

Belfast, Port of

Encyclopaedia of Ships and Shipping (1908)

Belfast, Port of. Belfast Harbour, the premier harbour of Ireland, is at high water at full and change is 10 hours and 43 minutes.

The rise of the tide varies from 9 1/2ft. springs to 7ft. 8in. neaps.

The prevailing wind is from the south-west to north-west for nine months of the year. The harbour is safe, and the approach from the sea is easy by means of a straight channel, which is efficiently lighted by oil, so that it is easily navigated by night as well as by day. The depth of water in the channel is 20 feet at average low water.

In 1613 a charter incorporating Belfast a borough empowered the "Sovereign, free burgesses, and commonalty" to construct a wharf or quay at Belfast, and in 1688 a new charter empowered the same authority to mend the quays and receive dues.

The first Act of Parliament for regulating Belfast Harbour was passed in 1729, and empowered the authorities to appoint officers, to make bye-laws, [sic] to supply ballast, and to levy tonnage dues. In 1785 an Act was passed by which the Belfast Corporation, consisting of 15 members, was constituted. This Act empowered the new corporation to license pilots, appoint a harbour-master, mark and deepen the channel, and construct docks. A further Act was passed in 1837 changing the name of the corporation to the "Corporation for Preserving and Improving the Port and Harbour of Belfast." This corporation consisted of 18 members, two of whom were ex officio. The corporation had power under this Act to borrow money, purchase private quays and docks, and construct a straight channel to deep water. The first section of this channel was opened in 1841. the second in 1849, and it was further extended and deepened in 1891.

The present harbour authority, styled the "Belfast Harbour Commissioners," was constituted by the Belfast Harbour Act of 1847. This Act gave enlarged borrowing powers for the purpose of purchasing additional property, filling up old docks, and widening and improving the quays. Authority was also given to levy tonnage and quayage dues on vessels. rates on goods, pilotage, portorage and storage, and rents. The Commissioners are also conservators of the harbour under the Belfast Port and Harbour Conservancy Act, 1852.

By the Belfast Harbour Act, 1883, the number of members was increased to twenty-two, the Lord Mayor being a member ex officio.

A person is not qualified to act as a Commissioner unless he resides within 20 miles from the harbour office, and possesses one of the following qualifications:

The Commissioners are elected by a constituency of shipowners and ratepayers. The elector must be the registered owner of at least 50 tons of a vessel or vessels belonging to and registered at Belfast, and engaged in the coasting, channel, or foreign trade, or be rated as the occupier of premises within the borough of Belfast on a net annual value

The following is a tabular statement of the docks, etc., in the harbour:

MUSGRAVE CHANNEL

WHARVES

Total Lineal Quayage, 24,840 feet.

Harbour datum-Level of No. 2 Clarendon Graving Dock Sill, and 1 ft. 8
3/4 ins. below average low water level.

Ordnance datum-(2 ft. 11 1/2 ins.) Three feet below Harbour datum.

The Commissioners are constructing another graving dock of the following
dimensions:

Length of dock or floor from the north

quoin of the inner caisson sill to the toe
of the battered wall at the south of the

Breadth of dock from toe to toe of the

Level of surface at inner and outer sills is

This graving dock will be one of the largest in the world.

The docks and basins cover an area of about 136 acres. The harbour consists of about 590 acres of land and 1,528 acres of water, or about 2,118 acres in all. There is a complete system of tramways around the harbour, and coal, etc., can be loaded direct from vessels into the railway trucks. These tramways are connected with all the railway systems of the country. Shipbuilding is encouraged, and the large shipbuilding and engineering works of Messrs. Harland and Wolff, Ltd., and Messrs. Workman, Clark and Co., Ltd., who have a world-wide reputation for the construction of the largest class of ocean-going steamers, are situated on the harbour estate.

The revenue of the harbour from all sources, excluding loans, for the

Acknowledgements

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