City Engineer’s Annual Report 1916-17, referring to the sale of the Cork Racecourse on the Marina to the Ford Motor Company

Background:
The modern motor car was made in 1886 by Karl Benz in Germany. However, the first popular car, the Ford Model T (which most people could afford) was not produced until 1908 by an Irish-American Henry Ford whose family had come from Cork. After losing two businesses he had only $900 dollars left by 1900. Ford sold more than 15,000,000 Model T cars in the United States between 1908 and 1927. He became fabulously wealthy with a fortune of $188 billion by the age of 57 when he decided to expand into Europe.

“Henry Ford journeys back to Irish shores
In the summer of 1912, Henry Ford made an important trip to reconnect with his Irish roots. Escorted most of the time by European Ford officials, Henry and his travelling party also visited France and England.

While in Ireland they spent time in Cork, Bandon, and Clonakilty. And on August 8, 1912, 65 years after John and William had departed for America; the Fords arrived back in [Cobh] Queenstown.

This trip is thought to have inspired Henry and his wife, Clara Bryant Ford, to trace their ancestors. It also seems Henry attempted to buy the old Ford homestead, which he wanted to transport to America and rebuild near his home. Unfortunately, the asking price was too high. But Henry did eventually manage to acquire the hearthstones, which were incorporated in his home at Fair Lane.

On another trip to Ireland in 1917, Henry Ford established Henry Ford & Son Ltd. It began as a private venture and later became a division of Ford Motor Company.

As Ford historian Bob Kreipke explains: "Henry Ford’s family roots drew him to Ireland. He knew what he was able to do socially and economically in the United States, and he figured he could apply that model to the depressed area of Cork."


Cork City Council and its records:
Before Cork City Council was created in 2001, [Cork Corporation](http://www.ford.ie/AboutFord/CompanyInformation/HistoryOfFord) managed the city, which received its first charter in 1185. For most of its existence, the work of the Corporation has been paid for through rates and charges levied on businesses, property owners, and trade. For many years only property-owning ratepayers could vote for the Corporation. From 1690 until the Municipal Corporations (Ireland) Act 1840, only members of the Church of Ireland could be councillors. After the Local Government (Ireland) Act 1899 most adults in the city had a vote in the local elections. In 1924 the elected Cork Corporation was dissolved and its powers and duties transferred to a City Commissioner Mr. Philip Monahan. The Corporation was re-established in 1929 and Monahan became first City Manager. Under the Local Government Act 2001, Cork Corporation was renamed Cork City Council.
Throughout its existence Cork City Council has played the lead role in developing and managing the city and its fabric, including its public buildings, roads, water services, social housing, and public spaces, and in governing, planning, and promoting the city as a regional capital, a centre of business, a tourist attraction, and, above all, a home for its citizens.

Many Corporation minutes and other records were transferred to Cork City and County Archives from 1985 on. Unfortunately, all but one original Corporation minute book prior to 1900 were destroyed during the fire at Cork Courthouse in 1891, and some later minutes and other records were destroyed during the burning of Cork in Dec 1920. As the designated local government archives service for Cork city and county (under the Local Government Act 2001) Cork City and county Archives is the official repository for historic records of Cork City and County Councils, Town councils, and predecessor bodies, such as the Boards of Guardians which ran Cork’s workhouses.

The Document:
This is quite an important document in the collection as it is about the arrival of Cork’s largest employer for most of the 20th century, the Ford Motor Company. Virtually every family in Cork has at least one member who worked in Fords, or in Dunlops Tyre Factory which was built across the road in 1935. The two firms employed almost 5,550 men and women (90/10 ratio) at their height but their closure within months of each other in 1984 brought economic devastation to the city.

This document, taken from a City Engineer’s report, is about how the Ford factory came into being.

Instructions:
1. Read through the document
2. Highlight the names of people, sentences, or words you do not understand.
3. Highlight any words you cannot read.
4. Fill in the recording sheet supplied and attach it to the document
5. Optional: This is a quick quiz below about the contents of the document which will allow the student to test their comprehension and observation skills.
6. Store the completed work as directed by your teacher.
7. Outline how you would arrange a visit to the Archives to consult original records
Ref: CP/RP(p)/14 printed reports 1914-19 (incl City Engineer’s report 1917). Collection: CP: Cork Corporation/Cork City Council
of Railway; (2) the formation of two new streets—(a) from King Street to Patrick’s Quay, (b) from Anderson’s Quay to Lapp’s Quay; (3) the abolition of the Level Crossing of the Bandon Railway from Gas House Road to Anglesea Terrace, and the construction of a new Road, 420 yds. long, including a Steel Bridge Viaduct, 240 ft. long over the Bandon Line from Anglesea Street to Rockboro’ Road.

