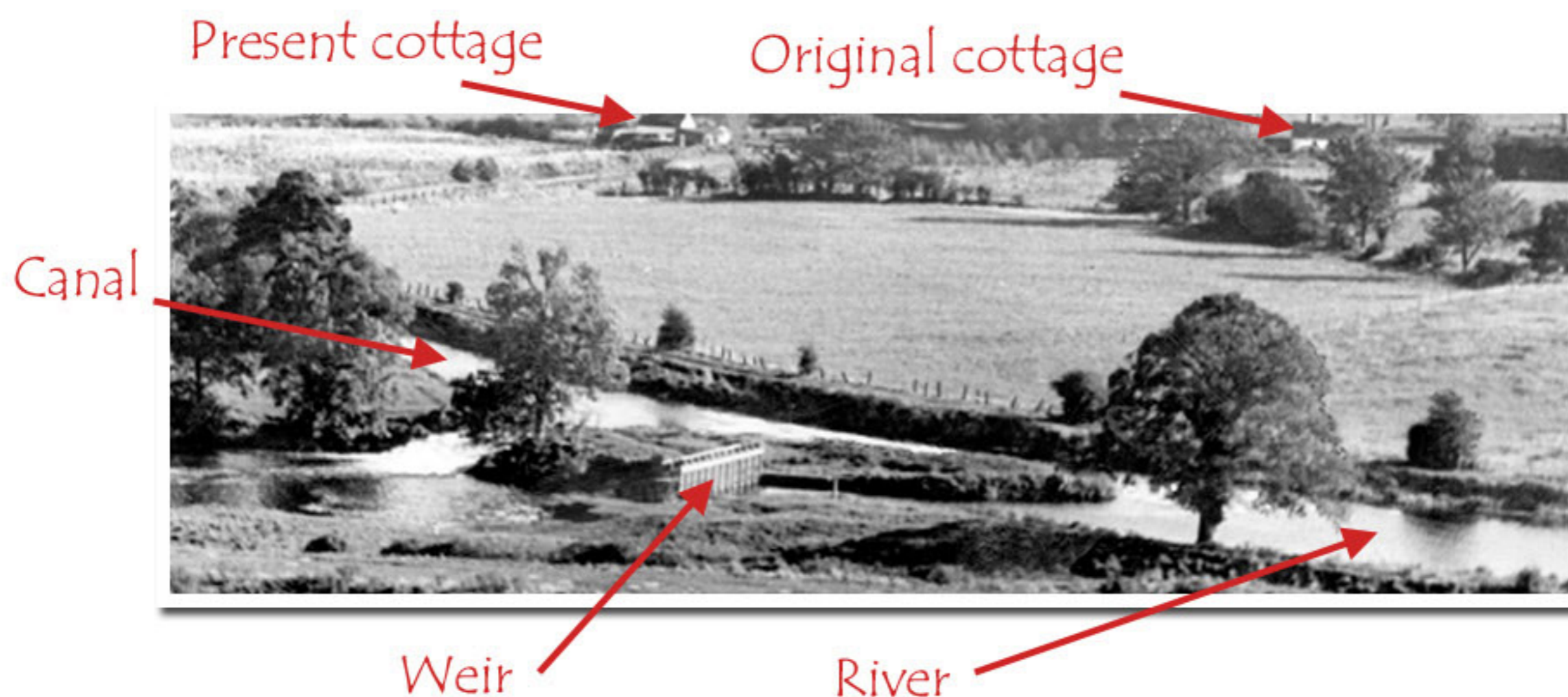


Why the canal was built at Newforge

The river at Newforge had a series of shallow rapids so in 1756/1757, the canal cut was made and water was diverted into the channel by a penstock weir across the river upstream of the lock. The small stone bridge was built over the canal and the towpath crossed the river at this point.

The first lock keeper's cottage

Each lock had to have its own accommodation for the lock keeper and the original cottage for Lock No 3 was just over the bridge and up the lane from the present one. It was one storey high and in keeping with the Lagan Navigation Company's policies. It came with a garden and small amount of land. The pay for the lock keepers was quite low which meant that they had to have this land in order to support themselves and their families.



In 1861, William McLeave became lock keeper. Thomas Bateson, who owned the Belvoir Estate, wanted to build a boundary wall and in 1883, he came to an arrangement with the Lagan Navigation Company.

Lock keeper's cottage pre 1900

The present cottage, which dates from the late 18th or early 19th century, was owned by Sir Richard Ferguson and attached to the nearby linen bleaching company James Ferguson and Sons. Linen was a very valuable commodity. The last stage in the production process was bleaching which turned the brown linen into white linen. As part of this process, it had to be laid out on the ground and during this time, there was more chance of it being stolen or damaged so it had to be watched carefully. The landscaped area in front of the cottage was the bleach green for Ferguson's. When the canal was built, it created an island, which probably meant that the drying linen was more secure and the present cottage was used as a "watch house".



The photograph above is a very early photograph of the cottage and you can see a number of differences in the actual building. There is now a window in each gable end and it is possible that the cottage was extended and the upper floor added. The identity of the man sitting on the lock gate is unknown but may be one of the McLeave family. scaped area in front of the cottage was the bleach green for Ferguson's. When the canal was built, it created an island, which probably meant that the drying linen was more secure and the present cottage was used as a "watch house".



