

The end of an era as last cargo sails from Portrush.

(By Hugh McGrattan)

On the afternoon of Sunday, 30 June, 1968, the container shipping service which had linked Portrush and Preston three times a week for the previous six years, was closed down.

Operated by Anglo-Irish Transport, the service was transferred to the Port of Derry. The final sailing from Portrush, with a full cargo of 22 containers and “flats”, departed promptly at 3pm. It was the end of an era - the cessation of commercial shipping from the 130-year-old port.

A few years later the harbour was purchased by Coleraine Borough Council and is thus today under the control of the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.



The *MV Fallowfield* moored at Portrush prior to her final sailing. The 25-ton Butters crane which dominated the harbour landscape during the operation of the Portrush-Preston service, was dismantled not long afterwards.



Captain Richard Saunders donned his best uniform for the final sailing and is pictured about to board the *Fallowfield* at Portrush for the very last time.



MV Fallowfield moves away from the Portrush quay, not an easy operation on the day of the last sailing due to crosswinds. Some spectators claimed it was as if the vessel knew it was leaving for the last time and didn't want to go!



With Captain Saunders on the bridge, the Fallowfield leaves for the last time. Local people gathered on the quay and north pier to wave farewell.



Three of the men who were essential to the operation of the Portrush container service are pictured a few weeks before the final sailing. They are (from left) Arthur Dunlop (foreman), Jamie Doherty (harbour master) and Nat Dorrans (crane operator). Jamie Doherty died in May 1968 and was succeeded by his brother Tommy, who supervised the final sailing.

Our thanks to Hugh for providing the photographs and text used in this Newsletter. 25th December 2021