

Tugboats on the Fergus

by Eric Shaw

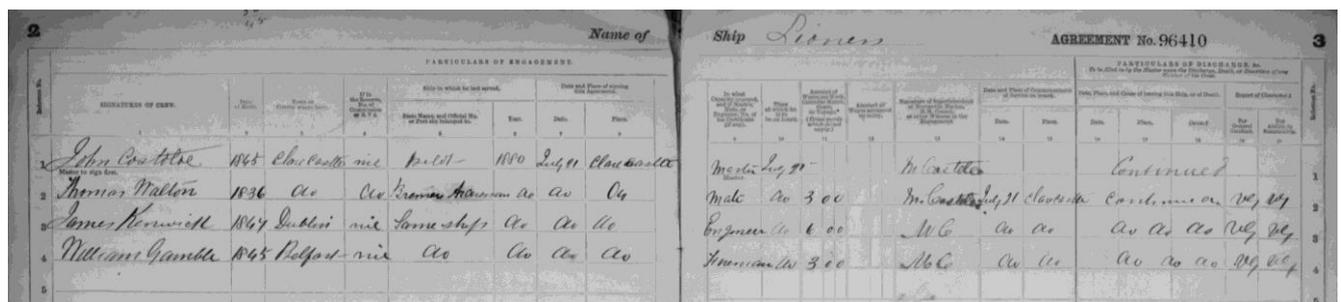
Introduction

David Costello sought help from the Parish Office in tracing his Clarecastle roots. His query was passed on to me. The Costellos were an old Clarecastle family, with links to the Port of Clare and the river Fergus. The early Church records that date from 1834 played a vital role in researching the history of the family. The Costellos lived in a house in Main Street and had a shop there, (green shopfront in photo) demolished in the 1960s. The family also lived at the end of Quay Road in what is now Willie Murphy's house. The work has enabled David to trace his ancestors back to the early 1800s in Clarecastle and he has also traced over 150 living relatives all over the world, many of whom were unaware of their links to Clare. David plans to hold a Costello gathering in Clarecastle and his dream is to bring as many Costellos as possible down the river by boat on a picnic.



The River Fergus

David's great-grandfather, John Costello, 1842-1896, was born in Clarecastle on 4 January 1842. He was the son of Michael Costello and Margaret Guinnane. John married Ann Harvey in 1870 and the couple had seven children. John was employed as a river pilot on the Fergus. In 1880, John was master of a tugboat, the *Lioness*, with a crew of three. A number



PARTICULARS OF ENGAGEMENT							AGREEMENT No. 96410							
Name of Ship							Name of Ship							
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1	John Costello	1842	Clarecastle	1842	1890	Clarecastle	1	M. Costello	Continued					
2	Thomas Walton	1836	Clare	Clare	1870	Clare	2	M. Costello	Continued					
3	James Hornumid	1844	Dublin	Same ship	Clare	Clare	3	M.C.	Continued					
4	William Gamba	1845	Polgar	Clare	Clare	Clare	4	M.C.	Continued					

of papers in relation to the *Lioness* survive in the National Library¹ and they give interesting details. The owner of the *Lioness* is shown as H.C. Drinkwater. It may be only a coincidence, but the man in charge of the massive land reclamation project at Islandavanna in the 1880s was John Drinkwater.

In the Agreement, the work of the Privateer is shown as ‘towing on the River Fergus’ⁱⁱⁱ.

NOTICE—All Masters of Ships engaged in the Home Trade only, the Crew and not to be engaged before a Superintendent of Merantile Marine, or otherwise, in the Agreement, to be entered in the Register, Book of Names or List of Ships, on the 31st day of June or 31st day of December, then this Agreement, shall be void and of no effect.

On this Agreement and Assent—The Superintendent of Merantile Marine Office, the Superintendent will issue the Certificate C.C. to enable the Ship to engage in the Home Trade within the limits prescribed by the Merchant Shipping Act within the Owner or Master to a penalty, and will lead to being in the case of the Certificate and management direction of the Ship.

