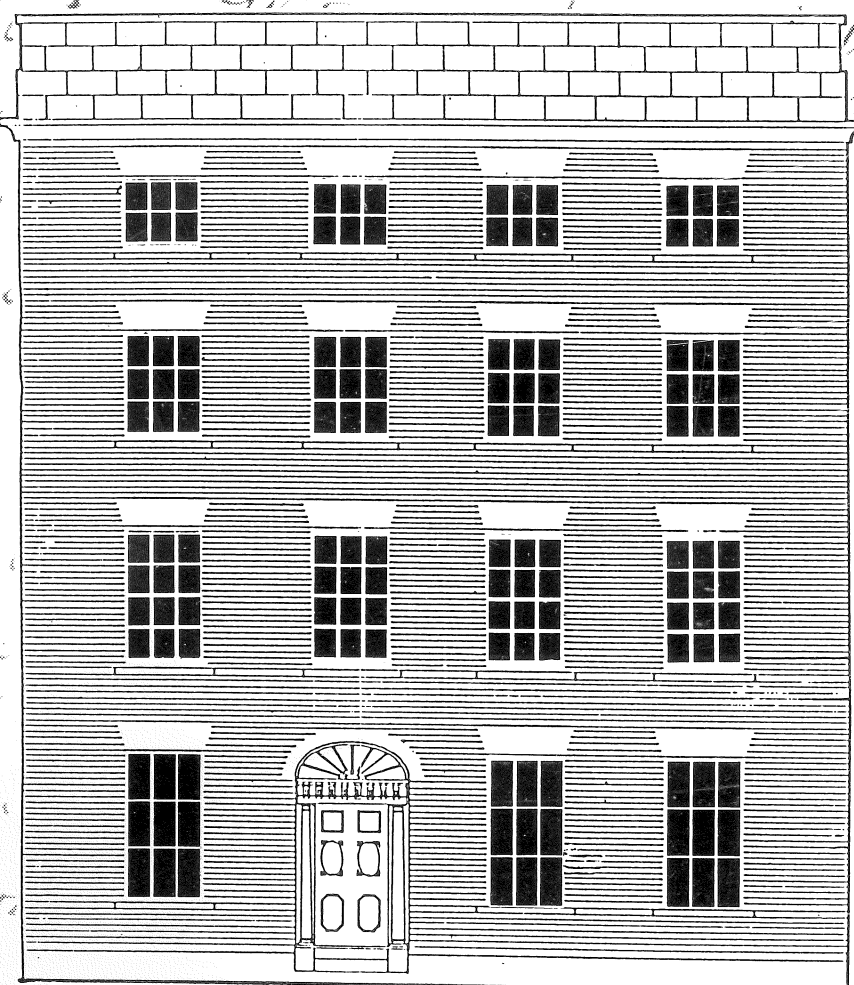


Tracy, of an Indenture dated the one thousand eight hundred and seventy
no eight hundred and seventy three and
in the City and County of London
Widow of the other part - Whereby
Witnessed that in pursuance of
HE the said William Coppin
Allan her Executors administrators
latter heraments hereditaments and premises
thirtieth day of June one thousand eight
that part of the lot or shore lately occupied
by from Henry & Samy born on the north side
row of Messieurs Shipton and Henderson of
lot or sh

CAPTAIN WILLIAM COPPIN

"NEPTUNE'S BRIGHTEST STAR"



A Foyle Civic Trust Production

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Typesetting & Design: Simone Horner
Printers: Cityprint
Front Cover: Drawing by J. J. Tracey

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© The Foyle Civic Trust 1992



Captain William Coppin
(1805 - 1895)

(Ulster Folk & Transport Museum)

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J. J. Tracey

The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum

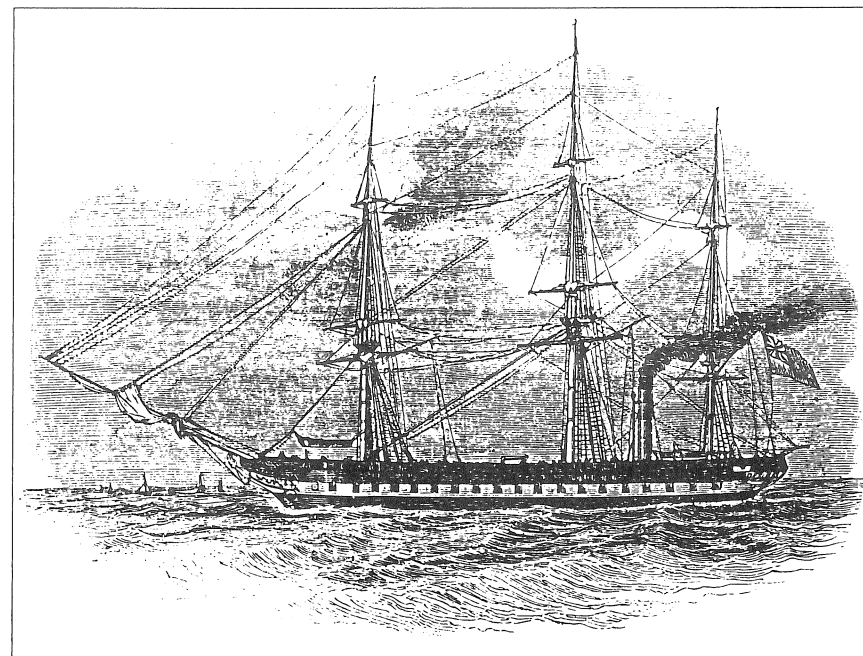
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CAPTAIN WILLIAM COPPIN

"NEPTUNE'S BRIGHTEST STAR"

BY

ANNESLEY MALLEY and MARY McLAUGHLIN



The "Great Northern"

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FOREWORD

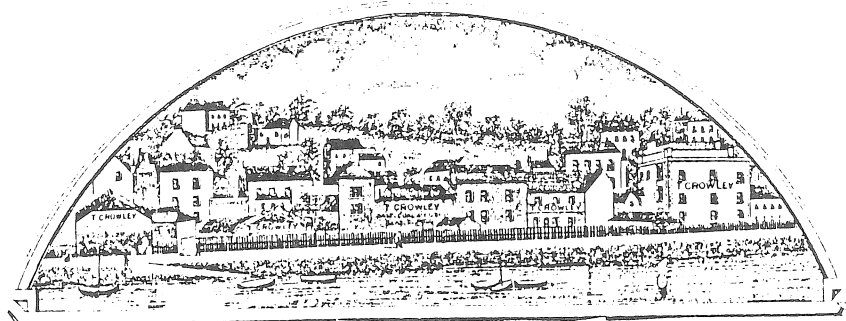
Over the last quarter of a century many changes have occurred to the built environment of the city of Derry. Many buildings of architectural quality and historical note have disappeared. Noted streets have all but been erased. Architectural detail of the georgian, victorian and edwardian periods disappear in what is almost a planned elimination. Derry is a historical city with its roots in early monasticism; its built environment dates from more recent times with the erection of its city walls and enclosing street pattern formed in 1614-18. It is essential that if the city is to retain its historical connotations it must preserve its building back-cloth of the past. No. 34 Strand Road is part of that building back-cloth. Not only a building of architectural merit but an edifice erected by one of its most enterprising and inventive citizens - William Coppin. It deserves to be retained as an architectural and historical monument to that energetic ship-builder who came first to this town in 1831.

This monograph, the first produced by The Foyle Civic Trust, draws attention to Coppin's achievements and the architectural merit of his Strand Road residence erected c 1840; which the Trust hopes will be preserved and revitalised as part of the vibrant fabric of Derry.

*J. J. Tracey (Chairman)
The Foyle Civic Trust*

CHAPTER I
HIS EARLY YEARS IN SHIPBUILDING

"The Morning Star of Derry Quay - brave Coppin is his name." (Anon.)



Kinsale County Cork



FOR ST. JOHN, N. B.,

The beautiful fast-sailing Ship

EDWARD REID,

Burthen 600 Tons,

WILLIAM COPPIN, COMMANDER,

Daily expected, from the above Port, and will sail hence early in April.

THIS fine Vessel is only six months old, was expressly built for the Passenger Trade, is a remarkably fast sailer, and will be found, on inspection, to possess accommodations fully equal to any Ship in the Port. As Passage by her, for a great number, has been engaged with Mr. DELAR, in St. John, an early application will be necessary.

JOHN BARBER & Co.

Derry, 3th March, 1831.

At No. 4, Bishop-street.

The Sentinel March 19th 1831

William Coppin was born in Kinsale, Co. Cork on the 9th October 1805. His family were well connected with the sea and possibly came from the south east of England. He did well at school particularly at mathematics. His parents wanted him to be a doctor but that was not to be and it was left to his younger brother Morney to study medicine. He was also a good swimmer and at the age of fifteen saved six customs men from drowning when their boat overturned on the river Shannon. His abiding interest in boats and the sea obviously prompted his parents, when he left school, to send him to St John, New Brunswick to work with a relative who owned the shipbuilding firm of John W. Smith. While in St John in 1826 he designed a boat which could run on the frozen rivers. It was 16 feet long and 8 feet across, had three steel runners and was cutter rigged. He claimed in his memoirs that he could reach speeds of 72 miles per hour on this craft. Many ships used in the Atlantic trade were built in Canada and William soon mastered the art of building wooden ships. His first ship was the 'Kathleen', a brigantine of 101 tons built in 1829.

He was also interested in navigation and soon went on a trip to the West Indies to study the subject. It was there that he met some merchants from Londonderry one of whom wanted a ship built in St John, William was given the job and the ship loaded with deals arrived in Derry in 1831. The ship was the 'Edward Reid' and the journey took only 19 days. The speed of the voyage brought him to the notice of other city merchants as shortly afterwards he was appointed Captain of the 'Prudence', a passenger ship of 281 tons owned by John Barber & Co. One of his first journeys was to take passengers to Philadelphia and he continued as captain until 1834 when he was appointed captain of the 'Queen Adelaide', a wooden paddle steamer of 173 tons. The ship was owned by the North West of Ireland Steam Packet Company and had been built in Glasgow in 1830. His objective was to set up a fast and regular route between Derry and Liverpool and judging by the

Steam Communication from Londonderry to Liverpool twice a-Week.



THE NORTH-WEST OF IRELAND
STEAM-PACKET CO

The superior fast-sailing Steamer

QUEEN ADELAIDE,

CAPT. WILLIAM COPPIN,
WILL SAIL WITH GOODS AND PASSENGERS
FROM DERRY, FROM LIVERPOOL,
(Sails from the Steam-Boat Quay, Foyle-street.) (Sails from George's Pier Head.)

Wednesday, 26th Mar. 8 o'clock, A. M.	Saturday, 29th Mar. 1 o'clock, P. M.
Wednesday, 2d Apr. noon	Saturday, 5th Apr. 9 o'clock, A. M.
Wednesday, 9th Apr. 7 o'clock, A. M.	Saturday, 12th Apr. 1 o'clock, P. M.
Wednesday, 16th Apr. 9 o'clock, A. M.	Saturday, 19th Apr. 7 o'clock, A. M.
Wednesday, 23d Apr. 7 o'clock, A. M.	Saturday, 26th Apr. 1 o'clock, P. M.
Wednesday, 30th Apr. 10 o'clock, A. M.	Saturday, 3d May 7 o'clock, A. M.
Wednesday, 7th May 7 o'clock, A. M.	Saturday, 10th May noon
Wednesday, 14th May 9 o'clock, A. M.	Saturday, 17th May 5 o'clock, A. M.
Wednesday, 21st May 7 o'clock, A. M.	Saturday, 24th May noon
Wednesday, 28th May 9 o'clock, A. M.	Saturday, 31st May 5 o'clock, A. M.
Wednesday, 4th June 7 o'clock, A. M.	Saturday, 7th June 11 o'clock, A. M.
Wednesday, 11th June 8 o'clock, A. M.	Saturday, 14th June 4 o'clock, P. M.
Wednesday, 18th June 6 o'clock, A. M.	Saturday, 21st June 11 o'clock, A. M.
Wednesday, 25th June 8 o'clock, A. M.	Saturday, 28th June 4 o'clock, P. M.

For Freight, &c. apply to

JOHN MUNN, Londonderry.
MOORE & M'CREIGHT, Liverpool.

Shippers will please have their Goods alongside the Vessel, one Hour at least before the time appointed for sailing.

Londonderry, March 28, 1834.

From an arrangement with the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company, Linens and other Goods are delivered in Dublin, and received here, via Liverpool, at reduced rates of Freight, Particulars to be known by applying to the Agents.

