



carlow

through the waters of time

Floating Heritage on the Barrow

Published by The Heritage Boat Association
www.heritageboatassociation.ie



Heritage Boat Association

Celebrating Ireland's Floating Heritage

www.heritageboatassociation.ie

We have published this book to celebrate the visit of the Heritage Boats to Carlow and to promote an increased awareness of our spectacular waterway system. We believe that increased knowledge of the pleasures and benefits available from the system will lead to greater use. This in turn will help to ensure a high level of conservation and so ensure that future generations will also be able to enjoy the wide range of activities the waterway system provides.

A great number of people and organisations have been involved in the production of this booklet. They have provided photographs, historical data, articles, anecdotes and a variety of other input. There are too many to mention individually but we would like to thank them all for their invaluable contributions. We wish however, to single out Waterways Ireland for the positive operational and marketing support they have provided. Without them this project would not have been possible.

Sean O'Reilly

Chairman—Heritage Boat Association

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Heritage Boat Association

Brian J. Goggin

We define a Heritage Boat as—
"a boat over 25 years old which is of significance because of its intrinsic construction or because of its association with the commercial, cultural, economic, industrial, military, political, social or other history of the country."

Some of our members own heritage boats and some do not, but all who are interested in our work are welcome to join and support us. And what is that work? The easiest way to answer that is to say that it means promoting the things we value.

Obviously, that includes heritage boats, other old boats and even new ones. But for many of us, older boats have a special appeal, and especially the older boats that, in bygone days, earned their living on the waterways of Ireland, north and

south. Some of these boats are well over a hundred years old. They had hard working lives and they've been re-plated, patched, re-engined and adapted for leisure use. But they keep on going, their hulls retaining their original shapes and their spirits retaining that original toughness that has enabled them to survive for so long. There are no hundred-year-old aeroplanes in Ireland and very few railway engines, steam tractors or road vehicles. But we do still have the boats, and they're still in regular use. Long may they remain so.

The second set of things we value is the Irish waterways. Nowadays, the Shannon and the Erne have lots of bright new boats, and those rivers don't need us to promote their virtues — although fifty years ago it was a different matter. But the canals and the Barrow have not seen the same

growth, and we want to see lots more people using them, whether for walking the banks, fishing, rowing, canoeing, cruising: indeed any activity that doesn't damage the canals or their environment or affect the enjoyment or safety of other users. So every year for the past few years, a group of us have taken a long-distance expedition in the spring, partly because we enjoy the canals and Barrow and

HBA boats at Carrick-on-Shannon 2003





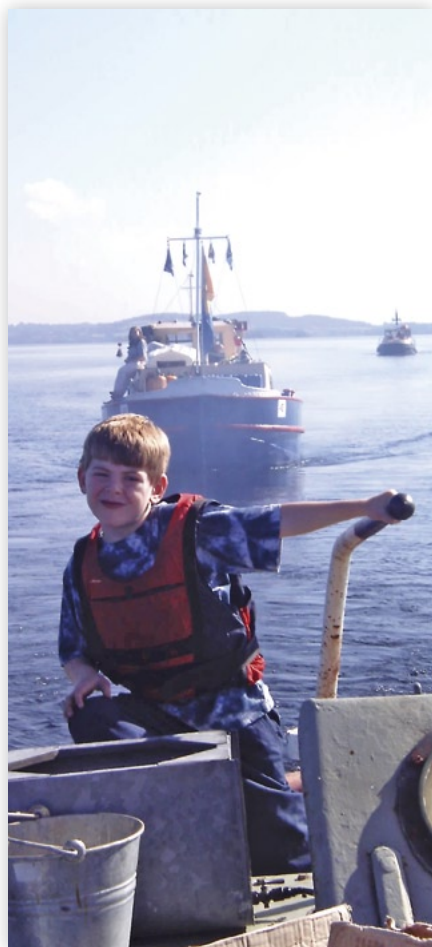
HBA boats form a 'raft' on Lough Erne. Left to right they are Horse Boat No. 2 (Dabu), Shanice, 76M, 35M, 31B, 41M, 4E, 42B (Snark), De Eems, 68M, 34B, Blackthorn, Ala Cart, and Chang Sha.

partly because we want to attract attention to the waterways and to encourage other people to come and use them. And what nicer waterway could you have than the Barrow.

Finally, bringing boats around the waterways gives you some idea of the skills that the boatmen needed in the old days of the commercial traffic. But even if some of us have to stand out in the rain to steer, we have the benefit of modern waterproofs and warm cabins to retreat into. If we don't feel like going out in the rain we can stay tied up; we don't have to start at six o'clock in the morning or keep going all night and we don't have to carry 16- or 20-stone sacks of cargo on board before setting off.

By comparison with the boatmen of the trading days, we have it easy. And knowledge of the conditions they worked under heightens our appreciation of the skills they developed. Those skills were nowhere more highly developed than on the Barrow, which had a long history of trading well before the Grand Canal Company took over the navigation. So we are delighted to be in Carlow, on the Barrow, at the same time as the Boatmen's Reunion, and to pay tribute to the men who worked these boats in hail rain or snow, and whose contribution to Ireland's economic development hasn't had half the recognition it deserves.

A new generation—Ben, from 4E (behind him) at the tiller of 45M. 68M in distance, August 2004.



Carlow

Through the waters of time

Since time began Carlow has carried her mysteries along her rivers. Waterways winding gently through the rolling valleys of this county have carried people from 6,000 years ago until now, and their legacy can be seen in its mystical ancient pagan sites, its early Christian settlements, its magnificent Georgian country homes and gardens, and its picturesque riverside towns and villages. Against this timeless landscape, visitors will uncover a unique experience—exhilarating outdoor adventure, traditional rural life, vibrant shopping and a rich cultural heritage.

The River Barrow is Ireland's second longest river. It runs for 192km from its source in the Slieve Bloom Mountains to the sea and is the first of the three rivers which eventually become part of the Three Sisters, including the Nore and the Suir. Between them they forge beautiful and historic river valleys and are part of a rich heritage in Ireland's South-East.

The most developed navigation of the three is on the Barrow, which is navigable for hire cruisers from Athy to St. Mullins, some 68km. There are 23 locks on this stretch, including the head of the tideway at St. Mullins. The Barrow line of the Grand Canal is 46km long and forms the second part of the navigation carrying 9 locks between Lowtown and the junction of the Barrow at Athy. Running westwards and eastwards from Lowtown is the main line of the Grand Canal, which can be cruised

to the Shannon and Dublin respectively, providing 300km of pleasure waterway.

The Barrow hinterland is imbued with a riverside culture which is steeped in tradition, a people who are warm and welcoming and a plethora of pubs and restaurants where the best of food, entertainment and hospitality can be enjoyed. Cruising the River Barrow is a unique experience due to its unspoilt, uncommercialized and uncrowded waters. There are no long queues passing through locks and no problems getting space at quaysides. The waters of the Barrow are suitable for swimmers, while the track line and woodlands beside the River offer a superb walking environment. Cyclists and walkers can explore the historic castles and ruins and the scenic countryside on the quiet roads each side of the river. A journey along the gentle River Barrow takes the traveller to a tranquil bygone time where bird watching, canoeing, angling and boating can all be enjoyed at ease.

