenditure that would be required (£151,000) to repair the dry dock gates, capstans and pumps. This area, known as Meadowbank, was now developed by the Harbour Commissioners. From the early 1980s until the move to Lisahally, Derry port was based at Meadowbank.

By 1990 it was clear that the future prosperity of Derry port was dependent upon relocation four miles downstream to a deep-water facility at Lisahally in order to provide capacity for larger vessels and opportunities to acquire more land for expansion. Derry port, right in the heart of the city, with 2,000 feet of concrete wharfs and with berths dredged to a minimum of 25 feet, could not handle modern vessels.

On 24 January 1989 one of the biggest cargo boats ever to dock at Derry, the 16,777 tons deadweight *Ziya-S*, had only three metres to spare as it passed under Foyle Bridge bearing 5,300 tonnes of grain from China. Because the ship had a low superstructure it was able to pass under the 32 metres clearance the bridge offers at high tide. On the other hand, at 146 metres in length, it was just within the limits of vessels capable of being turned in the river, and had the *Ziya-S* been fully loaded the channel would have been too shallow. This ship was only able to leave because it could take on sufficient ballast to get under the Foyle Bridge. In fact, two other large ships, which could have entered the port loaded, had to be diverted as they couldn't take on sufficient ballast to pass under the bridge. To be competitive and to prevent trade-diversion to other ports, the port of Derry must be able to handle large vessels.

On 10 July 1990 Secretary of State, Peter Brooke, announced details of a new £13 million deep-water port at Lisahally, with work commencing in October 1991. At midnight on 19 February 1993 the city-centre docks officially closed, after 139 years in operation by Londonderry Port and Harbour Commissioners. Business was now transferred to Lisahally Port with 365 metres of quayside and access through an eight-metre deep Lough Foyle channel. In relocating, the Port not only improved its competitiveness, but it also freed its former city-centre site for redevelopment.

The Future

The decision to move to Lisahally aimed to take advantage of the deeper water facilities available. The deep-water port now has the capacity to handle large vessels of over 30,000 tonnes and bulk cargoes. Furthermore, owing to its geographic location, and with facilities in place for future expansion, the port has the ability to serve the entire western seaboard of Ireland.

Outside of Ireland's three main ports in Belfast, Dublin and Cork, Derry is the leading smaller port and growing. The Harbour Commissioners employ around 40 people, with many others working in storage facilities and other industries that have grown up around the port.

Derry port has three staple maritime industries – transportation of grain, coal and timber (from Scotland and then on to County Fermanagh). Ships come from the US (with grain), Colombia (coal) and throughout Europe.

Another growth area is the cruise industry. In 1995 'Cruise Londonderry Port' was launched as "a gateway to the city of Derry itself" and as "a bridge which will carry you from the cliffs of Bloody Foreland on one coast to the Giant's Causeway on the other". On 24 July 1995 the

city attracted her first cruise ship, when the 800-berth *Southern Cross* docked at Lisahally as part of its Nordic tour.

Derry is now on the map as a cruise destination. Many companies now include Derry port in their European itineraries, bringing ships into the city centre, Lisahally and, for larger vessels, Greencastle. A new pilot station and pier at Greencastle was officially opened on 7 September 1999 to improve efficiency of Derry port's pilotage operation.

Finally, new opportunities are being investigated. Derry, at one time, was an important ship-building port and the dry dock at Strand Road remained right up to 1976. Today, some believe that business exists on the Foyle for construction of a new dry dock for the repair of shipping.