Londonderry Shipping List, and General Price Current October 4th 1834

Queen Adelaide

John Munn, 4 head Oxen and 165 Pigs.
G. Lyon, 7 casks Cement.
A. Schoales & Co., 50 sacks Oatmeal.
F. Anderson, 8 boxes Eggs.
J. Reid, 1 tierce Oysters.
Daniel Baird, 30 bales Bacon.
Edward Collum, 13 boxes Eggs.

Samuel Robinson, 9 ditto, ditto.
Edward Sproul, 3 boxes Linen.
C. Kelly, 15 boxes Eggs and 1 box Salmon.
P. Brayden, 3 boxes Eggs.
B Clarke, 9 ditto, ditto.
C. Kerr, 5 ditto, ditto.

advertisements in the local papers he achieved a fast, efficient service. This new form of propulsion interested him as he recognised its advantages provided the steam engines were well made. This new fast service to Liverpool attracted many passengers and gave William a chance to meet new people and learn about the new ideas and inventions concerning the shipping industry.

In 1835 he was appointed to the Company's new ship, the 'Robert Napier', a wooden paddle steamer of 200 tons. She had been built in Port Glasgow by Robert Napier and was used on the Derry-Liverpool run but under Captain Davenport. This ship could take 30 saloon passengers and 12 horses apart from any cargo and the cost of a passage in a saloon cabin in 1835 was ten shillings (50p) or sixpence for steerage (2 1/2 pence), William Coppin remained her captain until 1838.

The Sentinel June 27th 1835

Steam Communication to and from Liverpool twice a-week.



THE NORTH-WEST OF IRELAND STEAM-PACKET COMPANY'S powerful Steamers continue to sail to and from LIVERPOOL every WEDNESDAY and SATURDAY, calling off PORTRUSH and the GIANT'S CAUSEWAY.

THE
ROBERT NAPIER,

CAPTAIN WM. COPPIN.

FROM LONDONDERRY. FROM LIVERPOOL.
(Sails from the Steam-Boat Quay, Foyle-street.) (Sails from Clarence Dock.)

Saturday, 27th June, 9 o'clock, A. M.	Wednesday, 1st July, 1 o'clock, P. M.
Saturday, 4th July, 11 o'clock, A. M.	Wednesday, 8th July, 6 o'clock, A. M.
Saturday, 11th July, 9 o'clock, A. M.	Wednesday, 15th July, 1 o'clock, P. M.
Saturday, 18th July, 11 o'clock, A. M.	Wednesday, 22d July, 8 o'clock, A. M.
Saturday, 25th July, 8 o'clock, A. M.	Wednesday, 29th July, noon
Saturday, 1st Aug. 10 o'clock, A. M.	Wednesday, 5th Aug. 7 o'clock, A. M.
Saturday, 8th Aug. 8 o'clock, A. M.	Wednesday, 12th Aug. noon
Saturday, 15th Aug. 9 o'clock, A. M.	Wednesday, 19th Aug. 7 o'clock, A. M.
Saturday, 22d Aug. 8 o'clock, A. M.	Wednesday, 26th Aug. 11 o'clock, A. M.
Saturday, 29th Aug. 10 o'clock, A. M.	Wednesday, 3d Sept. 6 o'clock, A. M.
Saturday, 5th Sept. 8 o'clock, A. M.	Wednesday, 9th Sept. 11 o'clock, A. M.
Saturday, 12th Sept. 9 o'clock, A. M.	Wednesday, 16th Sept. 6 o'clock, A. M.
Saturday, 19th Sept. 8 o'clock, A. M.	Wednesday, 23d Sept. 11 o'clock, A. M.
Saturday, 26th Sept. 9 o'clock, A. M.	Wednesday, 30th Sept. 6 o'clock, A. M.

For Freight or Passage, AT VERY REDUCED RATES, apply to the Agents,

JOHN MUNN,
Foyle-street, Londonderry.
MOORE & M'CREIGHT,
Water-street, Liverpool.

It was on one of his trips to Liverpool that he met James Nasmyth, who was interested in the building of steam engines, steam trains, and forging metal. He invented the steam hammer which greatly assisted shipbuilders like Brunel, who later built the 'Great Britain'. James Nasmyth, who was given a knighthood, came to visit William Coppin in his shipyard and foundry.

Shipbuilding had been going on in Derry for many years but in 1830 two gentlemen, Pitt Skipton and Lieutenant Henderson set up a new yard on the Strand Road where Robert Keys & Co. subsequently had their premises. These two enterprising men built a patent slip at the cost of £4000 in order to remove ships of up to 300 tons out of the water for repair. In 1834 the yard repaired some 31 ships and in 1835 only 13 were repaired and 20 open boats. By 1836 only 9 vessels were repaired including two steam packets and 20 open boats. They also built boats and on 13th July 1835 they launched from the patent slip the 'Sir R.A. Ferguson', * named after the member of parliament for the city.

* *The Sentinel* Saturday July 18th 1835

On Monday morning, we had a novel scene here in the launch of a brig of 180 tons register, belonging to Mr. Pitt Skipton, from the Patent Slip yard. From an early hour the inhabitants were seen repairing in large groups to the yard; and at nine o'clock, when the launch took place, an immense number was congregated. At that hour, the blocks were driven away; and the brig, having received the name of the "Sir Robert A. Ferguson," glided majestically into the river. No confusion and no accident happened, which we may ascribe to the excellent previous arrangements made by Messrs. J. Henderson and Co. The brig was modelled by Mr. Hampson, formerly of this port, and his plan was carried into execution by Mr. D. M. McDonnell, (a native of our city) as foreman. Her symmetry is admirable; and she is what Long Tom Coffin would call "a perfect beauty."

William Coppin probably acquired an interest around 1837 in the shipyard, whilst captain of the 'Robert Napier' because the Hon. The Irish Society, on a Deputation in 1838, reported:

"We had great satisfaction in visiting the premises of Captain Coppin, recently erected, and opened for the manufacture of steam and general machinery, as well as the slip constructed by him for ship-building.

The spirit and enterprise manifested by Captain Coppin in this speculation, deserve the highest encomiums, and every encouragement on the part of the public, who will doubtless be ready to appreciate this most valuable addition to the trade and port of the Foyle.

The excellence of the situation, the depth of water, and the cheapness of labour in this neighbourhood, seem to render Londonderry peculiarly well adapted for the construction of steam-boats and sailing vessels."

His success as a ship builder and engineer was soon recognised by the Londonderry Corporation so much so that they decided to hold a Dinner in his honour on the 28th January 1839 in the Corporation Hall in the Diamond.

The Sentinel January 12th 1839

WILLIAM COPPIN, ESQ.

AT a PUBLIC MEETING of the Inhabitants of this City, held at Corporation-Hall, on Tuesday, the 8th instant, Sir ROBERT BATESON, Bart., Mayor of Derry, in the Chair, It was unanimously Resolved—That a Public Entertainment be given to Mr. WILLIAM COPPIN, on Monday, the 28th instant, in testimony of the high respect we entertain of his talents and private worth, and as a mark of our approbation of the spirited Establishment he has founded, so well calculated to increase the commerce and prosperity of this City.

Subscribers will please call for their tickets with the Treasurer, Mr. WILLIAM M'ARTHUR.

January 8, 1839.

The newspaper records the event and the speeches in which William Coppin was highly praised for his work in the yard and his ability to replace engines in the ships. One 'Isabella Napier' in which he had refitted engines within 24 hours. When he rose to speak he said that he was not used to public speaking and that he had sunk every shilling he had in the firm and he hoped that there would be good engines and boilers built in Derry. He sat down amongst loud cheers.

During 1839 he turned his attention to the construction of his first ship launched on November 1839. This was a barque of 450 tons, owned by Gardiner Boggs of Liverpool and named the 'City of Derry'.* She was destined for the East India and China routes. The newspaper article mentioned many of her new features (Captain Coppin's inventions) and the record speed which he attained in 1840 completing the journey from Liverpool to Madras, India in 104 days.

AN
ORIGINAL POEM
 ON THE MERITS OF
CAPTAIN COPPIN,
 AND THE
Enterprizing Spirit
He has so nobly Manifested by his Introduction
 OF
 GRAND MACHINERY,
 FOR THE
PURPOSES OF SHIP-BUILDING,
&c., &c., &c.
 BY MR. R. TAGGART.



DERRY:
 PRINTED BY WILLIAM H. BUCHANAN,
 RICHMOND-STREET.
 1839.

*HAIL! Captain Coppin, Neptune's brightest star,
 That shines with splendour and effulgence bright;
 Whose buoyant spirit, like a jolly Tar,
 Will yet burst forth with more effective might;
 Give to mechanics full employment here,
 And pay them for their labour so severe.*

*Hard, hard they toil, their work they finish well.
 With skill and judgement they their tasks pursue;
 The builders act their parts, as truth can tell,
 And still they keep the glorious end in view -
 To build steam vessels with a structure grand,
 Which may compete with those in any land.*

*The Captain's worth our citizens will prize,
 His value is esteemed surpassing great;
 He'll build fine ships, of great enormous size,
 Which shall plough Ocean's waves with pride elate,
 Sail to the East, or to Columbia's shores,
 Which nautic skill, with enterprize, explores.*

*Now may our Merchants lend their helping hand
 To raise fair DERRY'S fame, extend her sway;
 For they have wealth in plenty at command:
 Let tyhem build ships and make a grand display,
 Setting a bright example, to impart
 An emulative impulse to each heart.*

This poem was published in Captain William Coppin's honour

An extract from the poem by Mr. R. Taggart 1839

* *The Derry Journal* November 12th 1839

LAUNCH

On Saturday, was launched from the building yard of that enterprising gentleman, Mr. William Coppin, the splendid ship named the 'City of Derry' of 450 tons register. For symmetry of model, soundness of material, and style of workmanship she is not excelled in the merchant marine of the United Kingdom. Thursday has been fixed for the imposing operations, but it was unavoidably deferred till the above day. There are many things entirely new in the construction of this fine vessel. The knees which fasten her upper and lower deck beams are made of angle and plate iron, so exceedingly strong, and occupying so little space, that it is calculated that the gain of room in the hold will be worth £100 freight on a cargo to Calcutta—a matter of serious importance to the owner. The stanchions that support her hold beams are light hollow columns of cast iron, through which from the deck to the keel run maleable iron bolts, effectually preventing the decks from elevation or depression. On looking aloft you are forcibly struck with the light and tasteful appearance of her tops, which are entirely constructed of iron by an ingenious contrivance of the builder. The rigging is attached to very strong swivels, which entirely does away with the clumsy method heretofore in use of passing the shrouds round the mast head, where water constantly lodges, and speedily decomposes the rope and mast. She is built of British and African Oak, and is put in Lloyd's books in the first class, for 12 years, the longest period allowed any British ship. Her cabin accomodation, for its extent, is of the first order, and her sleeping cabins are furnished with side lights, which serve the double purpose of light and ventilation. The style of painting is very classic, and reflects great credit on the Derry artist who executed the work.

The 'City of Derry', as we stated in our last, is the property of our much esteemed fellow-citizen, Gardner Boggs, Esq., now resident in Liverpool, and is to be in the East India and China trade. It reflects much credit on the owner having her built here, affording an opportunity of developing the talent and ingenuity of Mr. Coppin in naval architecture. We understand that Mr. Boggs is so much pleased with the ship that another is to be laid down for the same trade of much larger dimensions.

The novelty of witnessing a launch collected a vast assemblage of all ranks of our fellow-citizens, and we were glad to see present so

many of the fairer sex, for whose accommodation Mr. Coppin had erected comfortable stands, commanding a good view of the ways to the river. This presence contributed not a little to enliven the scene, and, through the kindness of Major Crofton and Captain McClintock, the bands of the 83d depot and Derry staff were in attendance, whose spirit stirring music heightened the enjoyment of the spectators.

The 'City of Derry' gaily bedecked with a rainbow variety of flags and streamers, majestically moved into the tide amidst the thunders of cannon and the cheers of the delighted multitude, the ceremony of naming her having been performed by Captain Ramsay. Soon her anchor dropped, and the bands played very appropriately, "We'll gang nae mair to yon town."

It will give us much pleasure to notice many a launch from the yard of the same gentleman.

As a result of this tremendous achievement the Londonderry Corporation presented Captain Coppin with a splendid silver service suitably inscribed, at a luncheon given in his honour at the Corporation Hall in the Diamond. The following extract from *The Sentinel* describes the high esteem in which he was held.