History of the Barrow

Since time began the River Barrow has borne the life of Carlow upon its slow moving waters. Over 300 years before the Christian era, legend has it that a great battle took place to capture the fort of Dinn Righ, a large mound near Leighlin-bridge. The presence of such a formidable defensive structure indicates the importance of the Barrow as a strategic military highway as well as a highway for com-

merce since early Christian times.

Evidence of early Christian and later medieval church establishments can be seen all along the river, notably at or near St. Mullins, Old Leighlin, Carlow, Nurney and Monasterevin. During World War II, the great engineering company, Thompsons of Carlow built armoured cars for the Irish Army, as well as a fleet of canal barges for the Government, to cope with the wartime fuel emergency, carrying turf to Dublin to create a national stockpile of fuel stored in the Phoenix Park. These barges were classed "G Boats" by the Grand Canal Company.

The Barrow was a significant commercial canalised waterway right up to the 1950's, with important river ports at Athy, Carlow, Graigueamanagh and New Ross. Barges carried consignments of malting barley to Dublin as raw material for the famous Guinness stout, which was transported back downstream in its finished state. Later, beet-filled barges supplied Ireland's first sugar factory at Carlow. This was a prosperous era on the River. For the year ending 31st March 1956, 89,640 tonnes were carried by barge. Based on 50 tonne loads this equates to 1,793 barge movements in one year, ensuring a clean waterway and canal. Carlow generated approximately 40,000 tonnes of the above cargo.

However, with the takeover by C.I.E. under the Transport Act 1950, who were more supportive of their road and rail traffic, the

demise of the river system was inevitable

Towns and Quiet Country Village

Nestled in sleepy nooks along the River Barrow are some of the most beautiful country towns and villages in Ireland.

Carlow Town

Carlow Town, the county capital, has a rich historic tradition. The remains of a Norman Castle, built by William de Marshall (1208 – 1212 A.D.) stands on the eastern bank of the River. This was once an important military fortress, strategically sited on the south-eastern corner of the Pale. While the river remains an important focus for the town other influences include a bustling student population, a thriving arts and crafts community, a strong tradition of Irish language and culture and a superb range of shops and boutiques. Here and



Carlow street scene

throughout the county a dynamic and vibrant nightlife kicks off in the evenings with live music and entertainment, including traditional Irish music sessions. The county also boasts a wide range of international restaurants.

The Boats:

M-boats and Bolinders

The Grand Canal Company had long been aware of the problems of transportation on a mixed navigation of canal, river and lake. When internal combustion oil engines became available, they carried out trials in 1910. In May 1911 they ordered six (subsequently reduced to four) Bolinder engines – and two complete motor barges equipped with the same engines – from the British Bolinder agents, James Pollock and Sons.

The engines were successfully used in horse boats in July 1911 and thus the Company became the first to motorise in the British Isles. The boats were the Athy and 9M, measuring 60' X 12' 6". The Athy had a 20hp engine with a 12" bulwark all round. 9M had a 15hp engine.

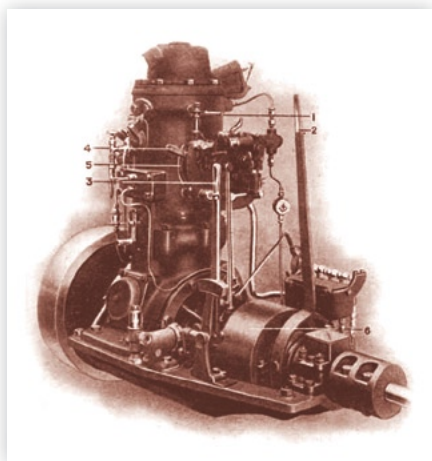
The Bolinder Company

The Bolinder Company was founded in Stockholm by the teenage brothers Karl and Jean Bolinder in 1832. They first produced components for steam engines, railways and sawmill machinery. They developed their first internal combustion engine, a four-stroke hot bulb, in 1893. In 1903 E. A. Rundlof invented the two-stroke, crank case scavenge hot bulb engine and passed it on to the Bolinders, who developed their range of semi-diesels from this – and the legend was born. The engines were so reliable and durable that they were used in barges throughout the world and Bolinder became synonymous with barge engine. The engines installed by the

Grand Canal Company in 1911 were the 1908 E-type single-cylinder 8.35-litre direct reversing engines (invariably 15bhp). These were in continuous use in the fleet until CIE removed the last working Bolinders from its maintenance boats in the mid-seventies. Consequently the E-type is known as the Irish engine.

How the engines work

The semi-diesel is the link between steam and internal combustion. A semi-diesel relies for combustion on heat and compression, whereas in Dr. Diesel's engine combustion is caused by compression alone. The vertical block of the Bolinder is surmounted by a pre-heated cast iron hollow hot bulb, where combustion takes place, driving down the piston through a vent in the bulb. This remains hot, allowing the fuel to combust and the air to change without high compression.



Peripherals such as the water-pump, fuel-oil pump and five lubricating-oil pumps in line, each with its own oil well, are driven by eccentrics from the shaft—all exposed and fully accessible in the steam engineering tradition. The silencer or expansion chamber is bolted to the block and is almost as large, being water-cooled by direct circulation with the engine. The starting ritual involves pre-heating the hot bulb with a blow-lamp and hand-pumping oil to the main bearings, big end, small end and piston, and greasing several exposed lesser bearings. Heating takes about ten minutes, but varies according to the age and condition of the bulb.

At the crucial moment, a few squirts of fuel are pumped into the bulb and a smart swing of the great flywheel, with the hand or the boot, results in combustion. Non-starting usually arises from attempting to start before the bulb is fully heated, with repeated squirts of fuel and exhaustive flywheel swinging—and an engine-room full of noxious diesel vapour. Spontaneous loud explosions contribute to spectator sport on the bank, followed by resolutions (over pints) to get rid of it and put in a proper engine.

Overheating of the bulb causes expansion of the block and loss of compression, with the same result: non-starting and similar resolutions. Writing in 'Canal Mania' (Arum Press, 1993) Anthony Burton, the canal historian, deduced that life was seldom dull with a Bolinder!

The new fleet

In 1925 the Canal Company commenced building a fleet of custom-built steel motor canal-boats. Powered by the 15bhp E-type Bolinder, they measured about 60' X 13' X 5' 6". They had bluff bows with accommodation forward for a crew of four.

The cargo hold was 40', separated from the engine-room and bows by watertight bulkheads. The plates were quarter-inch and hot-riveted on angle rames.

Over the next fourteen years, 48 boats were built, numbering from 31M to 79M. With a few exceptions, they were built by Vickers (Ireland) in the Liffey Dockyard and were over-engineered, with the exception of the turn of the bilges which, being subject to constant wear when fully laden on the canal, needed regular patching. In James' St. Harbour the forge was at the dry-docks.

A day at the harbour

Gerard D'Arcy, whose father was canal manager, describes a typical day at the harbour in the early 1950s. The first sound at 5.00 or 6.00 was of a blow-lamp starting, followed by a colossal bang, back-firing, starting and further back-firing. (It was often difficult to get the bulb hot enough, with the old paraffin blow-lamps, to ensure a smooth start.)

