
IHAI	BULLETIN		



Greetings to all our members around the island of Ireland and abroad.

An IHAI director, Audrey Farrell, writes:

As we can now venture a little further than our own county, I will feature in this Bulletin an area I grew up in, Abbeyshrule, Co. Longford, which has been shaped by its industrial heritage link with the Royal Canal.

In 1817, the Royal Canal was opened up to Abbeyshrule and the economic life of the area was transformed. This section of the canal traverses the Ballymagavy Bog and crosses the River Inny by the imposing Whitworth Aqueduct. This magnificent five-arch aqueduct carries the canal and its associated towpaths over the River Inny, a distance of 165 feet and is named after Lord Charles Whitworth (1752 - 1825), who was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland between 1813 and 1817, at the time of the canal's construction. The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) notes it is arguably the single most impressive feature along the entire length of the Royal Canal and is the most important element of the nineteenth century engineering heritage of County Longford. Abbeyshrule also has its own harbour and slipway.



The canal's business declined by the 1880s with the arrival of the railways. By the 1950s the canal had fallen into disrepair and was officially closed in 1961. In 1974, The Royal Canal Amenity Group, was set up to protect and if possible, develop the canal. After many initiatives and campaigning for recognition of the amenity of the canal, the Royal Canal was re-opened for navigation in 2010 after extensive restoration works.

My childhood memories of the restoration include 'excavating' the dredged sediment, taken from the canal, for old bottles and artefacts (my mom still has some on-top of her kitchen presses!), and the excitement of the reinstatement of the lock gates at nearby Drapers bridge and lock.



Drapers Bridge & Lock

Following the successful reopening of the canal, further initiatives to promote recreation, heritage and education have been implemented. The opening of The Royal Canal Greenway on 24th March 2021, provides a 130km walking and cycling trail from Maynooth to Cloondra, where the Royal Canal meets the Shannon. It has proved to be a very successful amenity, especially given recent restrictions, and is now also being enjoyed by many staycationers.



Tommy Swords, Waterways Ireland, running the weed harvester along the canal

I would also mention that another mode of transport has been active in Abbeyshrule since the 1950s, which is flying from Abbeyshrule Airfield, the only airfield in the midlands of Ireland. The present airfield was established in 1977 with several flying schools operating from the site. So as you are enjoying a stroll or cycle along the canal, it not just the plentiful flying wildlife to look out for, but also the aeronautical aerobatics of the nearby flying enthusiasts overhead.

I note that the IHAI visited Abbeyshrule in May 2015, but perhaps when trips are back on the agenda, Abbeyshrule may be a stop again as part of an exploration of the industrial heritage of the Midlands.

Links to further information:

<https://royalcanal.ie/>

<https://www.waterwaysireland.org/places-to-go/royal-canal>

<https://www.buildingsofireland.ie/buildings-search/building/13402337/whitworth-aqueduct-drumanure-longford#>

<https://royalcanalrunner.com/2020/06/20/walking-on-the-royal-canal-abbeyshrule-to-ballybrannigan/>

Heritage Week 15-23 August 2021

The IHA and ESB are planning to host an event for Heritage Week 2021. Further details will be sent to members when event details are finalised. Also you should look out for other Industrial Heritage related events as part of the national programme. Dublin Port will be opening the Ports Heritage Zone No.2 Graving Dock. For the most up to date and full event details see the Heritage Week website: <https://www.heritageweek.ie/>

Advanced notice is given that the Annual General Meeting of

**The Industrial Heritage Association of Ireland is scheduled to take place at
Fancroft Mill & Gardens, Roscrea, Co.Tipperary on
Saturday 11th September 2021, commencing at 11.00a.m.
[Covid-19 restrictions will apply]**

**Following the meeting, there will be lunch, a talk about the mill and a tour of the
mill and gardens.**

**Papers for the AGM, including Agenda and Programme will be circulated to IHA
members in mid-August.**

Bygone Days 7

Can you identify the location of this invigorating walk by members following a recent AGM?



*Finally, the answer to the 'Bygone Days' memory test in the last Bulletin is
the North Beach at Arklow, the site of the former Kynoch Explosives Factory.*