The Sentinel November 16th 1839

PRESENTATION OF AN ADDRESS AND PLATE TO CAPTAIN COPPIN

At twelve o'clock on Saturday, the bustle of the launch over, Captain Coppin, by invitation, attended a meeting of his fellow citizens which was held in the Corporation Hall, for the purpose of complimenting him on account of his general spirit of enterprize, which has been so successful, and so conducive to the prosperity of the port, and particularly on the completion of an undertaking, the building of the 'City of Derry', which was to be deemed the introduction of a new and valuable branch of trade. The meeting was

attended by a great number of ladies, and presided over by the Mayor. On the appearance of Captain Coppin, who was greeted with much warmth, his Worship addressed him.

The Mayor then read the address, which was as follows :-

“TO WILLIAM COPPIN, ESQ.

“The undersigned, your friends and fellow-citizens of Derry, have beheld with much interest and satisfaction your extensive works in Strand-Street, in steady operation for the past three years. This spiritual undertaking has been the means of giving employment to a numerous and useful class of society, and thereby encouraged industry as well as afforded those facilities to the merchant, manufacturer, and shipowner, hitherto so much required in this place, and has tended greatly to increase our trade and benefit all classes. These considerations combined with the ingenuity, talent and perseverance you have displayed in bringing your establishment to its present efficient state, call forth our warmest acknowledgements. In testimony of which, as also to mark our estimation of your private worth and upright conduct, we request your acceptance of the accompanying service of plate. We have also to congratulate you on the launch this day of the splendid ship ‘City of Derry’ from your yard. A few years since we could not have contemplated a sight of this kind; and, we trust, your success in this undertaking will be an inducement to others to follow the example of the owner, in giving you similar orders, and prove both profitable and serviceable to the community.”

The plate, which was the accompaniment of the address, consisted of a teapot, coffeepot, sugar basin, cream’ ewer and salver, the latter of which bore the following inscription :-

“Presented to William Coppin, Esq., by his fellow-citizens of Londonderry, in testimony of the high sense which they entertain of the service he has rendered to the trade of this city, by his enterprise and public spirit; and also as a mark of their esteem and regard for his talents and private worth. November 7, 1839.”


Mr Coppin then replied to the address as follows :-

“Mr. Mayor and Gentlemen - I have to return you my warmest

thanks for the very kind and flattering manner in which you have thus spoken of me in your address. I cannot let this opportunity pass without endeavouring to make a few remarks on the object of this present highly respectable meeting. It is with a feeling of heartfelt gratitude I have been once more called on to appear before you to receive at your hands so high a token, I may say, of unmerited esteem as that which has just been presented to me. I shall deem it an honour of the greatest magnitude up to the latest hour of my existence; and there can be nothing more gratifying to me than to find that any exertion of mine to promote the trade and manufactures of Derry should be so highly appreciated, and meet the general approbation of so numerous and respectable a body of my country friends and fellow-citizens. I trust the ship I have this day launched will do credit to the city she is called after, and place ship-building in Derry on an equal footing with that of our sister country, and remunerate her spirited and enterprising owner for his implicit confidence in me, which, I trust, has been fully discharged. It has come to the lot of few to acknowledge the receipt of so handsome a compliment as that which has been just paid to me. Though a stranger nearly to you all, I have only to add that the joy I feel on this occasion is only to be surpassed by the debt of gratitude I owe to you all for the many kindnesses I have received at your hands, and for which I shall ever feel grateful, and your splendid present shall be handed down to my children as a reminiscence of the kindness and generosity you have shown this day to their father.”

Mr Coppin was loudly cheered throughout and at the close of his reply, and the meeting separated, highly delighted with the whole of the day’s proceedings.

The Sentinel November 30th 1839

	LOADING FOR LIVERPOOL, THE NEW FIRST-CLASS SHIP, CITY OF DERRY, W. E. ROBERTS, Commander,
W ILL take Goods, on moderate terms, and have quick despatch. For freight apply to R. & W. F. M'INTIRE.	
Londonderry, 23d Nov. 1839.	

The yard was not immune from disaster and during April 1840 the 'Carouge'* which belonged to William McCorkell & Co. caught fire during repairs. The fire, a careless mishap, caused by a boy dropping a live coal in some wood shavings.

* *Londonderry Standard* April 22nd 1840

DESTRUCTION OF THE SHIP CAROUGE BY FIRE

On Friday last the inhabitants of this City were witnesses of a spectacle as unusual as it was deplorable. Shortly after noon, the 'Carouge', a fine vessel of 700 tons burden, which had been upon Captain Coppin's patent slip undergoing repairs for the last two months, was discovered to be on fire, and before any effort could be made to extinguish the flames, the deck of the vessel, and her upper timbers were wrapt in a sheet of fire. In about half an hour from the commencement of the conflagration, every exertion which could be rendered available was used to save the ship; but all was in vain, and the immense mass of dry timber, pitch, and oakum continued blazing away at a fearful rate until it had burned down so low as to be easily extinguished by the engines at about 7 p.m. At the height of the conflagration, the vessel had a very magnificent though dreadful appearance. The flames rose to a great height from the hatchways, and from the interstices of the sheathing, where the oakum had burnt out: strong jets of flame, from the keel to the bulwarks picked out as it were, the lines of hull on the starboard side, which was pressed upon most by the fire, receiving its whole violence, the wind having driven it from the other side of the vessel. At three o'clock the 'Carouge' listed completely over on the starboard side with a sudden crash, and it was momentarily expected that she would come down altogether and fall to pieces, but having swayed to the side which was mostly under the influence of the fire, there was not sufficient weight to bring her down altogether, and thus she remained until all was over. The day was cloudless, and

remarkably warm for the month of April, but we take upon ourselves to declare that the sun was not sufficiently strong to "aid the progress of the devouring element" as stated by a contemporary. The 'Carouge' now lies on the slip, with about a tenth part of her timbers undestroyed, more like a gigantic mass of half consumed hurdles than the remains of a fine vessel. The whole of the iron work remains, more or less injured, and twisted into every conceivable variety of contortion. Three engines were on the spot soon after the fire commenced, viz, the City Engine, one belonging to the Royal Exchange Assurance Company, and one, the property of Mr. Cooke, which it will be observed is to be sold by auction this day, and which we would take this opportunity of recommending to the notice of agents to insurance companies. The engines were worked with great spirit and perseverance. There was a fair supply of water from the river and from the pool, called the Liffey, in the immediate neighbourhood of the vessel. A great number of new butter firkins was generously afforded by the Coopers to be used as buckets. The 'Carouge' was the property of Messrs. McCorkell & Co., of this city. She was a great favourite with the emigrants from this part of the country, and was a very fast sailer and fine model. The fire originated in consequence of the carelessness of a lad who let fall some live coals among a heap of shavings near the stern. None of the timber in the adjacent yards was injured. The depot of 83d regiment, the police, the night-watch, and many of our fellow citizens exerted themselves manfully for several hours to save the property.

After this disastrous fire Captain Coppin was anxious to encourage new business for the shipyard and foundry. An advertisement* was placed in all the local newspapers for several weeks announcing his willingness to provide an efficient service to all his customers.

STRAND FOUNDRY.

THE SUBSCRIBER begs leave to inform his Friends and the Public that he has fitted up an extensive Foundry for BRASS and IRON, and is now ready to receive orders for Castings of every description of the above Metals. He flatters himself he will be able to execute work in a style hitherto unequalled in this City. He has adopted a plan which, he hopes, will meet with the approbation of the Public—to name a day for delivery, in all cases to be strictly attended to.

WILLIAM COPPIN.

STEAM ENGINES, MARINE AND PORTABLE ;
MILLWRIGHT WORK, &c.,

*Executed in the best manner in the above Establishment, with
all the new improvements.*

Londonderry, 23d May, 1840.

His second ship was the 'Barbara',* a barque of 346 tons and was built in 1840 for Daniel Baird and later sold in 1852.

**The Sentinel* December 12th 1840

LAUNCH:- A beautiful new craft was launched from Captain Coppin's ship-building yard on Thursday morning. The vessel is a barque, of 346 tons register, coppered and copper-fastened, the property of the enterprising firm of Daniel Baird & Co., of this city. She measures 104 feet in length from stern to stern - her breadth, at midships, is 24 feet, and depth of hold 16 feet. Her build is such as to combine a very large amount of stowage, with the qualities of a fast sailer, and she is allowed, by the best judges, to be one of the handsomest models of naval architecture ever seen in this port. Notwithstanding the wetness of the morning, the launch was witnessed by some thousands of spectators, who were delighted at the easy and graceful manner in which the vessel glided into the watery element. The ceremony of baptism was performed by Master Watt.. She is named the 'Barbara, of Londonderry,' and will, we have no doubt, do credit to this port, and to her scientific builder, Mr. Coppin.

His third ship was launched on 4th September 1841 amid great scenes of jubilation and excitement as the newspaper articles of the day record. There were flags everywhere with the spectators on platforms and even on the roof of William Coppin's new house on Strand Road. The regimental band from the barracks was also on the roof with an amateur band on the ship itself. The ship was called the 'Maiden City'* and was built for the North West of Ireland Steam Packet Company. The Company gave the employees £20 for their entertainment at the Corporation Hall on the Monday following the launch.

**The Sentinel* Saturday September 11th 1841

LAUNCH OF A NEW STEAMER

A splendid steam vessel, belonging to the North-West of Ireland Union Steam Packet Company, was launched last Saturday morning at ten o'clock, from one of the building slips of Captain Coppin, in this city. The sight was by much the most imposing of its kind ever witnessed here (although, thanks to the enterprising spirit of her builder, it is one by no means unusual of late years) or probably in Ireland, and the arrangements were as perfect as they could have been in any of her Majesty's dock-yards.

With the view of gratifying the public curiosity to the fullest extent, platforms were erected in various parts of the yard, which were reserved principally for the accommodation of ladies, and the flat roof and windows of Captain Coppin's new house were likewise placed at the service of his fellow citizens.

The new ship was profusely decorated with flags and streamers, the city arms floating proudly at her bows, and numerous ensigns displayed their gay emblazonry from different points of Captain Coppin's extensive establishment. The craft on the river were also decked in their gayest trappings. The morning was fine, and long before the appointed hour every spot from which a view of the interesting spectacle could be obtained was occupied by an anxious and

delighted multitude. There could not have been less than ten thousand persons present, a very large proportion being ladies, and many of them came from distant parts of the county. The enjoyment of the assembled throng was heightened by the performance of a variety of airs by the excellent brass band of the 43d depot, which was stationed on the roof of Captain Coppin's house.

A call from the bugle was a signal for the workmen to drive home the wedges, and they plied their hammers so vigorously, and with such regularity that the preparations were completed in a few moments. A brief pause ensued, the last stay was then removed, and a noble vessel moved slowly and majestically down the ways into the watery element, amidst the roar of artillery, the crash of military music, and the loud huzzas of the enthusiastic multitude. The ceremony of christening was performed by Miss Kelso, who, with a number of ladies, stood on a platform in front of the vessel's bows; and her name - the 'Maiden City' - had no sooner been uttered than a white flag was hoisted, on which it was inscribed in large crimson letters. The dimensions of the 'Maiden City' are as follow:- Extreme length, 182 feet; breadth of beam at paddle-boxes, 27 feet 3 inches; breadth over all, 46 feet 6 inches. She is 630 tons old measurement, and will be propelled by engines of 320 horse-power.

Her engines are to be manufactured by Messrs. Saunderson & Company., of Glasgow, and may be expected here in the course of a few weeks. The boilers, and all the other parts of the machinery, are the workmanship of Captain Coppin, and are now nearly completed. The 'Maiden City' is the largest vessel which has yet been built in Derry; but she is hardly more than half the size of another vessel now on the stocks at one of Captain Coppin's yards, which is to be propelled on the Archimedean screw principle, being little inferior in size to the unfortunate President.

This is the third launch which has taken place in Captain Coppin's ship-yard within the last two years - all vessels of large dimensions and unparalleled beauty of mould and swiftness of sailing. The first of these vessels, the 'City of Derry', made the voyage from Liverpool to Bombay in the shortest space in record. The second, the "Barbara", now at Calcutta, has a reputation scarcely inferior. There is no reason to suppose that the 'Maiden City' will not prove superior to either, and as for the vessel now on the stocks, she will

at all events be remarkable as the largest vessel ever built in Ireland, and one of the largest steamers ever constructed anywhere in the world. All the facts redound highly to the credit of Captain Coppin, whose talent and perseverance, under many difficulties, are only equalled by his urbanity and amiability of disposition.