After the engine was started, it was essential to keep the bulb hot, so the clutch was engaged as soon as possible and the throttle turned fully up. There was no gearbox, in the steam tradition. The throttle was of the hit-and-miss variety peculiar to these engines. A striker on an eccentric engaged the end of the fuel-oil pump-piston, injecting some fuel into the bulb. The tension on a spring above the striker determined the frequency with which the striker engaged. At full tension and throttle, it engaged nearly every time. A short distance out from the harbour, dropping revs and black smoke would indicate overheating and pre-ignition. At this stage the engineer would introduce the combustion water, from a deck tank, in a gradual drip into the engine; this would cool the bulb,

increasing the revs and ensuring a small puff of blue exhaust. The engine was now more or less set.

Locks

There was no reverse gear. To put the engine into reverse it was necessary to put it out of gear and then cut the engine, re-engaging it in reverse when it was just about to stall. The boatmen all exhibited great expertise at this procedure; however it was not something that was used routinely. With 47 tons of cargo and drawing 4' 6", the boats were run into the locks at high revs and checked by an 80' rope whipped around the wooden stop post at the lock. The volume of water against the bluff bows also acted as a brake. With the stop-rope made fast, the clutch was kept engaged at high revs to keep the bulb hot and prevent the engine from cooling and stalling in the lock.

Then and now

So on to Shannon Harbour at about 4 knots, reaching Limerick in around four and a half days. But that was in the early 1950s and, while hot bulb handling was transformed subsequently by bottled propane/butane gas, in Ireland the Bolinder, with its unique sound, is going the way of the Corncrake. As far as can be ascertained, at the present time only four boats – 45M, 50M, 75M and 78M – retain their original engines.

In Britain, where canal heritage is cherished, the Bolinders are highly prized. Reconditioned and restored engines are frequently reinstalled in traditional narrow-boats, attracting much attention at rallies, and Volvo (who acquired the Bolinder Company) present an annual trophy for the best-kept engine.

Oliver Connolly



119B



39M at Monasterevin



37M crew: Pat & Oliver McDonald, John Gill and John Connolly Senior.

I'm Selling My Horse

The Bolinder Song

I'm selling my horse, I'm changing my ways
Gone are the times of the horse boating days.
Got a new boat with Bolinder power,
Runs me along at four miles an hour.

Chorus.

*Farewell to the bobbin and the bit and the rein,
Farewell to the blinker and the bridle and the hame,
Farewell to the collar and the stretcher and the trace
The horse is no more, it's a new boating race.*

I've had my old horse for nigh on twelve years,
He's brought me some laughs, he's brought me some tears,
But now he must go, the horse is no more,
Bolinder power has come to the fore

Chorus.

*Farewell to the bobbin and the bit and the rein,
Farewell to the blinker and the bridle and the hame,
Farewell to the collar and the stretcher and the trace
The horse is no more, it's a new boating race.*

No more the sound of hoof beats on the towpath,
No more the crack of whips as the boaters pass,
No more the rope grooves in a bridge face,
The horse is no more it's a new boating race

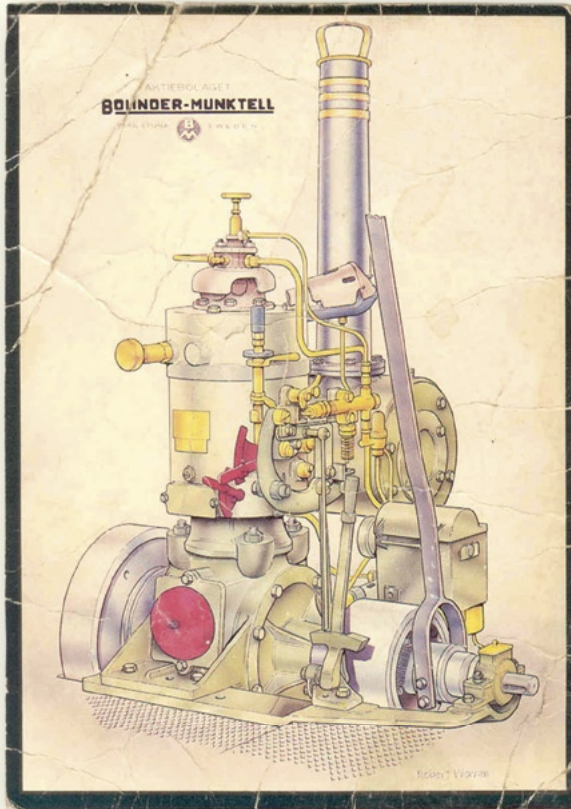
Chorus

*Farewell to the bobbin and the bit and the rein,
Farewell to the blinker and the bridle and the hame,
Farewell to the collar and the stretcher and the trace
The horse is no more, it's a new boating race.*

But who will I talk to when I feel down?
Who'll talk to me when I run a long pound?
You talk to an engine, get no reply,
Just smelly old diesel in your eye

Chorus

*Farewell to the bobbin and the bit and the rein,
Farewell to the blinker and the bridle and the hame,
Farewell to the collar and the stretcher and the trace
The horse is no more, it's a new boating race.*



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Grand Canal Boatmen's Reunion

Mary Hoare Walsh

In December 1959 and early January 1960 the Canal Boats ceased trading, with the exception of the Guinness trade to Limerick, which went on for another six months. Most of the lads were let go, breaking family links which for most of them went back three or more generations. A sad time for all whose families had been involved with the boats, a way of life had gone, and men of all ages hit the emigration trail. This looked like many men who had boated together for most of their lives would not meet again

Then in 1986 a number of people got together and with the help of Rev. Fr. Liam Merrigan, who had served in the Parishes of Graignamanagh and Allen, both boating strongholds, arranged a Boatmen's Reunion in Robertstown. The members of this committee were Mrs. Nellie Kelly, Mrs. Nancy Lynch and Paddy Kane who then recruited his daughters-in law Agatha and Bridget to look after the Canal men. The members of the Barrow area were John Connolly, Pierie Bolger and Jim Gill. John was assisted by his wife Margaret.

Unfortunately Paddy, John and Pierie have gone to their Eternal Reward. May they Rest in Peace.

The first Reunion was held in the Canal Hotel in Robertstown in 1986 and then in Graignamanagh in 1987, it was year about between those two towns until 1992 when we went to Killaloe.

The year 1993 saw us in Carlow in the then Belmont Hotel, back to Killaloe in '94 then to the Lord Bagnal twice, to Athy once, Graignamanagh and Robertstown a number of times and last year (2004) to Daingean and this year (2005) in Carlow.

This year is our 20th reunion and we were delighted to have The Heritage Boats Association join us last year in Daingean and to welcome even more boats to Carlow this year. It is great to see so many of the Boats again and we look forward to a long and happy association with them and their owners.

I missed the first two reunions but I have enjoyed all eighteen of them since, I only began to help organize in the last few years after the deaths of the original people, who had put such a lot of hard work into it. Each year I have enjoyed our reunions as I hope everyone else has, it is a great opportunity to meet old friends.

To finish, a big thank you to all those who put in so much work down through the years, welcome to the Heritage Boat Association and last and most importantly a big thank-you to Fr. Liam who has come every year to offer Mass and to join us in our celebrations.

