



Tommy Delaney of Killyfassey in 1952

Given Lough Sheelin's deserved reputation as a prime angling lake, attracting countless fishermen over the centuries, it is no surprise to learn that, for at least 200 years, a thriving boat building business has flourished on its shores. This enterprise was set up and run, from at least 1820 and perhaps earlier, by the Delaney family. Tommy Delaney was the fourth generation of his family to carry on the business. Tommy is recorded as saying that his great-grandfather had set up the business in the early 1800s and that his family's connection with boat building may even predate that. Tommy's grandfather, Bernard, according to the 1901 Census, was then living in Killyfassey with his son, John (Tommy's father) and daughter-in-law, Rose. In that census both Bernard and John were described as carpenters. It was under his father, John, that Tommy served his apprenticeship to the trade. He took over the business from his father about 1950. The Delaney's were renowned for the high quality of their craftsmanship and, with a reputation such as this, it is not surprising that their boats were to be found on lakes in the four provinces of Ireland as well as in the United Kingdom.

The firm built all sizes of craft but most were sixteen feet in length. Their aim was to build ideal fly-fishing boats that would drift satisfactorily in all weather conditions. Those anglers, who have used a Delaney boat, expressed themselves happy with the style and manoeuvrability of the craft. Occasionally they got orders for twelve feet craft. They also produced sea-going boats (14ft. to 25ft.), which were required to be wider, longer, and more robust. They also experienced an increase in demand for boats suitable for smaller lakes, which, as a result of the work of the Inland Fisheries Trust,

became popular with anglers. All the work was carried out by hand on native-grown larch and oak timber, which, for many years, the Delaneys themselves selected from woods in Counties Cavan and Meath. Latter, all the required timber was supplied by contract and delivered to their workshop in Killyfassy.

Tommy was quoted as saying that, when he took over the business, a standard boat could be bought for £30 while 20 years later this had risen to £125 or £130. Tommy was also an expert and successful angler winning numerous prizes for his efforts on Lough Sheelin. Sadly, boat building in Killyfassy came to an end with Tommy's death in August 1972. However, his nephew, Paddy Sheridan, who served his time under Tommy's expert supervision, continues the family's proud tradition in his workshop in Aughavona, Mountnugent, where his son, Eamonn, ably assists him. The timber supply is obtained from their own trees, which they grow for the purpose and then fell and process in their adjoining sawmill. It is encouraging to learn that a steady stream of orders is being received. A long and noble Delaney family tradition, now in its sixth generation, flourishes in Aughavona.

Boats with oars and motor may be hired at Crover House Hotel; Chamber's and Leggett's, Kilnahard; and at Reilly's, Finea.

Lough Sheelin Trout Protection Association

By Sean Young, February 2007

The Lough Sheelin Trout Protection Association (LSTPA) was set up in late 1800s. The purpose of the association was the protection of the brown trout stocks in the lake and the rivers. This was effected by employing water keepers for the protection of the spawning rivers and on predator control.

The association was made up of property owners living in the vicinity of the lake and boatmen providing services to anglers.