Site of bleach green and kitchen garden at Lock No 3.



Linen drying

Thomas Bateson then rented the present house from Sir Richard Ferguson for the sum of £1 per year. The original cottage was demolished in the 1950s and the site is marked by a settling tank. The area in front of the house where the bleach green had been became the lock keeper's garden and a lot of the family's fruit and vegetables were grown there.

James McLeave succeeded his father as lock keeper and the 1901 census reads: 4 rooms. James McLeave widower born 1836. Jane daughter, read and write, damask weaver age 26. Maria 22 winder. Jas 22 mechanic (iron turner).

George Kilpatrick was the next lock keeper at lock no. 3 and he came from a long line of canal folk! He started work at 14 driving horse and trap for Charlie Magowan, the canal manager, and then worked on

repair squad. In 1922, George Kilpatrick took over as lock keeper at Lock No 3.

The lean-to

George Kilpatrick built a lean-to onto the side of the cottage, which in time became an unofficial canteen for Wilson's food factory. It almost doubled the floor size of the cottage.

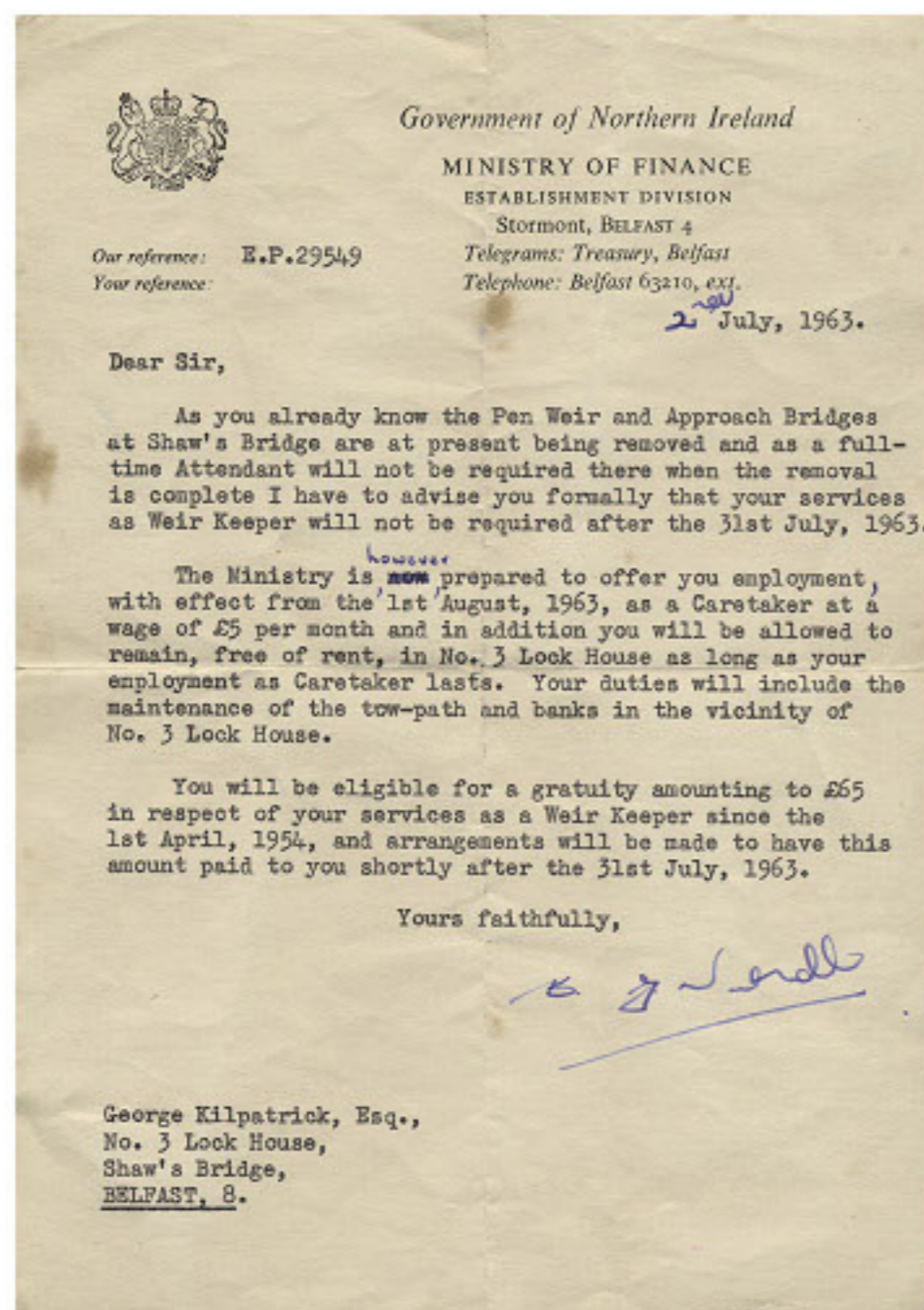


George Kilpatrick with his goats on the bridge at Lock No 3



George Kilpatrick with the Coca Cola rep in the lean-to.

Canal closure



When the canal closed in 1958, the Kilpatricks lived on in the house and George Kilpatrick still had duties looking after the weir near Shaw's Bridge. On his death, the cottage went to his son Stanley who lived in it until his death in 1993.

Letter to George Kilpatrick terminating his employment as weir keeper in 1963.