We remember all our friends who have gone. May they be with their Master and Heaven's light shine on. Those one time hardy sons of toil the Boatmen that are gone.



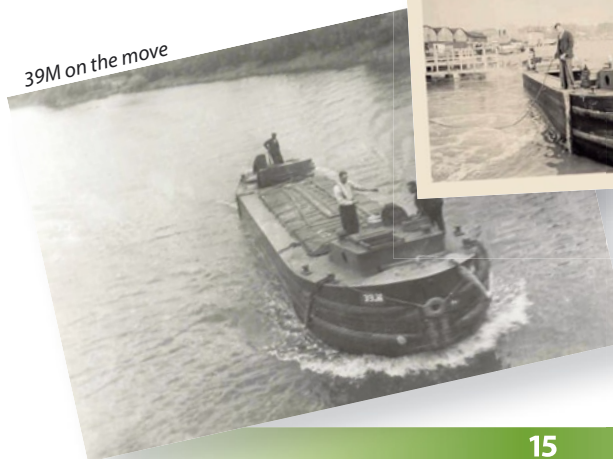
2004 reunion attendees grouped around a Bolinder engine. Present in the photograph are: Oliver McDonald, Todd Conroy, Sean Donohue, Mike Donohue, Billy Bolger, Larry McGrath, Paddy Dunne, Paddy McGrath, Tomsie Kennedy, Andy Maloney, Tom Connolly, Sean Anderson, Tom Nolan and Tim Connolly.



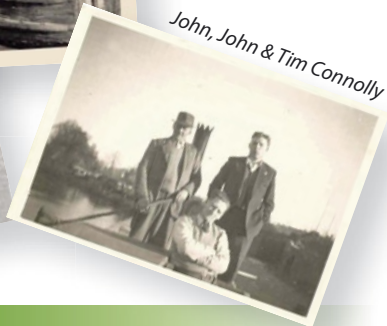
46M, Martin Foley, New Ross



39M on the move



John, John & Tim Connolly



The Old Canal Store

By Jack Phelan

1950 marked a turning point for Ireland's transport system, and especially for the Country's canals and inland waterway navigation. It was in 1950 that the then Government decided to nationalise transport, and so a new Coras Iompair Eireann took over the operation of railways, buses and canals and we were promised "a fully integrated system of transport", which would, we were told, make Ireland a model for other countries to follow.

Prior to 1950 the Grand Canal Company controlled the original Grand Canal from Dublin to the Shannon, its branch canals, the Barrow Navigation from Athy to St. Mullins and ran its own fleet of motorised barges (always called "boats" by the men who worked on them). This fleet operated as far as Waterford City, Limerick City, Ballinasloe, Athlone and on to Carrick-on-Shannon in County Leitrim. The Shannon navigation was controlled by a separate authority but the actual carrying was to all intent in the hands of the Grand Canal Company. The Company also collected tolls from private boats ("hackers") which traded on the system and had its own fleet of lorries which distributed goods over a wide area.

In Carlow the Company had its depot on the Quay just below Centaur Street. This depot was a very plain mass concrete building which in 1950 consisted of the original structure, a large open plan ware-

house, and at its Southern end had a more recent extension with windows and which contained offices. When the Company became part of CIE (1950 version) Mr. Jack Flynn was their Manager in Carlow. Jack was a quiet, taciturn man who lived in Graiguecullen in the shadow of the Barrow Mills. He was married and had 2 children, a son, Jack Flynn Junior, who originally worked in the office of the Sugar Company prior to emigrating to what was then Rhodesia, and a daughter Joan, a National Teacher, who in due course married Seán O'Beirne from Galway and moved to that City. Incidentally, I believe that Jack Flynn's title was "Agent of the Grand Canal Company, Superintendent of the Barrow Navigation and Collector of Tolls".

Looking now at the very modern two storeyed Carlow Rowing Club, with its veranda and row of windows looking out on the Barrow, its hard to believe that this structure is and was the canal depot, plain and rather gloomy looking with a crane at its northern end for the loading and unloading of the company's boats.

It's even harder now for younger people who were not born in the 1950's or even the 1960's to imagine the scene prior to 1950. Today, sleek eights, fours, double and single sculls are rowed away from the excellent stepped slipway with Carlow's finest young women and men adding to a wonderful panorama of pleasure and athleticism.



View from the canal store in 1908. Note the horse-drawn barges, stables on the far side (now the Town Park) and the church steeple, on the Athy road, which was moved stone by stone to Graiguecullen.

It wasn't always like that – certainly not at the Grand Canal Depot. In 1950 a typical day would have started early in the morning with two distinct and different smells. There would have been the aroma of bacon and eggs emanating from the cabins up in the bows of the black canal boats moored alongside the old grey building. The 3 man crews would be up and about and breakfasts being eaten, washed down by copious mugs of strong (very strong) tea. Boatmen drank tea on duty, porter when the day was done, and coffee was some kind of effete mixture taken up town by people who didn't know better.

The next smell was a hot one – blow lamps roaring as the skippers heated the bulbs to red hot on the Bolinder engines in the engine compartment down aft, and then came the swinging of the flywheel and the first gentle sound – a mixture of a cough and a puff and after a few more swings the

distinctive dry coughing of the Bolinders and those doughty old engines would thump away for the rest of the day.

Early morning departures, then boats which had arrived the previous night departing to Bagenalstown, New Ross and Waterford with mixed cargos, whilst northbound boats, some having arrived from the South the night before, leaving for Dublin and others now empty commencing to load.

Carlow's depot housed many commodities. Bags of sugar (sacks really) for despatching to towns all along Barrow and Grand Canal. Malt, mineral waters, hides, porter – barrels and boxed bottles of Guinness, fertilisers – for the canal was king for bulk and heavy cargos. All day the loading would go on and as loaded boats would leave straining against the flow of the river, boats coming south to Carlow would be

heard first and then seen coming around the last bend below Cox's Lane prior to coming alongside.

Boats approaching the Canal Store from Dublin and the north always turned and berthed with their bows facing Dublin. The prevailing flow of the River meant that boats from the north would be travelling quite fast even on reduced engine power. As the boat approached and drew level with the Canal Store the skipper would put the tiller hard over and the boat would turn hard to starboard, i.e. to the right.

Now for many years the Barrow opposite the Canal Store was divided into 2 channels by a long island. Bystanders watching canal boats turning would gasp with shock as the blunt round prow of the boats struck the Island causing the vessel to stop in its tracks and then the southerly flow of the river would catch the boat, now immobile across the channel and the boat would swing right around to face up river; a quick juggling of the throttle control and the tiller again hard over and the canal boat glided over to tie up. Yes – those boatmen were extremely skilled in the control of those seemingly awkward and hard to manage canal boats.

The crane already referred would be busy all day; it was especially useful in unloading the large rolls of newsprint arriving in Carlow for the Nationalist and Leinster Times and in unloading full barrels of Guinness and loading empty barrels bound back for James St. Harbour. All the time Jack Flynn would be in and out of the office checking loads, handing out forms and inevitably, on paydays, giving out the pay envelopes. However, it wasn't just boats to be attended to — bottle green trucks with the golden garter crest of the Grand Canal Company on their doors

would be taking on loads of Guinness and other commodities for distribution to places in the County and these trucks would have their own paper work too.

