

The Canadian Engineer

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Britain's Concrete Shipbuilding Program

Twenty Firms Have Been Awarded Contracts Totalling About \$25,000,000 for the Construction of Barges, Tugs and Mine Sweepers—Barges Are Flat-Bottomed and Will Be Floated, Not Launched—Some Are Self-Propelled and Have 1,100 Tons Carrying Capacity—For Service in the English Channel

TWENTY firms located in various parts of England, Ireland and Scotland are now building concrete ships. So far as is known, the first concrete boat of any description built in the British Isles was launched on Good Friday of this year; it was a 500-ton barge. Up to a month ago no other concrete boat had been launched in the British Isles, but a large number of them will be finished within the next month, and possibly some have been floated since the departure from England of the engineer to whom we are indebted for the following information and who is connected with one of the twenty firms above mentioned.

The designs for the boats that are being built have all been prepared by just six designers. In some cases a contractor or a group of contractors obtained the services of a naval architect and secured designs satisfactory to the admiralty. In other cases a firm of consulting engineers or naval architects prepared a design, secured for it the approval of the admiralty, and then allowed various

firms of contractors to use that design upon a royalty basis. All contracts were awarded upon a cost-plus basis, a fixed estimated cost being agreed upon for each boat. If the cost exceeds that amount, the contractor is paid only the percentage of the fixed amount; if the cost is less than the estimated amount, the contractor nevertheless receives his percentage on the whole of the fixed amount.

The construction of the concrete ships is under the jurisdiction of Lord Pirrie, Controller-General of Merchant Shipbuilding. The contracts were awarded in the spring of this year and amount to approximately \$25,000,000, including barges, tugs and drifters (mine sweepers). The largest of these are the barges, each of which has about 1,100 tons carrying capacity. The admiralty has not awarded any contracts for large freighters such as are being built by the American government, which has awarded contracts for \$40,000,000 worth of concrete ships, including a considerable number

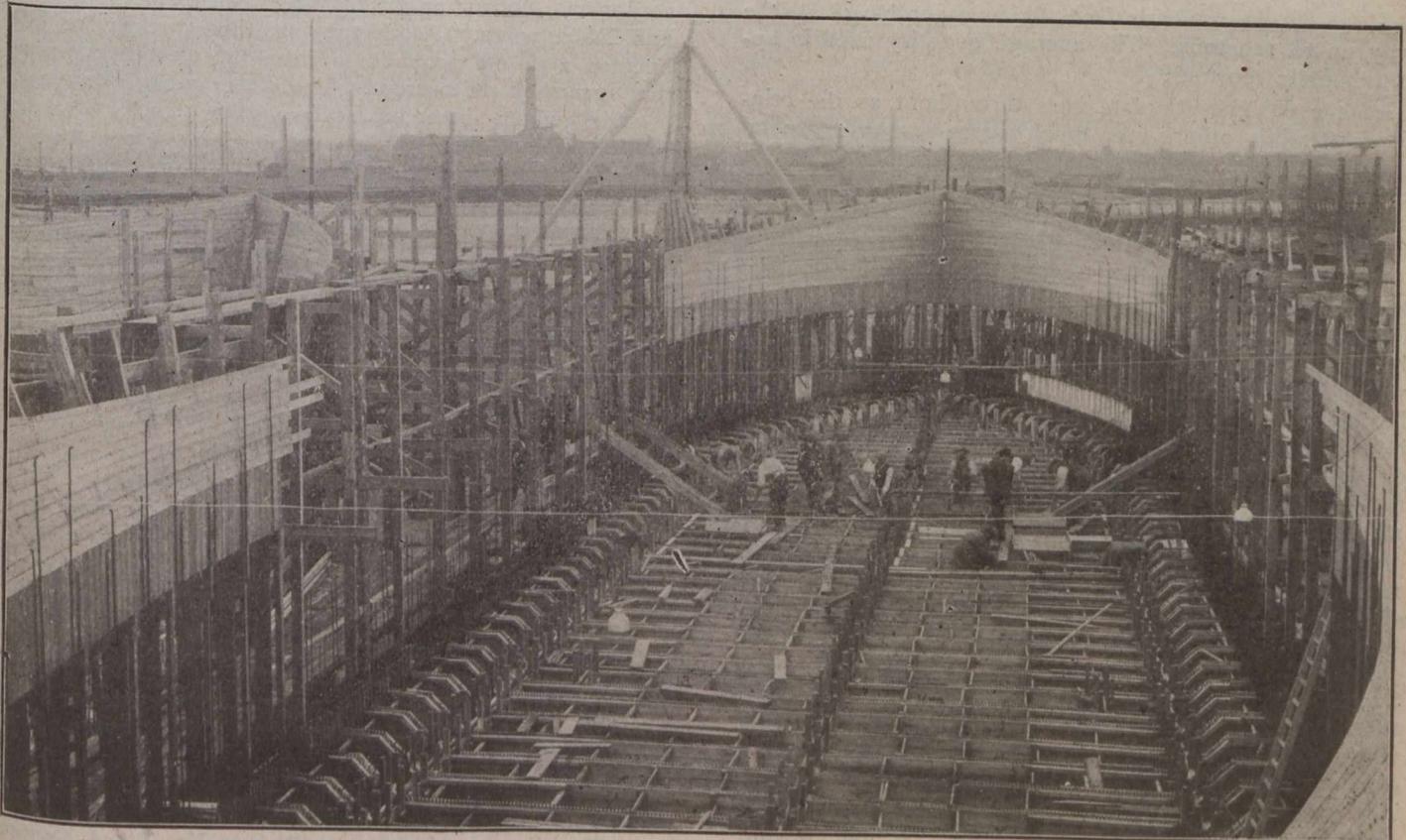


Fig. 1—Recent Photograph of Concrete Barge Now Under Construction in England