N.B.—The Master's attention is specially directed to the "Instructions to Masters of Home Trade Vessels," contained on page 10.

Name of Ship Privateer	Official No. 4977A	Port of Registry Limerick	Part No. and Date of Registry 1/1871	Equipment Tonnage 27.56	Net Tonnage 33	No. of Decks 4	
REGISTERED MANAGING OWNER, or PERSON engaged under the Act or Vessel, or							
Name James Kierne	Address Blue Castle	Name John Bostell	Address Hill Blue Castle	No. of Certificates 1.8			

And the Crew agree to conduct themselves in an orderly, faithful, honest and sober manner, and to be at all times obedient in their respective duties, and to be obedient to the lawful commands of the said Master or of any Person who shall lawfully succeed him, and of their Superior Officers, in everything relating to the said Ship and the Stow and Cargo thereof, whether on board, in hoist, or on shore in consideration of which services to be duly performed, the said Master hereby agrees to pay to the said Crew on Whose the Name assist their Names respectively expressed, and to supply them with provisions according to the above Scale: And it is hereby agreed, That any Breach or non-compliance with any of the above Scale, or any part of the Ship's Cargo or Stow shall be made good to the Owner or qualified for a day which he proves unnecessary to perform, the Whose shall be without maintenance discipline sanctioned by the Board of Trade, which on period, losses and are adopted by the parties hereto, and shall be considered to be null and void in the Agreement, and it is also agreed, That if any Member of the Crew considers himself to be aggrieved by any breach of the Agreement or otherwise, he shall apply to the same to the Master or Officer in charge of the Ship in a quiet and orderly manner, who shall, however take such steps as the case may require: and it is hereby agreed,

Towing on River Fergus

In Witness whereof the said Parties have subscribed their Names on the upper Side or Sides hereof on the days against their respective Signatures mentioned.

John Bostell Master's Signature

This Obligation to be filled in by the Master at the end of the last Voyage or the half-year. To be filled in by the Superintendent.

It would appear that the tugboats were used in towing the last of the old sailing ships up and down the Fergus to speed up the work of unloading and loading these ships at the Port of Clare. A fine photograph of Limerick Docks of about 1880 or a little later, by Lawrence shows a wonderful view of the Privateer, a most fortunate find.

Information on the tugboat can be found in this record^{iv}, showing that the boat was launched in 1865, registered in Limerick in 1871 as a tug on the River Shannon and broken up in Kilrush in 1895.



TYNE TUGS AND TUG BUILDERS

A history of Tyne Tugs, their builders and owners

Home	Builders	Engineers	Owners	Tugs	About							
Select Tug	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	XYZ

Name: PRIVATEER
 Launched: 1865
 Completed: 07/1865
 Builder: T Hepple & Son, Low Walker
 Yard Number:
 Dimensions: 89grt, 28nrt, 89.0 x 18.0 x 9.0ft; (1871: 89.0 x 18.1 x 9.3ft)
 Engines: 35nhp
 Engines by:
 Propulsion: Paddle
 Construction: Wood
 Reg Number: 49771
 History:
 10/07/1865 Joseph Ostens et al, North Shields; registered at Shields
 1871 Registered at Limerick
 by 1885 Arthur Russell, Limerick
 by 1888 James Spaight, Limerick
 1895 Broken up
 Comments: Probably engined by the shipbuilder
 1871: Operated as a tug on the River Shannon
 1895: Broken up at Kilrush, Co Clare
 Thanks to Mick O' Rourke for the above details

ⁱ NLI- Shipping Agreements and crew lists, 1863-1921

ⁱⁱ NLI- Shipping Agreements and crew lists, 1863-1921

ⁱⁱⁱ NLI- Shipping Agreements and crew lists, 1863-1921

^{iv} <http://www.tynetugs.co.uk/>