Jack Flynn would also be required to visit the Beet Factory during the beet campaign because very substantial tonnages of beet came to Carlow by canal. The Beet Factory had its own harbour and dock up near the 3 Boats Bend, and cranes there unloaded boatloads of beet. There was even a swing bridge across the entrance to the Beet Factory harbour which had to be swung open to allow boats to enter and depart.

Across the river in Carlow town Graigue-Cullen had its own long quay and it was here that the private canal boats were to be found. Remember the boat owning families of the Moores and Farrells? Then too one could know whether a boat was company or private as private boats carried the prefix 'B' and then their number, e.g. B-16 whilst the Grand Canal Company boats had the letter 'M' followed by their number, e.g. M-56. Canal Boats normally did not have names; on the River Navigation the company did have the 'St. Patrick', 'St. Brigid' and 'St. James'; whilst on the Suir one remembers the 'Knocknagow 1', 'Knocknagow II' and 'Rock Sand' of Dowleys running to Carrick-on-Suir.

Then came 1950, Nationalisation and that 'fully integrated system of transport'. For a while it was just the same as before. True the trucks were now painted two-tone green with grey bodies and adorned with the 'Flying Snail'. Still the boats operated, both company and private.

Change was coming – possibly a bit snail like & slithery. So the tolls were sharply increased and by 1954 there remained two

private boats only at Graigue-Cullen, but they didn't trade any more – the tolls had destroyed their profitability.

Then C.I.E. ceased to operate their own boats south of Carlow. No – the system was not closed – not at all. Boats were loaded fully in Dublin for Waterford and New Ross and set off down the Canal. On arrival at Carlow these loaded boats were unloaded, their cargos transferred to new Matador lorries and off went the goods to – yes, Waterford and New Ross. And indeed lorries were loaded up at both New Ross and Waterford despatched “canal” to Dublin and on arrival at Carlow the loads were transferred to boats and so on to Dublin. So now we had CIE's road freight, rail and canal sections busily competing against one another for the same goods with different ‘agents’ quoting competing rates against their fellow workers.

Came the day when a ‘bright fellow’ came up with a novel idea— close down the Canal side of things, including the beet traffic to Carlow, and transfer all the traffic to road. Great and so that's what was done. And so the Canal depot fell silent, the boats didn't come any more, the boat crews were paid off and Jack Flynn found himself retired. No more smells of early breakfasts, no more “thump-hump” of Bolinder engines, no more playing handball by boatmen against the sides of buildings next to Losty's pub and no more boatmen having their evening pints in Losty's after teatime Carlow arrivals.

So— what to do with that rather ugly and utilitarian riverside building? Ah yes, property section will sell it by public auction, and so the old place was put on the market. And the author was privileged to bid for the premises on behalf of Carlow Rowing Club and did succeed in getting it

for the Club. For a while the Club rented the premises to James J. Oliver & Co. Ltd., for storage and also used part of it for the storage of waste paper — because having spent all our money (and all the Bank of Ireland had lent us too) it would be a while before the Club had the money to commence to transform that ugly duckling into a swan. Well we did raise money to convert the canal store into a Rowing Club, and so William Byrne, builder, was appointed contractor and he and his men, working to the designs of Mr. Godfrey McDonald, Architect of Dublin St. Carlow, had a splendid ‘new’ club ready to be opened in 1962 by I.A.R.U. President Mr. David Gourlay of Belfast Commercial Rowing Club.

So the old Canal Store, already enlarged by the Grand Canal Company took on a new lease of life. And then it became a part of Carlow Vocational School. The Co. Carlow V.E.C. were short of classrooms and they rented out 3 rooms in the premises as classrooms – what ‘Arthur Daley’ of ‘Minder’ would have called “a nice little earner”, and its use hasn't ended there. At election times the new Club was often used as a polling booth. Club Socials and dances were also run there and later again an extension taking in a very fine gymnasium was built on the bridge side of the store, and a club licence was obtained and has operated now for many years.

Then in 2001 the Club decided to expand and it was realised that the only way to go was upwards – so new designs, new architects, new fund raising, new contractors and on 12th September 2003 the 2 storey club ‘with veranda’ was officially declared open. So – it was a very plain, not to say ugly, structure originally – but that old canal store has a record of service to the River Barrow and Carlow second to none.

Carlow Rowing

Still Going Strong

It is always important to get dates right – just as important that the statistics are correct. So when writing about Carlow's Rowing Club I believe that the following dates and statistics are all important, viz:-

1859: Carlow Rowing Club founded

2005: Carlow Rowing Club still going strong.

Curiously there are arguments to be made that Carlow's Rowing Club was there prior to 1859. Boat races were held on the Barrow prior to 1859 – but no written records remain and as there is only anecdotal evidence of such racing it is now accepted that the holding of Carlow Regatta in 1858 marks the foundation year of the present club.

Mystery surrounds the fate of the Acton Cup – which was presented to the Committee in 1860 by Sir John Acton, the then M.P. for the Borough of Carlow. The Cup was not returned after a regatta. A member of the Club who was a medical student saw the Cup in a Jewellers Shop window in Dublin in 1901 or 1902 – and there our mystery remains unsolved. By 1861 the Club were in communication with the Dublin University Rowing Club – Ireland's first fully constituted rowing club and a Club no longer in existence having been amalgamated with the rival Dublin University Boat Club.

Carlow Rowing Club resembles a mini-

Ireland – enjoying periods of prosperity, followed by decline, depressions and then again revival with the economic climate improving.

Thus in 1884 the Club was flourishing; its membership stood at 95 and its crews were travelling as far afield as Waterford. This happy time continued until 1897 when the minutes stopped and there are no written records until 1916.

And yet the years 1900 to 1903 saw Carlow Rowing Club as one of Ireland's greatest Rowing Clubs. The famous four of Messrs. Bell, Duggan, Boake and Orr rowed together for four years and won races for the Club at Waterford, Wexford, Carlow, New Ross and the Dublin University Regatta at Chapelizod.

So famed were they that in 1903 the Irish Times cited Carlow as the premier crew of 1903. As a signal honour they were invited to compete free of charge at Cork in 1903 – an outing which yielded no joy.

By 1922 there were 140 members and the Club was financially secure – but bad days were coming. The Committee saw no reason to waste money “gallivanting” to other Regattas so equipment was allowed to run down and if crews travelled they got so little expenses that literally the members were paying for themselves to compete at Regattas.

1928 to 1932 saw Club crews rowing at 17



Carlow Rowing Club

events and Regattas in Wexford, New Ross, Waterford, Carrick-on-Suir, Athlone, Carlow, Islandbridge. 1932 saw a Carlow Senior Four consisting of Jim Oliver (a Senior), Bill Duggan (a Junior) and 2 Maiden Oarsmen – Bill Fenlon and Liam D. Bergin. They won a great victory at Waterford and effectively competitive rowing ceased for 20 years until the next revival in 1952.

Yes – from 1933 to 1953 no crews represented Carlow at Regattas. True the Club continued to exist – it had a fleet of pleasure boats numbering over 30 in 1929, and these boats kept the tradition of a boat on the Barrow alive.