The new streets embraced in item No. 2 have proved a great boon in the matter of quick transit from the North to the South sides of the City on the more easterly portion, and the diversion road over the Bandon Railway freed from the traffic-hampering conditions of the old level crossing, has also established itself as a work of decided public convenience. All these works were carried out by the Great Western Railway of England, though the Act authorising them was promoted by the Harbour Board and Corporation. A map of the route is shown on previous page.

PARK PROJECT.

The acquisition of the Park and the Marina grounds at the South Deep Water Quay by Messrs. Henry Ford & Son of Detroit is a current event of great industrial importance.

Though the possibilities of these areas in the City of Cork with a magnificent water front were first mooted some three years ago, it was not until November, 1916, that the more intimate negotiations were entered into and a definite offer made to the Corporation for these sites, and to the Harbour Board for portion of their ground on the quay side.

At a Special Meeting of the Council held on November 22nd, 1916, an offer of £100,000 for the purchase of the freehold of the Park and Marina Building Site, and portion of the Public Roadway on Victoria Quay was submitted on behalf of Messrs. Henry Ford and Son, with stipulations that the buildings to be erected shall cost at least £200,000, and that at least 2,000 adult males shall be employed in the factory; that a fair wage building clause shall be inserted in all building contracts, and a minimum wage of one shilling per hour paid to all adult males to be employed in the factory when completed. It was unanimously decided to accept this offer.

Again, at a Meeting of the Council on the 8th December, 1916, a further offer was submitted under the same auspices, for an additional plot of the Marina Ground of 500 feet frontage on the river side, from the eastern end of the Harbour Commissioners’
enclosed ground eastwards towards the Shandon Boat Club, at the price of £1,000. This proposal was also unanimously accepted.

On the 26th of January, 1917, a Special Meeting of the Council was convened, and the following resolution unanimously adopted:—

"That in the judgment of this Council, it being the Governing Body of the County Borough of Cork, it is expedient that the Corporation of the County Borough, acting for the Town Council, do promote jointly with the Cork Harbour Commissioners, a Bill in the Session of Parliament, 1917, for the following or some of the following purposes, viz.:

"To authorise the Corporation and the Cork Harbour Commissioners to sell, lease, or otherwise dispose of the lands hereinafter described, and to grant all necessary deeds in respect of such matters, and to remove all restrictions upon or affecting the said lands, which are shown in the map herein attached.

"To repeal, alter or amend all necessary Acts for the purpose of effecting such purposes.

"To stop up all roads, etc., and to extinguish all rights affecting the said lands.

"To provide as to the application of any monies received of the said lands.

"To provide for the entering into and carrying into effect agreements, etc., and the surrender of any leases, etc., affecting the said lands, and the confirmation of any agreements or other arrangements which have been or may be made.

"To apply the property, funds, rates and revenues of the Corporation for the purposes of the Bill.

"And to determine as to applying the Borough Funds and Borough Rates, Rents, or revenues under the control of the Corporation or the Council towards payment of the costs and expenses attending the promotion of such Bill, and to take all necessary steps for the promotion of such Bill."

On February 20th, 1917, the Statutory Meeting of Electors took
place, at which the following Resolution was carried unanimously, and with acclamation:

"RESOLVED:—"That this meeting of persons qualified to vote at an Election for the Governing Body of the County Borough of Cork, duly summoned and held under the provisions of the Borough Funds (Ireland) Act, 1888, do hereby approve of the promotion by the said Council with the Harbour Commissioners of a Bill in Session of Parliament, 1917, for the objects above mentioned."

On the 22nd March, 1917, the Bill was presented for the first reading in the House of Commons, the sponsors being Mr. John E. Redmond, M.P., Mr. William O’Brien, M.P., Mr. Maurice Healy, M.P., and Colonel R. Sharman-Crawford, M.P., and went through the various stages unopposed.

It was read first time in House of Lords, 9th May, 1917, and subsequently was passed without opposition by the Committee of the Upper Chamber on June 21st, and the final sanction of the whole House on July 3rd, 1917.

Finally, the Royal Assent was given to the Bill, which then became an Act of Parliament on July 10th, 1917.

The large Industrial Scheme of Motor Manufacture which it is the intention of the purchasers to establish on the Park and River side sites, should create an unprecedented industrial transformation and lead to great industrial activity in Cork and the South of Ireland, as the works will be the largest the Ford Company will have yet established in Europe. In fact it will be the Detroit of Europe, sending its products to all the European capitals. This magnificent area of about 136 acres with its particularly fine deep water front, which has so long awaited the advent of the industrial capitalist, at last enjoys the distinction of attracting one of the most enterprising industrialists of the world, Mr. Henry Ford. No finer site could be found for the purpose, having excellent shipping and railway facilities in its immediate vicinity, and other ventures are not unlikely to follow. With the accomplishment of the present project, the City and Port of Cork should take a foremost place amongst the industrial centres of the Kingdom.