The Steam-Packet Company, with their usual liberality, presented the workmen employed on the 'Maiden City' with the sum of £20 to make merry on the occasion. With this sum they were enabled to have a splendid ball and supper in Corporation Hall on Monday night - the amusements were kept up to an early hour on Tuesday morning.

We cannot, in justice, omit to mention the very considerable addition to the enjoyment to this exhilarating scene that was afforded by that youthful and spirited society, the "Amateur Band." This body occupied the quarter-deck of the 'Maiden City', and were led by their valuable and indefatigable instructor, Mr McCloskey, whose acquirements as a musician are acknowledged to be of the highest order. They performed many favourite and difficult pieces with a degree of taste and precision of style, alike, gratifying to the admirers of music and creditable to themselves and their talented leader. On the wedge being driven, and as the vessel glided off the stocks, they played that beautiful and appropriate air, 'Maiden City', amid the loud applause of the assembled multitude. We may take this opportunity of applauding the spirit that dictated the formation of a society that promises so much pleasure and gratification to this city, as the "Amateur Band" will undoubtedly afford; and we hope that our fellow citizens will warmly patronise and encourage this laudable undertaking.

Captain Coppin had already laid the keel for his next ship in May 1841, it was 221 feet long and had engines of between 500-600 horse-power. Her claim to fame was that she was driven by the new Archimedean screw propeller* invented by Mr. F.P. Smith from England. His invention is used now on all ships and the ship being built in Derry was the first in Ireland, one of the first few ships to have the screw propeller fitted. Mr Smith visited the city and inspected the propeller on the new ship and on Saturday 23rd July 1842 the ship was launched from the patent slip amid great scenes of rejoicing as the newspaper reports of the day record. The ship was called the 'Great Northern'** and measured 220 feet long and 37 feet across and stood 26 feet in the hold; capable of holding 1300 tons of cargo and 700 tons of coal for her 370 horse-power engine, which turned the twelve foot diameter propeller. The ship weighed 1750 tons BM† had conventional masts and carried 6400 yards of canvas. As Coppin had built it for a possible government contract she had 44 gun portholes in her upper deck. The ship was also built of cross planking which was not seen before and tests on the models for three types proved that the design Coppin used was the most successful.

* Archimedes (287-212BC) created many inventions during his lifetime, including the principle of the screw, which he inserted inside a cylinder and by rotating it succeeded in raising water from a lower level to a higher level it was later adapted by F. P. Smith in the form of a four-bladed screw propeller used to propel ships through water.

† Builder's Measure.

The Londonderry Standard July 27th 1842

**** LAUNCH OF THE 'GREAT NORTHERN.'**

This immense new steamer, lately built by Captain Coppin, was launched on Saturday morning last, in the presence of at least twenty thousand spectators from all parts of the country, and of many from England and Scotland. Even so anxious were the Donegal Grand Jury, assembled at Lifford, to be present, that they obtained leave, on a special application to the Judge, for that purpose.

The weather was, in the highest degree, favourable to the full enjoyment of the magnificent sight. Every available spot of ground from which a glimpse of the beautiful vessel could be had was occupied, as well as all the house-roofs, and vessels in the river. We counted between sixty and eighty boats lying to, at safe distance from the vessel, filled with ladies and their companions. Flags and streamers floated in all directions, and bands of military music greatly enlivened the scene. At eight o'clock the workmens' hammers were first heard - the wedges were driven - and the last obstruction was removed at a quarter to nine, when Miss Reid, eldest daughter of the late Rev. Edward Reid, of Ramelton, and niece to Joseph Kelso Esq., broke the bottle at her bow - the flag with vessel's name "GREAT NORTHERN" was hoisted - and the mountain of wood majestically glided into the water. Immediately a salvo was fired from various pieces of cannon stationed on the wharfs, and the utmost excitement and congratulation succeeded. No accident of any kind occurred. The 'Great Northern' is the largest vessel ever built in this country. Her dimensions are, 220 feet in length; between perpendiculars, 37 feet beam; and 26 feet deep in the hold; burthen, 1750 tons, B.M., she is to be full rigged as a 50-gun frigate, the length of the main mast to be 90 feet, and 33 inches diameter, main-yard 79 feet, and 22 1/2 inches diameter in the slings, fore-mast 83 feet, and mizen-mast 76 feet; she was able to spread 6,400 yards of canvas. There are three decks, the upper one to be left entirely clear for action, and to be pierced for 44 guns; the windlass and capstan gear will be placed 'twixt decks. She is to be propelled

by Smith's Archimedean Screw, which will be 12 feet diameter, and 14 feet pitch, but the length will be only 7 feet; it is to make 88 revolutions per minute; the gearing consists of a cog-wheel, 20 feet diameter, working into a smaller wheel, of 5 feet diameter, upon whose axis is the shaft of the screw. The engine power consists of two cylinders, 68 inches in diameter, 4 feet 6 inch stroke, and to make 22 strokes per minute; nominal power about 370 horses; there are to be 4 air-pumps, 19 inches diameter, and 4 feet 6 inch stroke, and cylindrical boilers. The engines are to be placed close abaft the vessel, leaving the mid ships clear for passengers. The vessels already fitted with Mr. F. P. Smith's Screw Propeller have given the utmost satisfaction, especially the 'Archimedes', the first to which the instrument was attached, and vessel of 237 tons, 70 horse power. Besides this vessel and the 'Great Northern' three have been already built, with the Screw Propeller - 'The Princess Royal', 101 tons, 45 horse power, of Brighton; the 'Bee', of Portsmouth, 30 tons, 10 horse power; the 'Beddington', of South Shields, 270 tons, 60 horse power; 'Novelty', London, 300 tons, 25 horse power. They are now building, the 'Great Britain', 3600 tons, 1,000 horse power (!) the 'Rattler', 800 tons, 200 horse power; two packets for the French Post Office service, 120 horse power, and a French War Steamer, 'L' Orient', of 350 horse power.

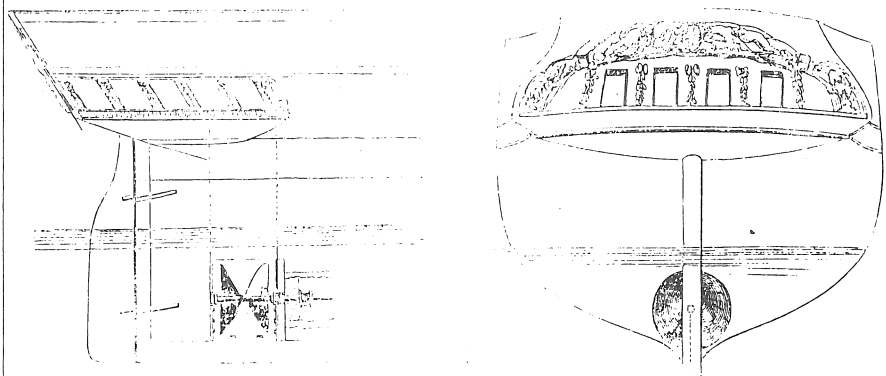
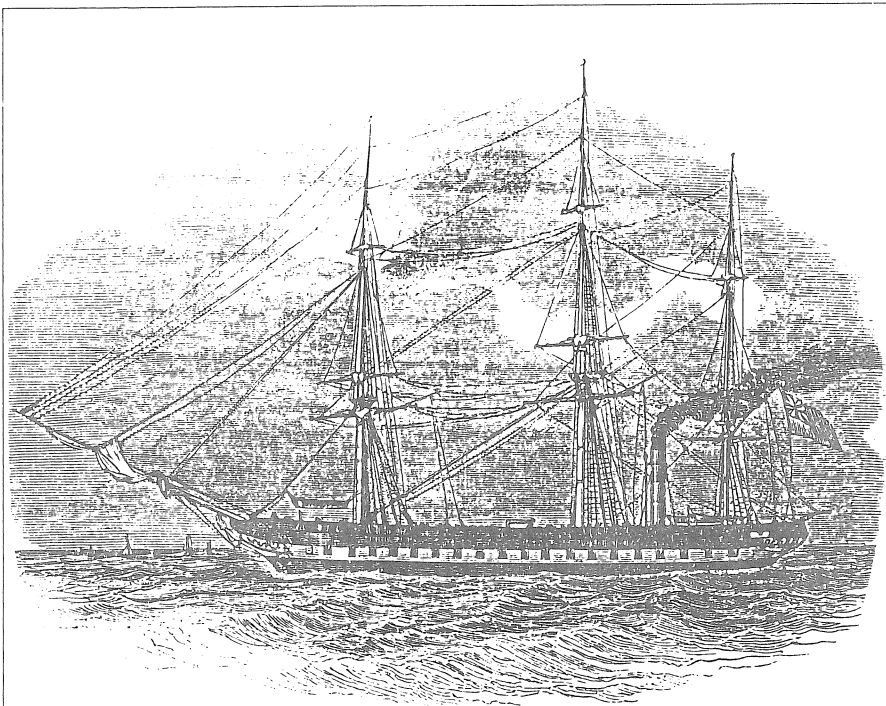
In the evening we were present during the trial of three different models, designed to illustrate the various methods of fastening. The first trial was with a model of the usual method, viz., horizontal planking and ceiling, which, on the application of 350 lbs. weight to the centre, "deflected" fifteen-sixteenths of an inch. The second trial was with a model ceiled with a single diagonal planking, six inches thick, which deflected one-fourth of an inch with 700 lbs. weight. The third trial was with a model ceiled diagonally from the gunwale to the bilge, with three-inch planks, crossing each other at right angles, which deflected only nine-sixteenths of an inch with 1960 lbs. weight! This last is Captain Coppin's improvement, on which the 'Great Northern' has been built. A confirmation of its superiority was seen in the result of the late launch, for it was found that the alteration in the "sheer" of this immense ship did not exceed three-fourths of an inch - a circumstance unprecedented in the annals of naval architecture, as we learn from the highest authority.

When the ship was fitted out it sailed for London as recorded in one of the local newspapers:

The Sentinel December 31st 1842

THE 'GREAT NORTHERN':- The 'Great Northern' proceeded from Moville bay, (as we previously mentioned,) where she had been lying after she left Derry, on Saturday, the 17th inst., for England. She encountered stormy winds, and foggy weather during the whole of the voyage, and made the Isle of Wight on the afternoon of Thursday, the 22nd. In consequence of no pilot coming on board, she did not reach Cowes until Friday morning. During the last two days she made fully two-thirds of her voyage, and in speed far exceeded the expectations of her talented builder. Steam-power was only used for about eighteen hours. Since she has been in Cowes, she has been visited by crowds of people, including many distinguished personages and nautical gentlemen, all of whom vied with each other in expressions of admiration of her proportions, symmetry, and strength, and could scarcely believe that Ireland, much less the small port of Derry, could produce such a noble vessel.

The ship arrived on 10th January 1843 and berthed at the East India Inner Dock amid great scenes of amazement which prompted the Illustrated London News of 14th January 1843 to publicise the event showing an engraving of the ship and its propeller.



Sections of The Great Northern Steamer

THE 'GREAT NORTHERN' STEAMER

This extraordinary steamer, now in the East India Docks, is the object of general astonishment. Her amazing length, breadth, and depth exceed, we believe, the dimensions of any steam-vessel ever in existence. She was built at Londonderry by Captain Coppin, and is certainly a remarkable monument of marine architecture. She is propelled by the Archimedean screw, which works on each side the rudder, and is turned by an engine of 360-horse power. No paddles are required, and, but for the funnel which is seen amidships, she might pass a square-rigged ship of the larger class. She has three masts, with lower and upper yards, and is rigged in every respect like a frigate or sloop of war. We were favoured by one of her officers with the following dimensions :- Length from the taffrail to the stem, 247 feet; breadth of beam, 37 feet; depth from the gangway to the keel, 50 feet. On her passage from Londonderry she ran, upon the average, $13\frac{1}{4}$ knots without the engine, which can be spared or used, as circumstances may require. When it was necessary to put on the engine she ran nine knots, head to wind. The space for stowage is most capacious. Standing aft, and looking forward on the orlop deck, the distance seems immense, exceeding, indeed, the length of the largest first-rate in the navy. With all this room, there is at present a want of arrangement for cabins; but we understand she will be fitted up in the best style. With respect to her external appearance, the vessel seems a huge monster steamer, but pleasing in her mould and trim. A beautiful female figure is placed over the cut-water, and her stern richly decorated with carving, gold, and colour. In consequence of the heavy masts, yards, and rigging, she will require an immense quantity of ballast. At present it is not decided whether she is to run to and from Ireland, or be employed on any other service. During the week many persons entered the dockyard to gaze at this really wonderful object.

