

# *The Keelmen's Hospital*

Keelmen were first recorded as a fraternity in 1539. In 1697 they established a charitable fund and the Keelmen's Hospital was built in 1701 at a cost of over £2,000.

Although the keelmen had a reputation for being "hard men", they were keen to look after their own.

They raised the money themselves by asking that their employers deduct four-pence per journey from their wages towards the costs. The ideal was well ahead of its time. It was a place where the old, the sick and the widows of their community could be looked after.

There were rules for every inmate:

- The Sabbath Day was to be observed.
- Rooms had to be kept in a decent state.
- All washing had to be done in the wash-house
- No rubbish was to be placed in the corridors.

Unfortunately, high standards were not always upheld and alcohol was a common cause of disturbance. It was sometimes smuggled in to the hospital or sometimes inmates would wander off and join their old friends in the taverns on the Quayside. As a consequence of drunkenness, arguments and violence would often occur.

Funerals were common as many inmates were old. Everyone dressed in black and the bell in the tower rang as a mark of respect. Keelmen were given a decent and Christian burial.