It will be a matter of future interest to note here, that after a notable record in the Irish racing world since 1869, when the Cork Park Racecourse was established, the last meeting, previous to being taken over by the new proprietors, was held on the prettiest racing venue of the South on Easter Monday, 9th April of this year.
The pictures of the Racecourse which follow will be of interest as showing the property before the transformation of the area into an industrial hive.

The approach to the well-known Marina Walk, via the South Deep Water Quay, is now cut off, and a temporary approach is provided through the diverted Marina Road, continuing due east and opening on to the Marina near the Shandon Boat Club.

As regards the diversion or substitute road proper, consideration is being given to a choice between the new road provided for in the contract with the Company to run along the southern boundary of the Park north of the Cork, Blackrock and Passage Railway and the adoption of the road leading to the Cork Agricultural Society’s Grounds (known as the Boggy Road). Either of these routes when finished will form a fine park drive leading to the eastern end of the Marina Walk.

The map facing page 42 shows in outline the areas over which Parliamentary powers have been obtained, as well as the area actually purchased by Messrs. Ford.

There is a total river frontage of 2,543 yards, or 1.40 miles, over which the Cork Improvement Act, 1917, gives power to lease or sell.
Of this the Ford project has a frontage of 1,642 feet from the Eastern end of Harbour Commissioners ground, South Deep Water Quay, to a point within 24 feet of the Western boundary hedge of the Shandon Boat Club.

It gives me much pleasure to testify to the continued good work of my staff, and I have to thank them for their loyal co-operation in carrying out the work of the Department.

In conclusion, I beg to thank the Council for their kind consideration and support given me at all times.

I am, Gentlemen,
Your obedient Servant,

J. F. DELANY, M.I.C.E.I., M.I.M.E.,

City Engineer.
Quick Quiz:
In the motto on page one what does the motto Statio Bene Fida Carinis mean?

On what date was the presented to the Cork Corporation Public Works Committee?

What two new streets were built in Cork in 1916?

How much did Henry Ford offer to buy the site?

What was the wage per hour for a worker?

Maths Question: If a worker worked 8 hours a day on a 5 day week for 52 weeks a year how much did he get to take home per year?

Which boat club is mentioned in the document and is it still there?

The sale had to be agreed by an Act of Parliament? Which Parliament?

According to the writer what benefit will the new factory have for Cork?

According to the writer why was this site chosen?

When was the Cork Racecourse opened and what does the writer say about it?

How long was the river frontage of the entire site, and how much of this would Fords get?

Looking at the map on Victoria Quay there was a time gun? What do you think this was?

Looking at the map what other sports were catered for in this part of Cork?
Further research and sources:

CORK CITY AND COUNTY ARCHIVES CATALOGUE
This item is from Cork Corporation reports:
http://catalogue.corkarchives.ie/Details/archive/110000280

Further dealings between Cork Corporation and Ford’s are documented in City Council and Law and Finance Committee minutes, including disagreement over restrictions in 1922:
http://catalogue.corkarchives.ie/Details/archive/110000256;
http://catalogue.corkarchives.ie/Details/archive/110004878;

CORK CITY AND COUNTY ARCHIVES WEBSITE
Index to Corporation minutes:
http://www.corkarchives.ie/media/City%20Council%20Minutes%20Index%201901%20-%201967.pdf

Descriptive Lists:

ELSEWHERE AND ONLINE:

Ordnance Survey Ireland Historic Mapping via the OSI Map viewer is a very good way of looking at the changes to the site over time as it moves from agricultural to recreation and then to Industrial through a combination of Ordnance Survey Maps and aerial photographs right up to the present day.

New World Encyclopaedia Internal combustion engine
A very detailed description and history of the internal combustion engine with limited animation.

‘American Dreaming’: Detroit’s golden age of auto design
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16Ti4eJbLMM
A short Youtube Video of car designs from the 1950’s

Guardian Newspaper The death of a great American city: why does anyone still live in Detroit?
A good article about the decline of the American car industry as the great car companies move production overseas to cheaper locations.

Ford Motor Company Official Site
Includes a history of the Company and how it is structured today.

Ford Motor Company (Ireland)
Includes a history of the company in Ireland and the building of the Ford plant in Cork.
History Channel Automobiles and other videos.

A series of 3 to 5 minute videos that discuss the history of the Automobile from an American perspective. Other videos in the collection branch into other issues in history such as the invention of the light bulb and range from 5 minutes to 20 minutes.

Cork Past and Present Park races: Grand National steeplechase (1869)

- London Illustrated News

Cork City Council and Library site which provides a wealth of information free online about the city over the past two hundred years. Guys directory on the site is particularly useful for genealogy projects.

RTE Archive Ford Car Plant to Close 1984


This Project is made possible through the support of the Heritage Council Grants Programme 2015