

## The Royal and the Shannon 1912

Friday 26 January: Wind easterly – barometer rising slowly – slight frost. Fred Carr, George Shackleton and John Wigham Shackleton – Jim Doyle, extra hand. Left Barberstown 1.15, arrived Thomastown 10.00pm, bright moonlight. Engine running free, pace good considering the narrow canal, frequent stops to clear screw from weed. Miss Allen on board Kilcock to Ferns Lock “the poor girl could raise ne’er a guzzle out of the three gentlemen” (Doyle).

Saturday 27 January: Wind easterly, barometer rising, colder, ice across canal in places. Breakfast 8 o’clock; Jim Doyle reported he enjoyed a good night’s rest on the starboard bunk forward – picked up Ebenezer Shackleton at Killucan at 10 o’clock and ran on thro’ Mullingar where Doyle left us and stopped for the night on an exposed reach of canal near Abbeyshrule having been much delayed with weed and sacks in propeller.

Sunday 28 January: Hard frost – wind easterly – barometer rising. Soon ran into ice which we broke with poles from the bows of the boat – the engine worked very sweetly for this running light and an occasional touch with the clutch kept the boat just moving. Nearly half a mile of heavier ice near Killashee delayed us considerably and it was quite dark when we made Richmond Harbour and were welcomed by Jim Lennon who soon passed us through the lock on to the Camlin for Burke’s Lock on to the Shannon. We lay the night in the short canal immediately below Burke’s Lock within hearing of Tarmonbarry weir. Looked up Walton Fleming.

Monday 29 January: Barometer steady – wind easterly and cold. Through Tarmon Lock, Shannon Navigation, and up under Tarmon Bridge and up the cut into Lough Forbes – through Roosky and on to Lough Bofin where the Hunts all joined us after we had sent a wires etc. from Dromod P.O. Through Loughs Bofin and Boderg and on thro’ the Jamestown Canal to Carrick-on-Shannon where we had tea. Hunt and G.S. going ashore and seeing Bob Devenish and Pettit and R.I.C. Inspector. Three miles above Carrick close to Hartly Manor the *Seagull* grounded on a clay bottom going half speed. She rose 4 inches forward and about 2 inches aft on the sloping bank. All efforts to move her were fruitless though we got out the heavy and light anchors astern and the full length of chain cable and grass rope out and put full strength on the capstan. At 7 pm the Hunts left us by side car for Dromod and J.W.S. went to Jamestown and wired Fletcher asking if we might have the flood gates at Jamestown closed for a time. Cold night – J.W.S. returned at 10 o’clock.

Tuesday 30 January: Easterly wind – barometer steady – very cold – early breakfast. J.W.S. and G.S. to Carrick – Eben and F.C. out after swans. While trying for these we heard the *Barrow* steamer coming up with J.W.S. on board to try to tow off the bank. Placing a heavy 8inch manilla bridle round the *Seagull* immediately below the rubbing piece, after two pulls she slowly pulled off into deep water very kindly at 11.30 am. 20 s to Ned Walsh, the skipper, and 10s to the mate. Ran down to Carrick and showed Mr Pettit the running of the engine. Lay the night at Inishmucker Island as we had to wait for the *Barrow* to break out the Jamestown Canal for us in the morning.

Wednesday 31 January: Barometer steady – wind easterly - very hard frost. The *Barrow* came along at 7.30 while the porridge was cooking. We made the canal about one hour after them and found it a very rough job to get thro’. The masses of broken 2inch ice took a lot of moving and we placed the punt across the bows of the *Seagull* and pushed our way thro’. Arrived on Lough Boderg we found the lake frozen solid but we followed the steamer track to the Grange outlet and then doubled for the Derrycarne Narrows. We had one and half hours work breaking



thro' the ice and reached our anchorage at the low end of Lord Harlech's wood near the river in open deep water at 5 o'clock. Dined at Aughrey.

Thursday 1 February: Barometer steady – cold east wind – very hard frost. Eben Shackleton in bed all day drinking hot drinks and looking ghastly – hot sponge to forehead gave relief. At 10 o'clock out with Hunt shooting up the river and across some bogs – ground too hard for snipe or cock – saw Mr Clements and Hardy at the station. Hunt on board to lunch. J.W.S. and F.C. dined at Aughrey – pheasant, holly leaves and floured heads.

Friday 2 February: Barometer steady – cold east wind – very hard frost. Eben better. Tried for geese on river – one shot but no result. Short time at Hunts – apple pie beds – and Hunt, Mrs H. and Bar joined us as far as Roosky. Anchored for night below Burke's Lock, Tarmonbarry. Called up to see Watson Fleming – he had caught 12lb salmon – Mike Hussey no result, very cold after fishing, took a cup of tea with remark "Oh God".

Saturday 3 February: Barometer slight fall – wind easterly – some snow in night – very severe frost. Shot the whins near the river for cock – one in it got away. Down river to Lanesboro' where we lay in the usual anchorage above Curreen Point – the lake frozen and duck in considerable numbers round the mouth of the river. Peter, the poacher, turned up – reported no geese this year.

Sunday 4 February: Barometer falling steadily – wind easterly with threatening snow and bitterly cold. Tried the lake but could do nothing, thick ice right across from Curreen Point to Roscommon shore and to the Gomerans rocks and to InchMcDermott.

Monday 5 February: Barometer falling – wind south easterly – threatening snow. Eben left us at 9 o'clock driving to Longford. Tried to force our way thro' to Tarmon, made 50 yards into the thick ice below Kilnacarrow, returned in the dark to anchor above Lanesboro' Bridge – snowing at nightfall.

Tuesday 6 February: Barometer falling – wind south and warmer- snow gone and general thaw. Again attacked the ice at Kilnacarrow after proving the lake impracticable. Broke thro' and reached Richmond Harbour at nightfall. J.W.S. severe tooth trouble. F.C. to Watson Fleming's after tea.

Wednesday 7 February: Southerly gale – barometer falling – warm and wet. Packed up and left at 10.30 for Longford in Watson Fleming's car. Left *Seagull* in Lennon's care lying just below the lock.

General observations on Shannon Cruise: The *Seagull* behaved well throughout and the new rubbing pieces were found a great improvement and security for lock and open river work. The stem piece now much strengthened allowed us full liberty to attack the ice with an end on drive. For ice work we used some cargo grids which did well enough until the cross batons cut thro' and broke at the bow with the weight of the two and two and half inch ice we drove thro'. These grids we carried abaft the conning tower and made an effectual guard. The engine worked very well under most trying conditions and with the now improved magneto mechanism we considered we had secured faster running and a more flexible engine for the heavy drag of the canal work and the heavy drag of ice breaking with the ice guards in position. The clutch worked very sweetly and the reverse gear ditto, particularly so when the reverse was in for perhaps an hour at Hartley's when trying to back off the bank. For the cold we found a primus lamp burning on the floor of the cabin an efficient stove and the engine room remained warm thro' the night following the running of the engine.