The bad years had seen the Committee sell the Club's outrigger fours so when rowing re-started a second hand clinker four was bought from Waterford and Carlow "came back" in 1953. By 1955 the Club had Senior and Maiden Crews appearing all over

Ireland, rowing in a new clinker four and a new fine four, and for the first time in its 94 year history Carlow were competing in and winning eights events as well.

The legendary Carlow Senior 4 of 1954 and 1955 won 11 senior cups in those 2 years – culminating in bringing home the Metropolitan Grand Challenge Club (the Blue Riband of Irish Rowing) at the Dublin Metropolitan Regatta of 1955. For the record the members of that Senior Four were – Cox: Joe Fenlon, Stk: Maurice Dowling, 3: Harry Griffiths, 2: Eamonn Stafford, Bow: Michael Bolger and/or Shirley Gillespie who replaced Michael Bolger at Limerick in 1954.

And so the last 50 years have seen unprecedented levels of rowing activity at Carlow. The far seeing Committee who had revived the Club expanded Club activities from purely male adult activity into youth and

schools rowing from 1956 onwards and early in the Nineteen Sixties female competitive rowing started. A huge increase in numbers rowing has resulted with massive results and victories accruing.

The Club's crews have rowed in Ireland and Great Britain; club members have worn the Irish Rowing Singlet with great distinction; a County Carlow man – Seán Drea has won the Diamond Sculls at Henley, appeared in Olympic events and dominated European and World Sculling events, and many overseas crews have competed at Carlow Regatta.

This Regatta, once an evenings entertainment with a few races, some swimming events, a greasy pole and perhaps a duck

chase has since 1953 become a huge rowing festival – indeed Championship events were common at Carlow in the 1960s, and today regularly plays host to well over 120 crews of all grades and sexes.

Then in the Nineteenth century the Club rented premises at €10 per year in Skinner's Lane – in 1962 it opened its new clubhouse in the renovated and transformed Canal Store and now has re-built, re-modelled and completely transformed that 1962 Clubhouse into the present 2 storey structure – complete of course with verandah – a very far cry from that day in 1859 when the first documented rowing event was run off on the Barrow at Carlow.

Jack Phelan



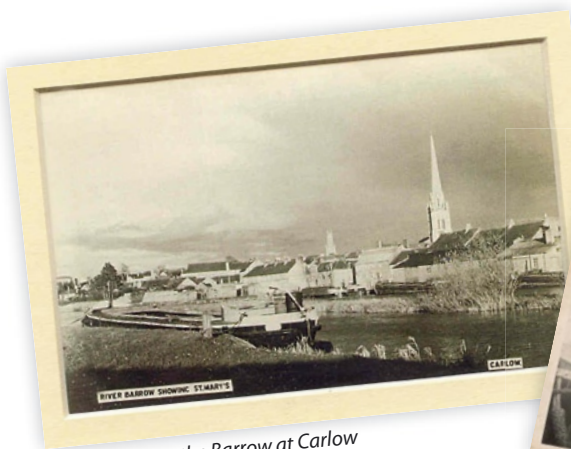
Peter Duggan Junior on 62M

Back to front, Jack Pender, Tom Connolly, with Sean Murphy at the tiller of 37M.





Barge 110 G.C.C.



34B Moored on the Barrow at Carlow



62M

Built in 1878, Canal Boat No.2 is the second iron boat ever built for the Grand Canal Company. Probably built by Bewley & Webb, Dublin, who built most of the early iron trade boats, she would have cost in the region of £300. 61'3" in length and 13'3" wide, she is built of $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch Swedish iron, and her ribs, which are 2½" x 2½" angle iron, are at 2' centres. Everything is held together with "hot rivets" which are 2" apart.

Her pointed nose, rounded stern and her keel allow her to be moved easily through the water, as No.2 was designed as a horse boat and never had an engine in the trading days.

Registered in 1907 as No.2 in Killaloe, she would have carried all types of cargo, from manure, turf, coal and gravel to flour, wheat, Guinness and other general groceries.

The Bat(left) &Dabu(right) sunk in Killaloe c1960. Mick Donoghue in picture.



No.2, as with all the other horse boats of the time, had a crew of 3, consisting of a captain, a deckhand and a horseman. The Captains quarters were at the stern of the boat and contained one bed and a closed fire. The crews quarters were at the bow and this room had 2 beds and a pot-bellied stove.

She ended her working days as a 'dumb barge' carrying muck and dirt etc. on the building of Ardnacrusha power station in the 1940s and early 50's. Construction completed, she lay abandoned to a watery grave opposite the hotel in Killaloe after approximately 75 years of service.

Seeing her sunk in Killaloe in 1966, my parents Sean & Brigid Bayly fell in love with her design as No. 2 was unlike the other trade boats on the canal, which were flat nosed and flat bottomed. Raised from the bottom by John Weaving, she was towed down the canal to Clondalkin by Paddy Wilkinson and 76M, where the conversion to 12 berth cruiser would take place over the next 8 months.

A stern tube and No. 2's first engine, a Perkins 120hp S6M, were installed between the 10th and 11th locks along with a timber superstructure and wheelhouse. After my father's death in 1984, I replaced the timber superstructure with steel and Dabu has continued to travel to all corners of our waterways ever since.

The addition of a new engine and wheel-

house last year (2004) should ensure that she will still be seen all around the system

for many years to come, including joining the Tall Ships in Waterford this summer.

Robert Bayly



Dabu delivered from Killaloe to Shannon Harbour, Oct 1966



Dabu's visit to IWAI harbour Carrick on Shannon

Heritage Boat 4E

The Canal Boat which presently carries the number 4E, has in its life so far carried four different numbers marking different roles. These numbers were: '53'(1895-1913), '23M'(1913-1935), '111B'(1935-1952), '4E'(1952-present).

Horse boat 53 was built in 1895 at the Passage Dock Company and was first weighed at Killaloe 24th June 1896 by P. Killeen. Dimensions were: Length 60ft. 8 inches, Beam 13ft., Height at stem 6ft. 10½ inches, height at stern 6ft. 8 inches. She drew 4ft. 2¼ when loaded to 50 tons. Stores on board when weighed were: 18 hatches, 6 tarpaulins, 8 ropes, 1 cork fender, 2 rope fenders, 6 skids, 7 planks, 2 poles and 1 boathook. Of iron riveted construction with wooden decks, the only remnant of her horse-drawn days is part of the tow post about half way along the port side-inside the hull.

The Grand Canal Company was the first in the British Isles to use motor barges and between 1911 and 1923 installed engines in thirty of its horse boats. '53' was fitted with a 15 H.P. Bolinder semi-diesel and became 23M in 1913. When weighed at Killaloe on 15 August 1915 the addition of engine, fuel and 50

tons in weights, gave a draught of 4ft 5¾ inches. In 1935 when the Canal Company had already built 35 of its modern M boats, the converted boats were being sold off and 23M was sold, without engine, to Joseph Kane of Blackwood, Co. Kildare and became '111B'.