The following extracts from the ship's log during her recent trip from Londonderry to England clearly show that her sailing qualities are in no way impeded by the screw propeller, while the advantages of the latter adjunct are of the most important nature during the prevalence of adverse winds, &c. :-

Sunday, Dec. 25. - 8.15 a.m. Weighed anchor in Cowes roads and put the ship on her course for London under steam and canvas. 9.50 a.m. Massey's log put overboard. Revolutions of engines per minute, 18. Rate per common log, 10 knots; Massey's log, 10 $\frac{1}{4}$

ditto. 11.50 a.m. Stopped engines abreast of the Owez light-ship, and disconnected the screw. Ship put on her course up channel with sails only. Noon. Fresh breezes and cloudy. 2.30 p.m. Abreast of Beachy Head. Hove to for a pilot, but could not procure one. Ship brought to her course. 5.5 p.m. Abreast of Dungeness. Wind squally, with rain. 5.15 p.m. Massey's log hauled in. Note. The distance run from the Owez light-ship by chart, 66 nautical miles in 5 hours 2 minutes. Hove to and fired guns for a pilot. 5.50 p.m. Took a pilot on board. Wind increasing. 7.50 p.m. Anchored in the Downs in 8 fathom water.

Monday, Dec. 26. - 4 a.m. The wind blowing a gale down royal and top-gallant yards. 8.50 a.m. Changed pilots. Noon. Gale increasing and a great number of ships running for the Downs. Mid-night. Weather about the same.

Tuesday, Dec. 27. - 9 a.m. Gale suddenly moderated. Steam raised to assist in getting the anchor. 11.40 a.m. Got under weight and proceeded through the Downs setting fore and aft sails. 2.30 p.m. Abreast of Margate. Took in all sail, wind being directly a-head. 5.17. p.m. Abreast of the Nore Light. 6 p.m. Anchored nearly opposite the Chapman beacon.

Wednesday, Dec. 28. - 7 a.m. Got under weight, steaming only. Wind a-head. 9.5 a.m. Stopped off Gravesend and changed pilots. 9.17 a.m. Started for London against ebb tide and light wind. 12 a.m. Abreast of Woolwich. 12.20 p.m. Arrived at Blackwall and moored ship, having stopped 6 minutes in Long Reach to adjust machinery, thus accomplishing the run from Gravesend to Blackwall (21 miles) in 2 hours 57 minutes, the mean rate of the tide being taken at 2 miles per hour.

Thursday, Dec. 29. - Ship steamed into the East India Import Dock.

The experiments hitherto made with vessels fitted on Mr F.P. Smith's principle are altogether satisfactory, both as to speed, action, and total absence of the swell caused by paddles, while the protection afforded by the depth at which the propelling screw is worked promises to be of the highest importance of war-steamers. This screw is placed in a rectangular opening at the rear of the vessel, and is put in motion by the engine's action on a combination of wheels. The gearing consists of a cog-wheel 20 feet in diameter, working into a smaller one of 5 feet diameter, the axle of which is on the same shaft with that of the screw. The screw makes 64 to 66 revolutions per minute.

The following is a list of the vessels already fitted with the Archimedean screw :-

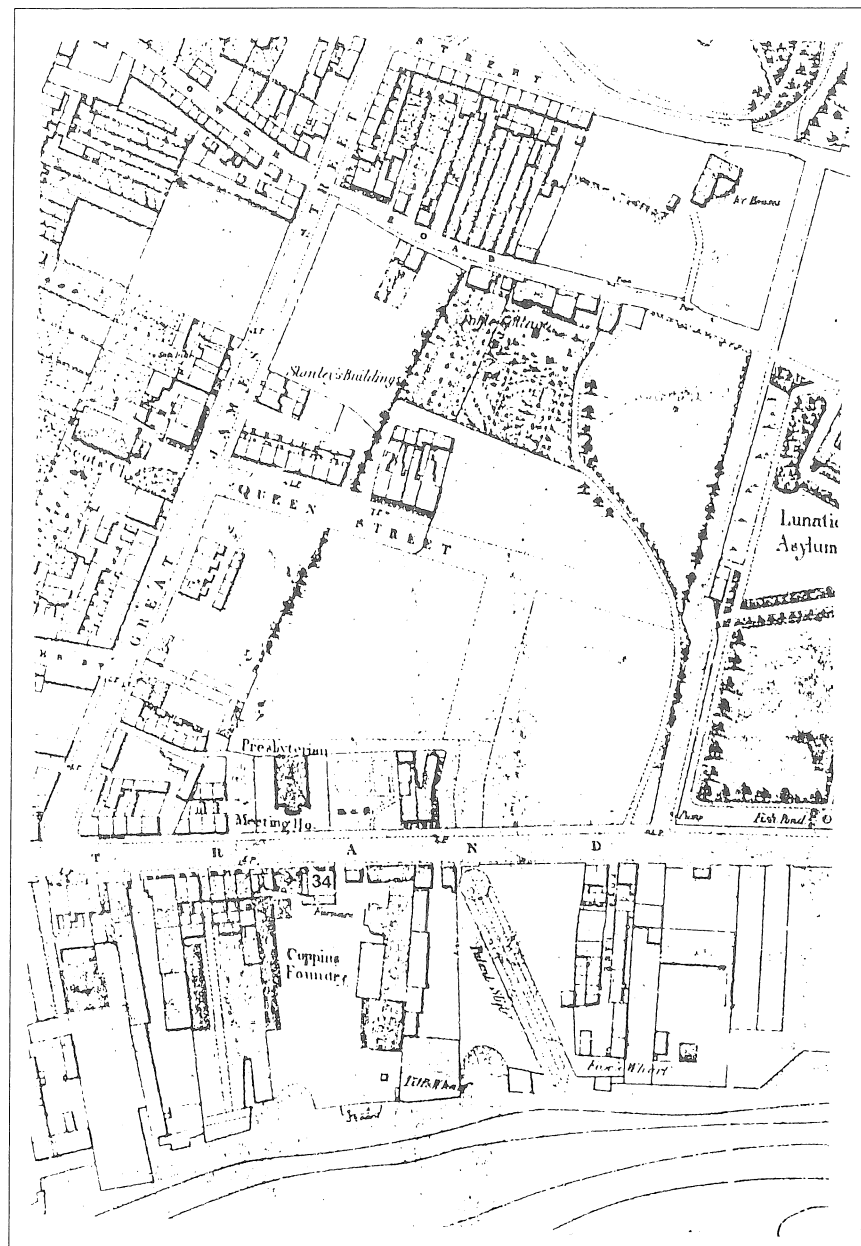
The Archimedes,	237 tons,	70 horse power.	
The Princess Royal,	101 tons,	45 horse power.	
The Rattler	800 tons,	200 horse power.	Government ship.
The Bee	30 tons,	10 horse power.	ditto.
The Beddington	270 tons,	60 horse power.	
The Novelty	300 tons,	25 horse power.	
The Great Britian	3600 tons,	1000 horse power.	Will be launched in March next.

Two Post-office packets for the French Government; and L' Orient, a war-steamer, for the French Government.

The ship lay in the London docks for some time waiting for the contract that never materialised, and eventually had to be sold to pay the harbour dues. A disappointing end for a revolutionary ship hitherto greatly admired and praised. At least the idea of the screw propeller did not die and Coppin's remark at its launch came true when he said "There goes the propeller of the future".

Despite this severe setback Coppin returned to Derry and undeterred began building another ship. His workforce was in excess of 500 men and they needed to be employed. A second large ship was scheduled for launching in 1846 but a disastrous fire destroyed it on the slip. Misfortune appeared to haunt him yet he never gave way to despondency as records show that he embarked upon the construction of several smaller ships namely: the schooner *Ann Coppin*; *PSt Lady Franklin*; *PS Lion*, but his interests were now directed to ship salvage work and during his subsequent life he raised over 140 ships.

† Paddle Steamer



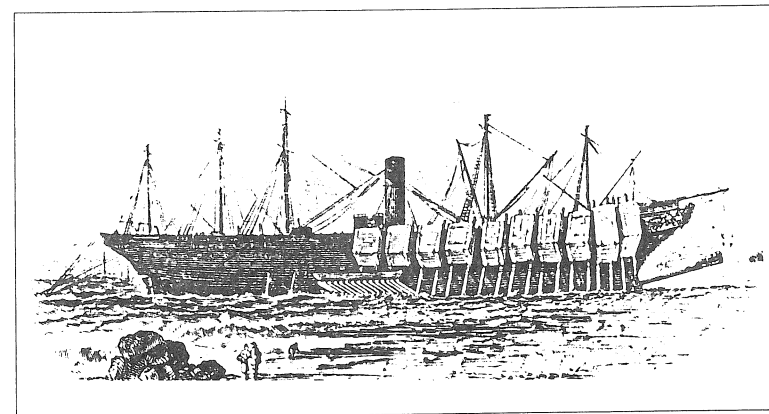
Map of Londonderry showing Coppin's Foundry 1848/49

CHAPTER II THE ERA OF SALVAGE AND INVENTION

*"And here comes Coppin with his noble head
Skilled to command, or steer, or cast the lead,
Or, by his art, to raise from coral caves
A gallant ship once more to ride the waves".*

(Anon.)

One of the first ships salvaged was the 'Rambler' which ran on to 'The Maidens' near Larne. Coppin purchased the salvage rights for a small sum and proceeded to use his own floating salvage vessels to lift the engines. This he did and within a few weeks had not only raised the engines, but the boilers as well. After salvaging the 'Rambler' in September his expertise was noted by the owners of the 'Great Britain', built by Brunel and launched in July of 1843, which went aground in Dundrum Bay, Co. Down. In September 1846, according to the newspaper article of 11th December of that year, William Coppin was given the contract of refloating her. The task must have been too great for Coppin as James Bremner of Scotland refloated her in August 1847.



The 'Great Britain' being refloated at Dundrum Bay, County Down

In the 1850s William Coppin continued to build small ships and run his foundry. He was elected a town councillor and became involved with some of the corporation projects such as the city's water supply. Being an innovative man he turned his attention to novel ways of salvaging ships and new inventions. One of his inventions The Steam Ram described by him in a letter to the *Liverpool Albion* of February 1st 1853 was designed for war ships. It was rejected by the Admiralty who later made use of the design on the naval ship 'The Iron Duke'. In 1877 'The Iron Duke' collided with 'The Vanguard' (which wasn't fitted with the Steam Ram) in Dublin Bay; 'The Vanguard' sank and subsequently Captain Coppin attempted to salvage it. Ironically that he should be involved in this exercise especially as his design for the Steam Ram had been rejected originally. The reference below gives much greater detail about the invention.

The Liverpool Albion April 14th 1862

IRON-PLATED STEAM RAMS - CAPTAIN COPPIN - *The remark is a trite one which declares that in very numerous instances inventions of the highest value, and of the utmost importance, are forgotten and lost sight of soon after their first promulgation if nothing occurs to enforce on the public mind the necessity of their immediate adoption. In such case, also, it almost invariably happens, that after years have elapsed some emergency arises which at once directs attention, in one way or another, towards the past invention which would have met the now existing difficulty. When this occurs the resuscitated scheme is brought forward almost simultaneously by different claimants for the honour of the suggestion, while the original propounder is entirely ignored. A peculiarly apt illustration of this may be found in connection with the invention of iron-plated*

steam-rams. In respect to priority in such a claim, Liverpool is entitled to a foremost place. So far as we are at present in possession of the facts, the first suggestion of steam-rams for the purposes of aggressive war was made in the columns of The Albion, by Mr William Coppin, engineer and shipbuilder, in Londonderry, who, in the beginning of February, 1853, recommended the construction of a vessel of 1,000 tons, builders' measurement, so built and engined as to secure a speed of thirteen or fourteen knots an hour. The fore part of the vessel to be made solid for about fifty feet, and no part to be less in thickness, above light water line, than five feet, solid, and caulked inside and out. The stern and bow to be covered by a shield of malleable iron, containing in the centre a circular punch or cutter, capable of punching a piece out of the largest of our line-of-battle ships, of twelve square feet, at any distance below the surface of the water to seven feet, as opportunity may require. The inventor of this ram proceeds with the description of elaborate details for the construction and management of his invulnerable steam war-ship, including suggestions for increasing or diminishing her specific gravity, so as to make her have a greater or less draft of water. The cost of such a vessel as he suggests, he estimates at about £45,000.

