



### **William (Billy) Mulvaney – Pioneering International Engineer**

A proud Irishman, Billy Mulvaney graduated in 1971 from University College Galway with a degree in Civil Engineering. On graduating from college, he came to Sligo in August of that year to begin his engineering career in the offices of Jennings O'Donovan. Starting out in the overseas office under the guidance of Derry O'Donovan, Billy would go on to remain with the Jennings O'Donovan organisation for the next 46 years, retiring from the business at the end of January 2017. Those 46 years of loyal and unselfish commitment to the firm made Billy the longest serving

member of Jennings O'Donovan, longer than company founder Austin Jennings and his partner Derry O'Donovan after whom the company is named.

Charismatic and colourful, Billy enthralled generations of young engineers with stories of his many trips across the highways and byroads of Ireland during the 1970s, in the company of Austin Jennings on visits to County Engineers in various counties. Of even more interest were the experiences Billy shared of his international travels in the many overseas environments where he worked including the Middle East (Syria, Libya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Gaza/West Bank and Iraq) and Africa (Tanzania, Nigeria, Kenya, Zambia and the Sudan) as well as the Eastern European countries of Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Romania and laterally towards the end of his career in Turkey.

It is for his work on overseas projects that Billy will most be remembered. Billy, Derry O'Donovan and Pat Treacy were pioneers of Irish engineering overseas in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In different times to the world of today, with no mobile phones and no email, Billy was a brave young man leaving Ireland and journeying into the unknown in those then remote countries in the Middle East with minimal contact with head office in Sligo or indeed with home. Billy, Pat and Derry flew the flag not only for Jennings O'Donovan, but also for consulting engineering in Ireland. Building a highly respected reputation for his work, Billy was the project co-ordinator and senior engineer in the late 1970s and early 1980s for the design of some of the largest water supply projects in Iraq for cities such as Diwaniyah, Kerbala, Hilla, Najaf Kufa and Kirkuk which had a population of over 1 million people. His work on these water supply projects provided drawing design work for nearly one hundred people in the Jennings O'Donovan overseas offices at several locations across Sligo Town.

Iraq was almost a second home to Billy at the time and with so many projects ongoing, there were always rooms reserved for him in the Ramses Hotel in Baghdad. When Iran and Iraq went to war, Billy could no longer fly directly to Baghdad. Undeterred, Billy continued to oversee his Iraqi projects by flying to Amman in Jordan and taking a 24 hour taxi journey to Baghdad.

After Iraq, Billy spent three years working in Syria in charge of the European Investment Bank funded Sweida Water Supply Scheme involving the establishment of a project implementation unit, project design, supervision and provision of technical assistance for all aspects involved in the supply of treated water for Sweida City and its regional governate area, an overall population of 475,000 people. He returned from the three year sojourn in Syria with a white Mercedes making him instantly recognisable as he drove around Sligo. This conjured up images among the overseas staff of Lawrence of Arabia leaving on horseback, although with

Billy it was by horsepower as he left Syria and drove the white Mercedes across North Africa, up through Europe, back to the Northwest of Ireland and Sligo.

In the later years of his professional career, Billy worked on water and wastewater projects in Eastern Europe, on EU funded projects for pre-accession countries including Albania, Croatia, Romania and most recently of all in Turkey on two large wastewater projects at Lüleburgaz and at Amaysa, a project shortlisted by the Association of Consulting Engineers of Ireland for award in the overseas category.

Billy was renowned for his ability to assemble teams of competent engineering experts to successfully deliver these complex EU funded water services projects and for his technical skill in preparing detailed comprehensive submissions. These skills allowed Jennings O'Donovan compete for work from a base in the Northwest of Ireland with the largest consulting engineering firms from across Europe and be successful in winning large engineering commissions.

During his 46 years professional engineering career at Jennings O'Donovan, Billy saw much change from drawing on the boards with a T-square in pencil and ink in the early 1970s, through the advent of the computer, AutoCad, email and the internet, change which he took in his stride, adapting to the use of the emerging technologies. He witnessed change in the Jennings O'Donovan offices, moving from O'Connell Street to offices over the Café Cairo in Wine Street, to Harbour House, the old red brick building in Finisklin and finally to the current Head Office Building in Finisklin where Billy finished out his career.

An able, competent and most accomplished engineer and a larger than life character, Billy will be fondly remembered by all the many colleagues he worked with, both here in Ireland and in the many countries he worked in overseas, in the Middle East, Africa and Eastern Europe.

Jennings O'Donovan have lost a committed son in Billy, who dedicated all of his long professional career to the organisation, a feat unlikely to ever be equalled. We know he will be missed by his wife, sons and daughter. To Mary, Ted, Matt and Stephi, we extend our heartfelt sympathies at this time. He will be laid to rest on Thursday the 27<sup>th</sup> of October 2022 after 12 noon mass in St. Joseph's Church, Ballytivnan. Billy's memory will live on in Jennings O'Donovan, the company in which he proudly worked for 46 years.

*"Death comes to all, but great achievements build a monument which shall endure until the sun grows old"*

*-Georg Fabricius "In Praise of Georgius Agricola"*