Joe Kane worked for Odlums Mills on their canal boats and in 1934 he was encouraged to go-it-alone and he bought 49B. The following year he bought 23M which was the boat he was to use the rest of his working life. He is said to have had a great attachment to her and when asked the

4E trapped near Ballynacarrigy



number always replied, "Three ones". Noted for his honesty and integrity, he lived aboard although the family home was only a short distance from where he tied up on the Blackwood feeder.

Paddy Kane (Joe's nephew) has told me the stories about 111B and believe me, there are many. Paddy was the boy on board along with Joe's married brother and of course Joe himself as skipper (a life-long bachelor and teetotaler). The original 'nose job' occurred when she was being towed by 41M into the inner basin in Ringsend with a cargo of 45 tons of wheat aboard. On approaching the lifting bridge, 41M slowed down and '111B' veered out of control (no brakes). Joe ran to the bow with a straw bag which had little effect as she hit the bridge. The stem post and some bow plates were buckled forever. Joe sold 49B in 1937 and the following year had an engine installed in 111B at a cost of £300. The main cargoes were turf into Dublin and wheat back to Odiums at Sallins.

A load of wheat paid six pounds five shillings out of which wages, fuel, tolls, etc. had to come. In the busy milling season, the crew often stayed working up to three weeks at a stretch without getting back to families.

When Joe retired in 1952, 111B was acquired by C.I.E. and was to be the last boat out of the Blackwood feeder before its closure. She was again relieved of her engine and brought to the Royal Canal on maintenance duties. Under the control of the canal's engineering section, she



4E after being released – and a bit of work!

was renumbered 4E. While on the stretch between Ballynacarrigy and Abbeyshrule, a breach occurred on the bog section and 4E was trapped. What kept her from deteriorating was the fact that a C.I.E. employee who had suffered a work accident, was allowed to live on her for some years. He was very liberal with red lead and bitumen.

In the early 70's, 4E was purchased by Robertstown Guild of Muintir Na Tire to add to a collection which included 'Pomeroy', 'Emily' and 'Eustace'. The salvage of 4E was not attempted and she remained settled at Ballynacarrigy.

Having lost out in the bidding battle for Chang-Sha and stricken with a severe dose of 'Barge Fever', I was given the start of a trail which lead to 4E. Sid Shine was called in and agreed, retrieving her was feasible. Negotiations began and on October 13th, 1980 I purchased 4E for the sum of £1800 where she lay.

November saw her cleared of debris, towed by tractor the half mile to a lock chamber and craned onto a truck to be

brought to Tullamore and re-floated on the Grand Canal. She was given the once over by the late John Weaving and Pat Benson. John was to lend me his barge pole for the trip to Celbridge, "as good as a spare engine", he said. Powered again by 15 H.P. (Evinrude this time) the trip to the 13th lock was completed over the two weekends in January 1981.

Conversion to her present shape was completed by summer 1982 and 4E joined the Shannon Harbour and Derg Rallies. Since then she has been as far as Mount St. Bridge in Dublin, Athy on the Barrow, Leitrim Village on the North Shannon and the Well travelled Derg route. At Tourn-graney on the Scarriff River she received and survived her second 'nose job' during the flooded 1986 Derg rally.

In 1995 a birthday party was thrown for the old girl's centenary, which was a new rally event. A great night was had by all with someone even going off wine

forever. 4E along with 35M, 68M and Dabu travelled from the Shannon to Dublin via the Grand Canal in spring 2001 in order to launch 'The Heritage Boat Association'. After a fantastic trip and some problems en-route, the Minister Sile DeValera hoisted the H.B.A. Burgee on 4E's mast and a new era began. 4E was completely re-plated in 2002 and a much-needed internal re-fit began. In 2003 she was part of the flotilla to travel up the Erne to Belleek. In 2004, 4E was back on the Grand Canal, travelled to Dublin and did a run on the Liffey before it headed back to the Shannon for the summer.

In over a century 4E has come from horse boat to floating home-from-home with a lot of water under the keel in between. To those of you interested in a piece of canal history there is always a welcome aboard and anyone bitten with the dreaded 'Barge Fever' will never be put off as 4E has well repaid the blood, sweat and tears that has her still on the water today.

Joe Treacy, Skipper.



*John and Pat
Hoare on 34M*



Heritage Boat 76M

The Barge 76M was built for the Grand Canal Company in 1937 at the Ringsend Dockyard Company in Dublin. She is one of the last Barges built in the M series which stopped at 79M. From records available it appears she was half an inch wider than all earlier barges, at 13 feet 2 inches, in an effort to increase cargo space. Subsequently the last 3 Barges were a further inch wider allowing an extra row of Guinness Kegs to be stored.

In the early 1940's the Barge was worked by the Cross-Family from Robertstown. Other Bargemen who worked her at that time included Tommy Bowers and Jack Connolly from Derrymullen. Towards



76M at Ardowen

the end of her working life she seemed to have spent time on the Barrow in the hands of the Bolger Family from Graiguenamanagh. The crew then included Jim, John, Lawlor and Seamus Bolger. At one point in the tenure of the Bolger's it seemed that the Barge might be passed on to Matt Smullen and his father, but this



57M, 76M & 72M at James St. harbour (Guinness)

never happened. The Grand Canal's fate as a transport route was sealed in November 1959 with the announcement from CIE of its withdrawal from trading. It closed to trade on 1 January 1960 and according to Canal Records 76M was the last cargo boat to leave Edenderry Harbour.

The Barge was purchased in the early 1980's by the previous owner Captain Jack Bagnall who very carefully converted her over a 14-year period to a beautiful cruising home. Our Family purchased the Barge in 1997 and have extensively travelled the inland waterways since then.

Lorna Baker

Length:	60 feet
Beam:	13 feet 2 inches
Depth:	3 feet 8 inches
Weight:	78 tonnes (per our bathroom scales!)
Engine:	120hp 6 cylinder Ford D series
Steering:	Internal/hydraulic

M. Moore - Carlow

Heritage Boat No 34B

Canal Boat 34 B was built in Shannon Harbour in 1896. She was owned by Shackeltons Mills at Milford Co Carlow. This mill was run by Ebenezer Shackelton, a relative of the great explorer. In 1913 she was owned by Moores of Carlow. She was used by the Moore family to carry general cargo on the Barrow and Grand Canal until trade declined on the system. In the photo she carries the name **M. Moore Carlow**.

She is also reputed to have been used for icebreaking on the canal and this was confirmed by an old canal man who claimed that he saw her in action in this role at Ticknevin being towed by a number of horses.

During the Second World War turf was purchased in the Ticknevin area and taken to Dublin. On a recent trip through the lock at Ticknevin an elderly local man made the statement to me "You know 34B put food on many a table in this area during the war". She is reputed to have a bullet hole on the port side near the stern which she received during the Easter rising in 1916 while leaving Ringsend basin. There is indeed what appears to be a bullet hole visible inside the hull in the engine room on the port side.

The Moore family owned 34B until about 1960 when she was purchased by Jim Dil-

lon who carried out the first conversion on her. From the decline in trade in the early 50's she had remained tied up at Graigculen, home port of the Moores.