A successful salvage operation using corks was the method employed to raise the 'Iowa', which sank with a cargo of coal in 1865 off Cherbourg. The ship had settled on her side and the coal shifted to cover the portholes. Pumping proved ineffective as the water came in through the broken glass, Coppin decided to put different sized corks on the end of a rope attached to an iron rod which then was forced through the twenty feet of coal until a cork of suitable size jammed in the porthole. This he repeated for forty two portholes and when the ship was sealed he was able to pump the water out and refloat her. Another ship refloated by unusual means was the 'Antilles' which collided with another ship and sank in the river Clyde in 1871 with a cargo of grain, causing a blockage on the river. The owners were prepared to blow up the ship but gave Captain Coppin the chance to salvage it. He called for one thousand new corn bags and one hundred tons of blue clay which caused much derision! He proceeded to block her stern with the bags of clay and when completed he was able to pump out the water and refloat her. An appreciative letter from the General Manager of the Trustees of the Clyde Navigation dated March 11th 1871 says everything:-

*Clyde Navigation,
General Manager's Office,
Glasgow,
March 11, 1871.*

"Dear Sir, -

I have been authorised by the Trustees of the Clyde Navigation to express to you their high sense of the very able and successful manner in which you directed and superintended the raising of the ship Antilles, which had sunk in the river Clyde in January last, with a full cargo of grain and flour, the position of the ship being right athwart the river, and wholly under water, except for the comparatively short time at ebb tide. The inclemency of the weather at the time, and other causes, rendered the lifting of the vessel a very difficult and responsible undertaking, but by your persevering energy the work was accomplished in a manner highly creditable to your ability and skill in such matters.

"To this I am happy to add my own testimony, having had frequent opportunities during the operation of witnessing your skilful proceedings, and being present at the moment when success was achieved. We do not wish ever to require your services again in the same capacity, but if we should unfortunately do so, I am sure we could turn to you in the greatest confidence that we were securing the assistance of one who thoroughly knows the right course in such emergencies.

*- I am, dear sir,
Yours truly,
"(Signed) Geo. Keith, "
(General Manager).*

Captain Coppin moved to 14 Sackville Street in 1873 where he continued designing inventions well into his eighties. In 1880 he designed the large triple-hulled iron ship called the 'Tripod Express', which was commissioned for the Atlantic trade. A unique feature of this ship was the position of the engines which were mounted in the middle hull.

The following letters were sent to Coppin expressing an interest in his invention:

66 Old Broad Street,
London.
12th July 1880.

My dear Sir Daniel,

This will introduce you to Captain Coppin, who has had the experience of lifting one hundred wrecks.

He has today shown me the model of a new design for a steamer and I would not trouble you with any introduction were I not very much impressed with the idea that this the first design I have ever seen which appeared to me the best calculated to establish between Milford Haven and New York a line of ocean ferry boats.

The ordinary steamers, in my opinion, will not easily make Milford Haven a great success.

If this new model is as successful in its results as I think it should be, we are on the eve of a great change in naval architecture, as I have this impression on my mind. I think it right to put Captain Coppin in the way of seeing you and you might think it worth while putting it before the gentleman interested in Milford Haven.

As the scheme will involve arrangements with your Great Western line, I think it altogether worth considering upon its own merits.

I have no personal object in view and no time to do anything with it, but I am captivated with its practicability and advantages which I think will be developed.

Yours very truly

*James Anderson
(Formerly Commander of The Great Eastern)*

*Sir Daniel Gooch
Chairman,
Great Western Railway.*

*The Ebbitt House,
Washington.
15th March 1882.*

Mr William Coppin,

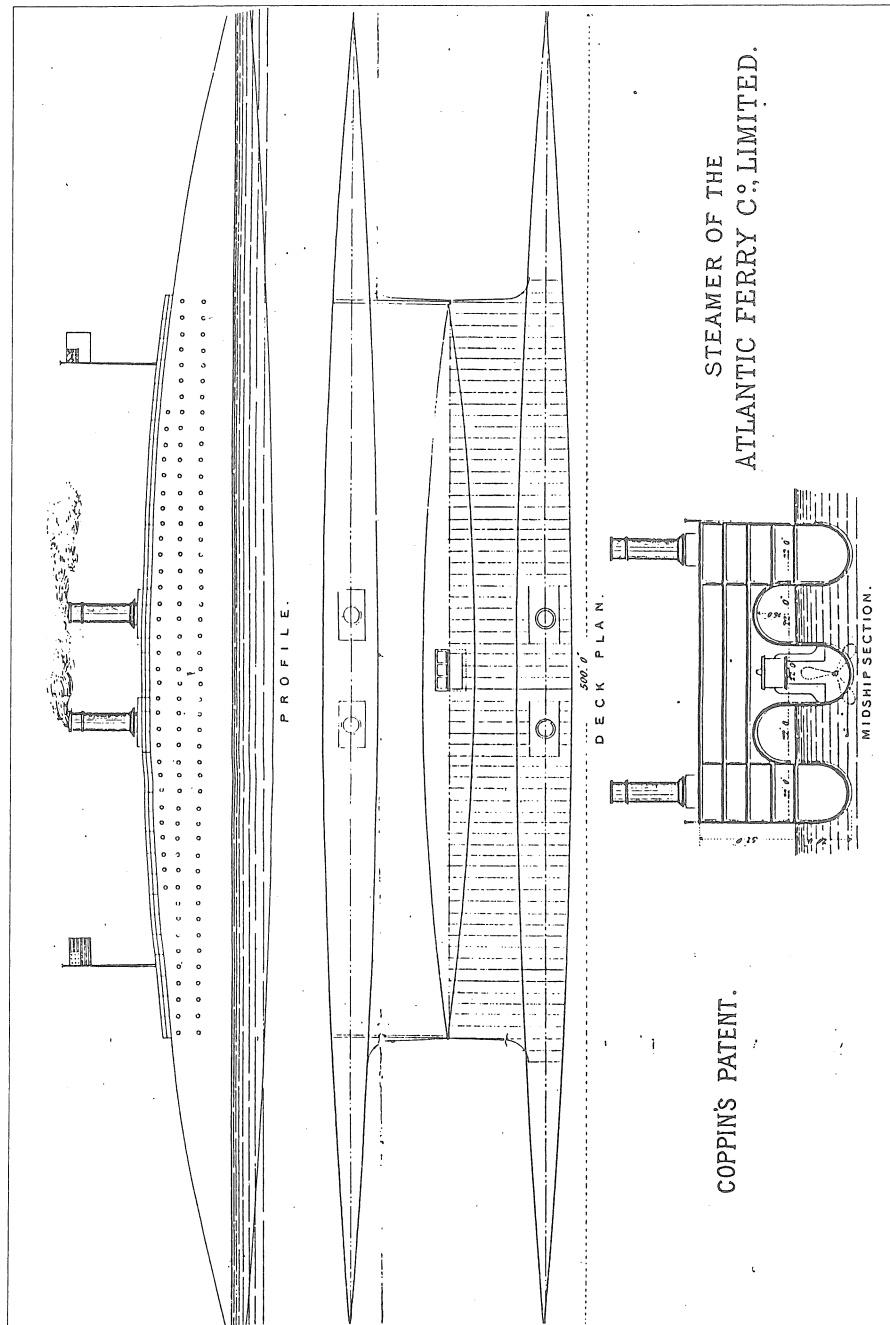
Dear Sir,

I have carefully examined the drawings and model of your triple steamship and believe that you will obtain a much higher speed than it is possible to get by a single vessel and that the design reduces the rolling and pitching motion to the lowest minimum, secures the greatest amount of safety and comfort for passengers and cannot fail to be a complete success.

And as regards a ship for war purposes, I believe it will have no rival. It appears to me perfect, possessing all the necessary powers that will be required to complete the war ship of the future - namely, the highest speed, with perfect protection for engines, boilers, rudders and propellers, with a large amount of gun platforms to carry the heaviest guns, without the necessity of armour plating; and from the position of her propellers the vessel will be made much more under the control of steering and manouvering than any twin screw single ships and perform a complete circle in one half the time without moving ahead or astern - turn on her centre. I have a high opinion of this new type of war ship and consider it well worth a trial on its own merits.

Yours truly,

*Charles S. Beggs
Rear Admiral U.S.N.*



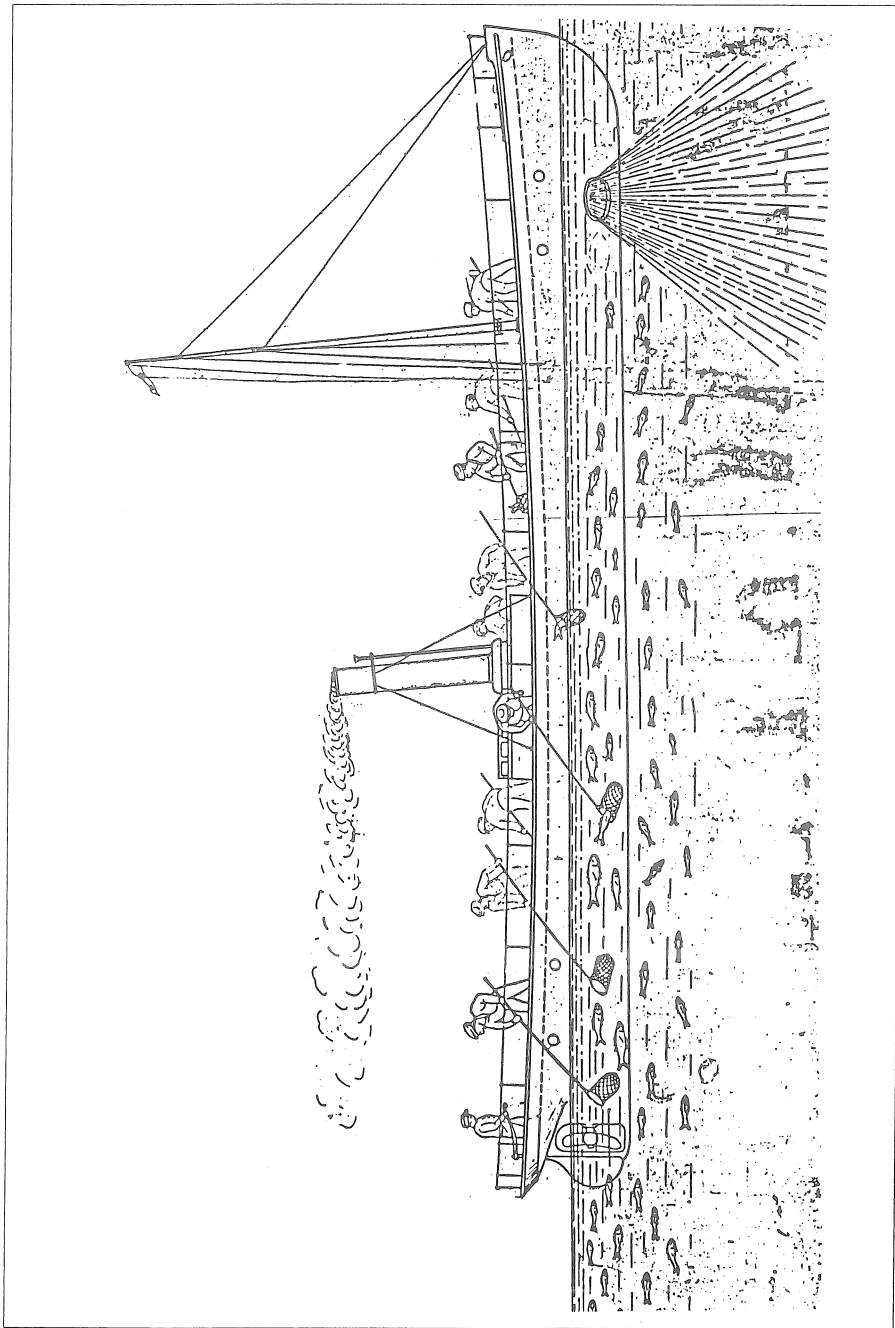
The 'Tripod' Express

In 1886 William Coppin invented the electric light fish-catching apparatus. This consisted of two strong lights powered by a dynamo inserted behind glass on the prow of a boat. The lights were below water level and at night would attract fish. The fishermen caught them more easily this way. An experiment using his invention showed that it worked. The invention was patented in 1886 and the drawing accompanying the patent is reproduced here.

During his lifetime William Coppin invented many pieces of machinery including new types of ships, salvage vessels, dredging equipment, steam engines, diving equipment and even steam railway engines. A model steam railway engine, attributed to William Coppin, is exhibited in the Foyle Valley Railway Museum.

