

Canal Artefacts



Swingle tree

A swingle tree is a wooden or metal bar used to balance the pull of a draught horse or other draught animal when pulling a vehicle. It was part of the harness for the canal horses. Because the horses had to walk along the towpath and the lighters were not directly behind the horse, the swingle tree balanced the pull from alternate shoulders as the animal walked to prevent the ropes or chains rubbing the shoulders if the pull is uneven. The swingle trees were attached to the back of the harness by the two iron hooks at each end and the rope that was attached to the lighter was tied to the hook in the middle.

Breaker



The lightermen could not drink the river water due to the pollution caused by the industry on the Lagan. Clean water would be carried with them in these barrels or "breakers" and every lighter had at least one on board.

Barge horn

The "barge horn" was used for alerting other lighters and letting lock keepers know that the lighters were approaching. The lock keepers would also use these for the same purpose, if they did not use the horns to alert the lighters and this resulted in a collision they would be fined by the Lagan Navigation Company inspectors.

