



Haulers were the men who led the horses along the towpath as they pulled the lighters. The lightermen would employ them at the start of the journey along the canal. Mostly they were farmer's sons who had a horse. The journey with a full boat would have taken about two days.

Paddy Creaney was a hauler who remembered his work on the canal:

"In the summer time, on a good night, you slept on deck. You had your bag with a couple of stone of corn in it ready for the horse the next mornin'. You put that under your head and your coat on top of it. You took your boots off and lay down under a couple of oul' blankets you carried with you. In winter you got sleepin' on the cabin sole. If it was a light boat you put newspapers down first to keep the draught from blowin' the stour round ye. The hatch was nearly always open at the top you see. The lighterman would have a good fire in the evening and banked it up at bedtime. That kept the heat in you till mornin'. Many a time you got wet. You took your coat off and dried it. The next day, away you went and got wet to the pelt again! But the sleepin' accommodation was grand. There was nothin' wrong with it! You slept three or four hours. Then the boatman got you up again at the skrake of day (maybe four in the morning). At night you went till you reached a stable. Sometimes you just put your horse on the grass and jammed somethin' across the towpath at the bridge. The next mornin' you got him either at the bridge or back at the lighter for his feed. If you hadn't jammed somethin' across he might have walked home by himself in the night".

"It took my black mare twelve hours to haul a light boat from the Gut (Lough Neagh) to Belfast. It took two days to haul one that was full. You got two poun' for haulin' a loaded boat, ten shillin's for a light one. If it was a load of peat it was lighter and you only got thirty-two shillin's. A load of peat weighed about forty ton. It nearly always went to Graham of Belfast for beddin' horses. Sometimes you could have done three load in a week, but if it took a month the money was just the same.....the boat-man paid the hauler.....Sometimes the water was that low, and it took the horse that long; you would have gone for eight hours afore you stopped; and then you got the heel of a loaf and mug of tea. If you got to the head level, (Sprucefield) sometimes you worked all night in the moonlight and got no sleep. You see, you had eleven mile of water there till you reached Aghalee."somethin' across he might have walked home by himself in the night".

Who do you think had a tougher job, the horses or the lighter men?
Whichever choice you have made, write a list of reasons to support it. When the class is ready, open the courtroom and debate it! Who do you think will win?