The following list of patents were lodge by William Coppin between 1857 and 1886:—

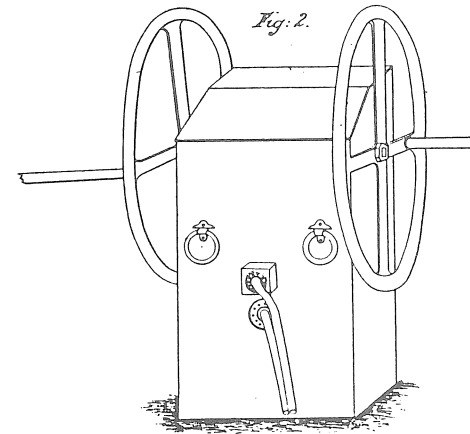
<u>Number of Patent</u>	<u>Year Patented</u>	<u>Title</u>
1806	1857	Preservation of timber
1531	1859	Raising stranded vessels
39	1863	Separating fibre in flax
1115	1864	As above
402	1874	Construction of ships
1294	1876	Diving helmets
2778	1877	Winding wire rope
2260	1879	Raising vessels
2388	1879	Construction of ships
2996	1881	Fishing boats and apparatus



Electric Fish-catching Apparatus Patented 1886

A.D. 1876. MARCH 25. N^o 1294.
COPPIN'S SPECIFICATION.

(1 SHEET)

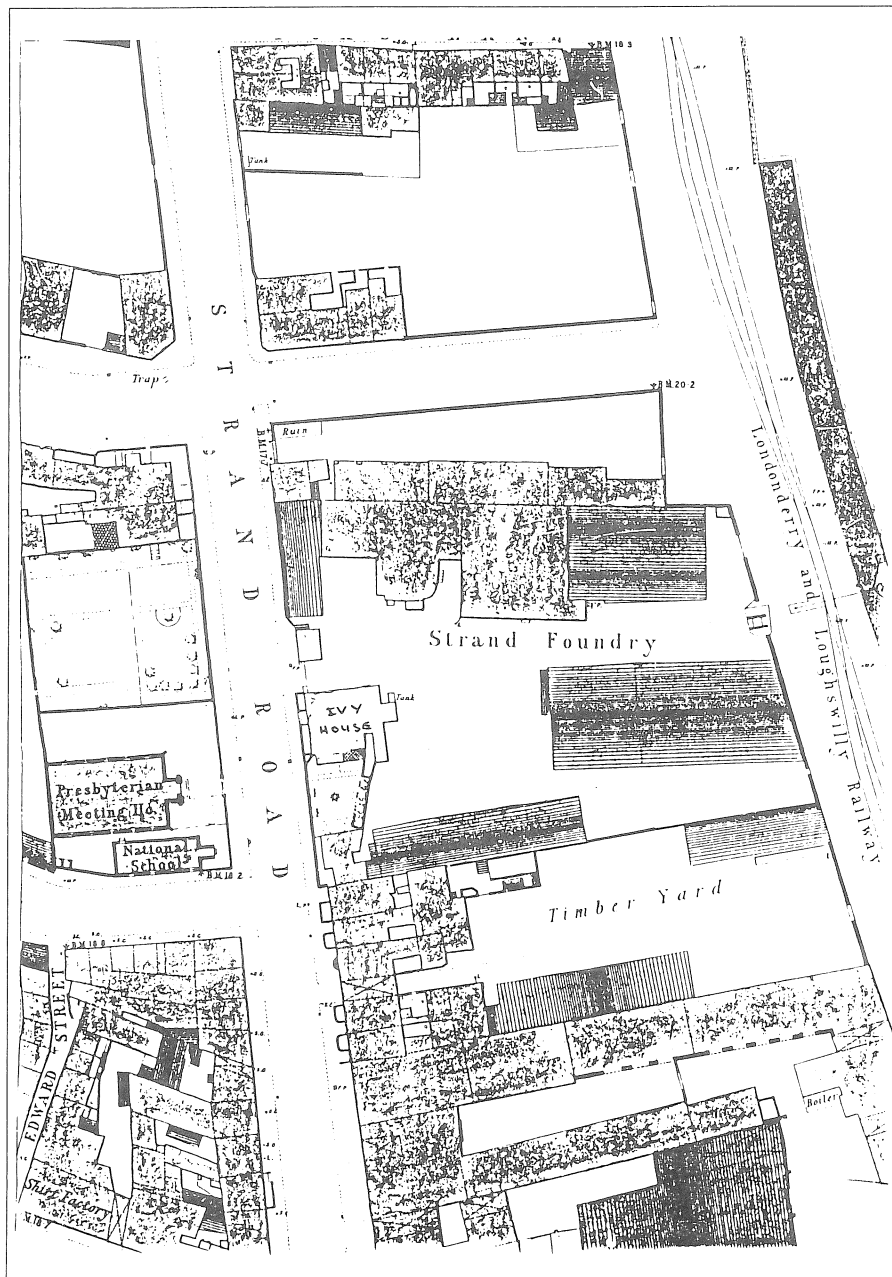


The filed drawing is not colored.

LONDON: Printed by GEORGE EDWARD EYRE and WILLIAM SPOTTISWOODE,
Printers to the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, 1876.

Maly & Sons, Photo-Litho.

William Coppin's Patent Drawing of 1876 for
Diving Helmets, Dress and Apparatus



Ordnance Survey Map 1873

CHAPTER III

"Your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams."
(The Acts of the Apostles)

WILLIAM COPPIN AND HIS FAMILY

William Coppin and his wife Dora had six children, two boys and four girls. The eldest boy, John Wilkins Coppin attended Foyle College, Trinity College, Dublin; he died in London in 1901. His second son was possibly William Junior as some of the patent drawings etc. were recorded under that title. Of his daughters, two died young, Louisa died on the 27th May 1849 aged three years and eight months and Harriet at the age of one year six months on 11th April 1859. The other daughters, Ann and one referred to as "Miss D"., possibly Dora after his wife, lived at "Ravenscliffe", Moville around the first World War. His wife Dora died on the 11th September 1866 and is buried in St. Augustine's graveyard in the city.

Underneath are the remains of
HARRIET COPPIN
 who departed this life
 on the 11th April 1859
 aged 1 year and 6 months
 Also her sister **LOUISA**
 who departed this life
 on the 27th May 1849
 aged 3 years and 8 months.
 The beloved children of
WILLIAM COPPIN
 of this city

It was his daughter Louisa who became famous after her death. The account of this remarkable story is recorded in the book written by the Reverend J. Henry Skewes entitled 'Sir John Franklin - A Revelation', published 1889. In 1849 Captain Coppin was away on business during the month of October in his capacity as a Board of Trade inspector when his family experienced an unusual occurrence, a 'bluish ball' of light appeared in one room of the house. The children were not frightened as they said it was 'Weesy', Louisa's nickname, who had died some months before. Mrs. Coppin's sister who was present asked this strange ball of light about the whereabouts of the explorer Sir John Franklin and his expedition sent to find the North West Passage; (a subject of topical interest in the town and elsewhere at the time) as they had not been heard of for some years and various expeditions had been sent to locate them, with no results. The 'bluish ball' of light disappeared and soon a map of the Arctic region appeared and the remains of two ships were discerned with a channel leading up to them.

When Captain Coppin and his friend Captain Kennedy came home the 'bluish ball' of light appeared to them with the map. So impressed were they that they went to England to see Lady Franklin in May of 1850 and she believed the story and acted upon it. Later an expedition under Sir Leopold McClintock located the two ships at the exact spot as told by 'Weesy'. There were a number of other occasions when Captain Coppin himself had premonitions of impending disasters related to shipping. On account of these experiences he was able to avoid danger.

The story of the 'bluish light' in 1849 is well documented in a book written by the Rev. J. Henry Skewes published in 1889. The following account in The Derry Journal relates to the publication.

The Derry Journal March 29th 1889

Old Derry people have something of a reverence for the name Captain Coppin. He was a worthy and influential citizen of Derry in his day, filled with a desire for the welfare of Derry more chivalrous than calculated to promote selfish ends. He was the father of shipbuilding enterprise in Derry, and if the enterprise failed it was not from any want of genius and energy in Captain Coppin. The old gentleman's personality is revived to us now in a singular way. A book is being published by Messrs. Bemrose & Son, Old Bailey, entitled "Sir John Franklin - The Secret of the Discovery of his Fate - A Revelation." It is claimed that the discovery of the fate of Franklin is owing to a revelation to a child of Captain Coppin. In an advance proof we find the following:-

Sir John Franklin was "lost" in 1847. The Government sent out expedition after expedition to search for the 'Erebus' and 'Terror,' but chiefly in one direction, yet never to the right spot. The little daughter of Captain Coppin, of Londonderry, ex-councillor, ship-builder, Surveyor of Ships under the Board of Trade, &c., has a revelation. In this she sees the lost ships in an unsearched region, as well as a new direct route through which they can be reached. The savans of science laugh, and the Government pooh. Such do not deter Lady Franklin from placing the most implicit faith in the revelation. For want of means she is comparatively helpless. Four hundred and thirty of the leading merchants and bankers of Liverpool, with the Mayor (Sir John Bent) at their head, petition the Admiralty to search the locality indicated in the chart drawn by the child, and "seen" by her in the writing on the wall of the bedroom. The "revelation" pur et simple, and not the Solons of the Admiralty, is the alone guide. What the child "saw" proves to be true, and that to the letter. Thus, in a measure, is fulfilled the prophecy, "A little child shall lead them."

The author states that this "revelation" is disclosed after a silence of forty years. Within the past few months, we had occasion to deal with a marvellous manifestation recorded in the Glasgow Herald, and in doing so we touched on the subject of the Coppin revelation, without reference to names. What the author (The Rev. J. Henry Skewes, Vicar of Holy Trinity, Liverpool) is about to give to the reading public, will not be new to the elder generation of Derry people, but it will recall a forgotten incident in local life, and restore zest in a most strange event. The book should command a wide sale in Derry and the district.

SIR JOHN FRANKLIN.

THE TRUE SECRET OF THE DISCOVERY OF HIS FATE.

A

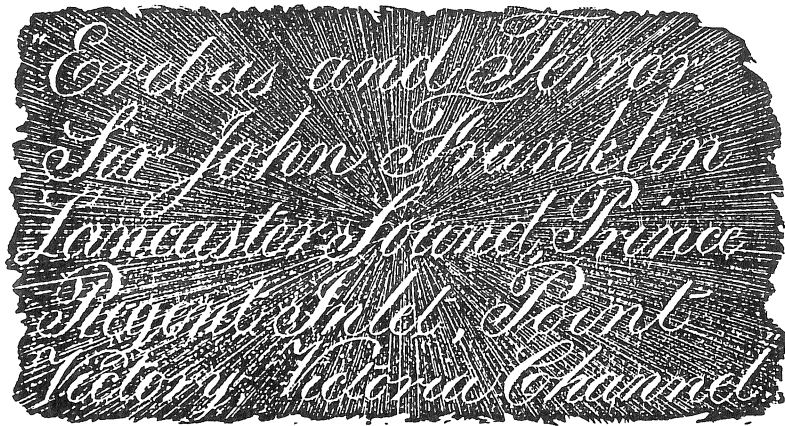
“REVELATION.”

“A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM.”

BY

J. HENRY SKEWES,

*Vicar of Holy Trinity, Liverpool, and late President of The Liverpool
Mental Science Association.*



BEMROSE & SONS,
23, OLD BAILEY, LONDON; AND DERBY.
1889.

(All Rights Reserved.)

In 1873 Coppin sold his foundry and shipyard and moved to live at 14 Sackville Street where he continued to create and patent many interesting inventions. At the age of 89 the Derry Corporation wanted to evict him from his house to build a new bath-house. The local newspapers brought this to the attention of the public and he was not evicted.

The Derry Journal June 1st 1894

EVICTING CAPTAIN COPPIN

The Corporation, in the majority, are determined to have an odious distinction in accomplishing - if they be allowed to defy the ratepayers by accomplishing it - their Baths and Wash-houses scheme. They are to play the part of evictors; and, if we be not greatly misinformed, the conditions under which they move to their purpose give evidence of a cleverness and, we fear, a callousness, that will be fully appreciated, if not very much admired in Derry. They have made arrangements to evict Captain Coppin. How have they placed themselves in the position of doing so? They have, we are informed, served on him a notice of ejection for the 20th of June, and in this have shown no regard for the fact that this venerable and valuable citizen is enfeebled by the decay of age and seriously ill as well. Is not this a pretty performance to be done in the name of the people of Derry whose welfare Captain Coppin had at heart, and whose genius did honour to our city in days ago? Now, if Captain Coppin were an ordinary tenant, holding in the ordinary circumstances, it is not, of course, to be considered that his occupation should stand in the way of necessary public improvements. The citizens, whatever their sympathy with the gentleman, could not recognise any privilege of that sort. But the circumstances under which this once influential benefactor holds are not the ordinary circumstances at all. What are the circumstances? Captain Coppin, as we all know, was a man of genius and many enterprises. He was a great employer of skilled labour and a good employer, aiming, above all else, to make the works he engaged in benefit Derry and Derry tradesmen. He won applause and made a name. But he was a bad financier and a worst diplomatist; and thus, with one remarkable touch of misfortune in a brilliant career added - a misfortune not of his making - he became

poor. He lost his property. He who had made the banks of the Foyle sing merrily to the tune of the shipwrights' industry sank into privacy a broken man. In this critical moment a relation of his family - so it is stated - purchased the leased interest in the premises now occupied by him. There was, it seems, an implied understanding that at its expiry the lease would be renewed. This purchased interest was obviously and in fact for the one purpose - to give Captain Coppin a home secure for his life. The Derry Corporation majority now step in to play Clanricarde - a worthy, a noble enterprise! Now a plain question or two are here presented. Did Captain Coppin hold under lease by purchase, and on the understanding that he was to enjoy its continuance? Was the renewal sought on the part of Captain Coppin, and is it not the fact that with this knowledge procurable, if not actually ascertained, the majority of the Corporation set about grabbing the property? What have the Hon. the Irish Society to say to this? The Visitation is to be here in July. What a nice discovery it will be for them to find full across their path - radiant as usual with festivities - the scene of an eviction painful and offensive to the public eye to a peculiar degree. We do not believe that the hon. body are in full possession of the information we now place before them; but when they come to know the nature of the thing that is to be done, we venture to tell them that they owe it to the honour of a great life now near its close to interpose, if they yet can, for the cause of justice and public decency. The citizens are deeply moved over this matter, and would stay the hand of the evictor if it can be done, or at least they desire that Captain Coppin be fairly, nay, generously treated.

He died at the age of 90 on 17th April 1895 and his remains were buried with the rest of his family in St. Augustine's graveyard.

The Sentinel April 22nd 1895

DEATHS

COPPIN - April 17, at his residence, Sackville Street, Derry, William Coppin. Funeral will leave this (Monday) morning, the 22nd inst., at half-past ten o'clock, for interment in St. Augustine's Burying-ground, Derry. Friends will please accept this intimation.

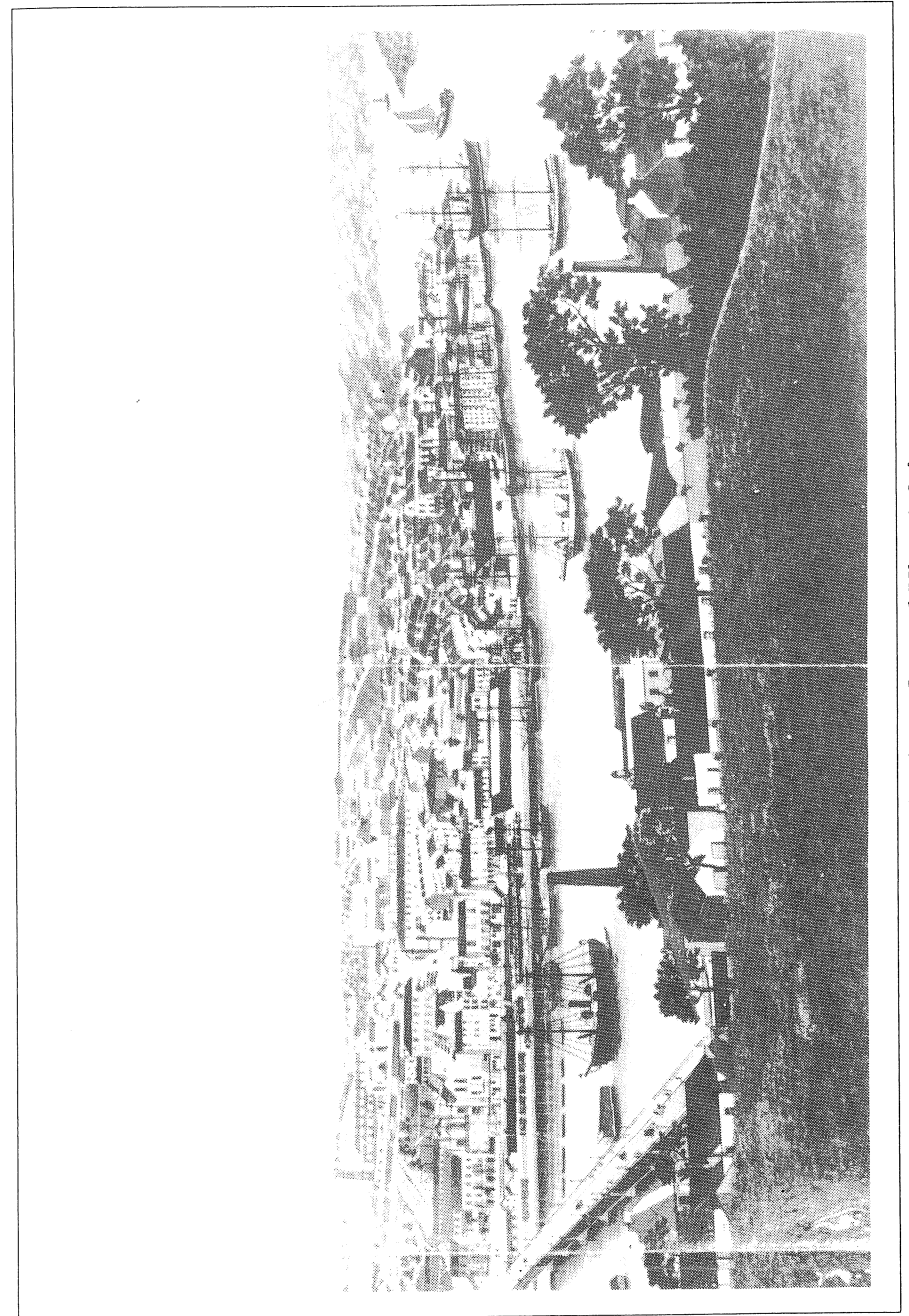
Throughout his life Captain Coppin used most of his own money to finance his inventions and shipbuilding business, he died in almost total obscurity, a very sad end for such an illustrious 'captain' of industry. The Derry Journal report of 19th April, 1895 gives a better insight to the type of man William Coppin was. Of an impetuous nature it would seem. As soon as an idea formed he had to act on it immediately, getting bogged down in bureaucracy was not for him, and if financial help was not readily available he put up his own money. This perhaps accounts for the circumstances in which he found himself towards the end of his life. It would appear that Captain Coppin although a brilliant inventor was very inept at managing his financial affairs. A relative put up the money for his house in Sackville Street and earlier in 1866 when his wife Dora died a tombstone was never erected to her memory. Could the reason have been that he couldn't afford one? Yet after his death his daughters went to live in 'Ravenscliffe' Merville, who supported them? Did the family silver have to be sold to pay the bills?

Because he had faith in his own ability, he was often an outspoken man, almost arrogant. He had every reason to be as records show how consistently the Admiralty reneged on his contracts. Ivy House is the only visual testimony to the memory of the man who in the mid nineteenth century employed between five hundred and seven hundred men.

The Derry Journal April 26th 1895

The death of Captain Coppin and the sketch we have given of his great if rather sad career are stirring up some attention in the metropolitan Press, and post-mortem praise does justice to the worthy man's memory. The Irish Catholic in an editorial says: "Poor Captain Coppin had made two mistakes for which he was to pay dearly. He had forgotten that he was an Irishman, and, labouring under the forgetfulness, he had built the 'Great Northern'

as a private speculation, hoping that the British Government would encourage his enterprise by buying the ship. He was doomed to bitter disappointment." We believe the real fact is that a wretched party display in Derry against a Government supporter, "Derry Dawson," for his vote in favour of the removal of Catholic disabilities was at the root of the disastrous blow at Derry shipbuilding by the official "boycott" of the Great Northern. "In any other land but his own," says the Irish Catholic, "honours and patronage would have been showered on Captain Coppin, but although his name stands high on the roll of Irishmen beggared by British rule he died possessing the esteem and respect of his fellow-citizens, irrespective of creed." Unhappily Captain Coppin's closing days were harrassed by those of his creed and party in terrifying the dying man with the horrors of threatened eviction. The Corporation of Derry has this to add to its long bead-roll of honour. The generation in which Coppin was a giant amongst the men of industrial enterprise had passed away from him in his long and honourable life; those who succeeded to place and power knew him only as a broken man. Why should they bother since his day of usefulness was over? And they didn't. The Corporation has its faults, but fine sentiment of this sort is not amongst them.



Londonderry General View 1890's.



IVY HOUSE

Courtesy of: The Londonderry Sentinel

CHAPTER IV

*"What's not destroy'd by time's devouring hand?
Where's Troy, and where's the Maypole in the Strand?"
(James Bramston 1694 - 1744)*

IVY HOUSE, 34 STRAND ROAD

Captain Coppin, probably designed Ivy House himself. As a naval architect his designs incorporated originality, practicality and style and there is no doubt that he applied the same principles in the design of 34 Strand Road.

Ivy House, as you will have learned from the previous articles played a significant role in the life and work of Coppin. Many famous and important people, like Nasmyth and F. P. Smith, recognised inventors of their time, together with the wealthy merchants, who would have been prospective customers, not to mention civic dignitaries must have passed through its portals. However the brass band on the roof at the launching of the 'Maiden City' has to be the most spectacular event of all, the entire city *en fête* would have rivalled the Ascot scene from 'Pygmalion' with the ladies in their finery on the quayside and lots of small boats bobbing in the water all eagerly awaiting the launch of this great ship. The recent visit of the Japanese Tall Ship commanded a great deal of interest, for those who went on board a whole new perspective of the city was revealed.

Then of course the stories relating to his little daughter 'Weesy' provided further interest, which room would she have appeared in and was the house haunted? What about Captain Coppin, which room in the house did he use for his office or study, was it at the back of the house overlooking the very busy, noisy yard contrasting with the calm effect of the river, or the front looking up towards the new Gwyn's Institute and the general bustle of everyday life in Strand Road.

This townhouse when first built in 1840, stood solitary on the Strand Road and between it and the river was the foundry where William Coppin carried on business. Just north of it, the patent slip and shipyard that Coppin had purchased from Pitt Skipton some years earlier. Patrick Street had not yet been formed and Queen Street and Clarendon Street were still in embryonic development. Like the earlier houses of Queen Street, No. 34 was built in a style some several decades out of date. The style is chaste georgian with restrained decoration; not unlike the Deanery in Bishop Street or No. 39 Shipquay Street, and very much reminiscent of georgian Dublin. No. 34 could easily fit into the terraces of Eccles Street or Upper Merrion Street.

When built it brought an elegance to the Strand, it fitted well with the architecture of the Scot's Presbyterian church. Francis Johnston's Asylum, the free school and Richmond House. The architect and builder of the house is not recorded but undoubtedly they endeavoured to produce a facade of distinction. The proportions of the street facade proclaim this. The brick facing between the stone plinth and surrounding parapet wall makes a perfect square. This square is subdivided horizontally and vertically by four windows. These windows, typical of the style, reduce in height at each storey until those of the top storey are squares. The elliptical fanlight doorway placed asymmetrically displayed the main decorative feature of the front. The double panelled doors are enclosed on either side with threequarter engaged Doric columns which support a decorative frieze patterned with metopes and tryglyphs of matching order. The handmade brickwork in a loose flemish pattern rise from the plinth stone in four courses to 340 millimetres. Each window sash is finished with wedged brickwork and at the top the brickwork terminates in a soldier course, above which is a projecting bold cavetto sandstone moulding supporting a high parapet ashlar wall concealing the roof. The sliding sash windows retain

their original sashes and astragals, likewise the slim sandstone cills remain intact.

Structurally the edifice appears sound there being no evidence of settlement cracks though the front wall has an inward lean of some 200 millimetres from footpath level to the parapet. The building has had several uses. Prior to the last war it was a tenement house and later was government offices for the Public Assistance Board. More recently it became an art gallery and later was temporary offices for the Bank of Ireland.

In the 1930's Ivy House had another well known resident, Gretta Kelly (nee Torrens) affectionately remembered by Derry people, lived there, one of her sons was born in Ivy House.

The building is listed by the Historic Monuments and Buildings Branch, Department of the Environment (N.I.) as of architectural and historical importance and should be preserved as part of the city's significant past.

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