The late David Wheeler later purchased her in a derelict state at Rathangan and he was responsible for the present conversion. She was later owned by a syndicate of German nationals along with the late Des Barry. She was purchased in 1990 by Gerry & Geraldine Gavin who made significant changes to the interior. The many plaques on display inside testify to the many rallies she has participated in since she came to the Shannon.



34B at Sallins

In the late 80's she had the dubious distinction of passing through Athlone without using the lock. On that occasion vandals cut her loose from the Apparel jetty and she went over the weir. There are many stories around Athlone of adventures aboard 34 B involving her previous owners.

Gerry Gavin



34B at Carrick in 2002

Information for this article provided to Gerry Gavin by the Moore family, Dick Kearney, Hio Quade, David Wheeler & Jonathan Shackelton.

Thomas Moore *Canal Boatman*

Imagine a trip to Dublin from Carlow taking three days at a rate of a mile and a half an hour. That was the daily, or should I say three-daily routine that my grandfather used to endure for much of his working life. Tommy Moore was born on February 9, 1913 to Thomas and Mary Moore. Thomas Sr. owned 34B, a 61ft long and 13ft wide barge, which he used to bring goods up and down from Carlow to Dublin on the Grand Canal.

He had three sons, Jack, Eddie and Tommy and after his death on March 11 1926, they

took over the work. This barge was tarred black all around the hull for protection from leakages. The name was at the bow of the boat in red on a white background with a little shamrock beside it. Without cargo, the barge weighed a hefty 56 tonnes. The brothers had a routine schedule, week in week out for 22 long years. They got up at 4 am every morning to load over 37 tonnes of malt in 500 sacks, each weighing 12 stone.

Every Monday, they'd load up and set off. Now this wasn't easy in a barge then, they

had to light a blow lamp and heat the bulb to light the engine for fifteen minutes. For approximately 17 hours, they'd travel along the canal at a speedy one and a half miles per hour. Eddie and Jack would steer while my grandfather took care of the engine. At around 10pm they'd stop for the night at Vicarstown to catch some well earned shut-eye until 4 am the next morning. Another



Tom Moore at the tiller.

17 hours travelling, then they stopped at Sallins. Finally, three days after setting out, they'd arrive in Dublin the following day.

On average, the journey took twenty hours on an empty vessel or thirty hours with a full load of malt. They often collected beet from Vicarstown and Courtwood in winter and again during the beet campaign to bring home to the people Carlow. They also brought wheat weighing thirty tonnes for Barrow Mills or coal weighing forty-five tonnes for Haughtons. They would alternate between the two on a weekly basis.

Now you may be wondering what they did while travelling up and down the canal,

surely they sat back and watched the trees go slowly by — wrong. There were eighteen locks along the route, all of which had to be opened by hand. They went through locks at Bestfield, Maganey, Ardreich, Athy — all the way to Dublin. Some were drawbridges, like the one at Monasterevin, that had a handle that turned 360 degrees to raise it, a little like the old locks on the Shannon. This particular bridge was so heavy it took the combined strength of two men to raise it. Each drawbridge had to be lowered too. To get through a lock took the best part of five minutes and at a double lock it took 8 minutes.

In the late 1940's and early 1950's, the latest Godsend was the lorry, as it could do the same job as the barge in less than one tenth of the time, two hours, although it could only carry 10 tonne. When he married Julie, business was bad for barges so he made the decision to leave. His brother Jack kept the barge until 1951 when he sold it. It has changed hands a couple of times since but can still be seen on the River Shannon, looking well though it has been modified for pleasure use.

When compared with today, the task of delivery was more tedious and harder; now we have forklifts to carry more goods at once, diminishing the time spent loading and unloading, wheelers for heavy barrels, boxes etc and better road systems for a safer, more reliable delivery. We have refrigerating containers and there isn't as much physical work. When I asked him if he's ever go back to it, he laughed and said quite definitely — "No!".

Aisling Moore

Adapted from *The Carlow Nationalist*, June 2000.



48M at Edenderry in the 1950's



37M taking a break. on the way into Dublin.

Heritage Boat 35M

In common with other M Boats, 35M was commissioned and built for the Grand Canal Company. She was one of a small number built by McMillans and was constructed in 1926. 35M was commissioned in March 1927 at Killaloe Co. Clare and her payload at the time was recorded at 61 tons.

During the first phase of her life 35M carried cargo from Dublin down the Grand Canal and delivered all the way to Killaloe, Co. Clare. Her skippers and crew through those years included Tom Bowers, Matt Smullen Dick Kearney and Bert Conroy. Both Tom and Bert met and married local ladies in Killaloe as a result of their travels and married and settled down there.

When cargo deliveries by canal barge ceased 35M retired from that life and was

converted to a dredger by the Office of Public Works. She worked away in that role until some time in the 1960's when she was redecked and sold to Ballyteague GAA club in Co. Kildare. The Club added a superstructure over the original hold area and used her as their club bar for many years.

35M Gets a New Life

35M was sold on in the late 1980's and rested on blocks in Verolme Dockyard in Cobh, Co. Cork from where her present owners, Andy and Cathy Roche, bought her in October 1992 and brought her by low loader to the Shannon and subsequently to Shannon Harbour to start her current conversion.

Her maiden voyage with Cathy and Andy was in spring 1993 on the Grand Canal and

35M at work



was the first 35M working on Lough Derg step in achieving the dream of converting her to a family holiday home from home. She has well repaid all the effort that was put into restoring her to her present conversion and has given many happy days and weeks to us throughout the navigation.

Since we bought 35M we have travelled much of the navigation with her. She made the trip from Lough Derg to Dublin with 68M, 4E and 'Dabu' to attend the Heritage Boat Association at World Canals Conference in 2001.



35M in 2002

35M has participated in several Boat Rallies on Lough Derg and in Shannon Harbour with her present owners and their family. She visited Limerick in spring 2003 and continued on with a large fleet of other canal barges and heritage boats to the Shannon Erne waterway and on to the end of navigation in Beleek in summer 2003.

© Andy & Cathy Roche



Technical Details

Built by:	McMillans for Grand Canal Company
Year:	1926
Length:	61ft 6ins
Beam:	13ft 3ins
Draft:	1ft 6ins unladen, 4ft 6ins with full load, 3ft 3ins currently
Payload:	61 tons fully laden, 50tons currently
Weighed:	Killaloe, Co. Clare 15 March 1927
Engine:	Originally fitted with a Bolinder Current engine purchased from a fisheries boat in Killybegs and rebuilt in 1993 Ford 120hp K Series 6 cylinder diesel
Steering:	Originally tiller replaced by Hydraulic Pump and Ram system
Home base:	Cloondavaun Bay, Lough Derg



Tom Anderson on 73M in 1958

Ye Iron Lung

Heritage Boat 49M

49M was built as a grand canal company barge by Vickers Ireland in 1928.

At the end of her working life she was bought at auction in Shannon harbour by the Anchor Hotel at Ballyleague (Lanesboro). Converted as a houseboat she provided living accommodation for workers constructing Rinenna (Shannon Airport).

The 49M returned to Lanesboro and was advertised for sale or rent. At this time she was painted white with light blue and was named the St. Mary. In the summer of 1961 Sean Fitzsimons hired the St. Mary for two weeks to do the Shannon boat rally. Following a great holiday Sean and John Connon decided to buy the barge between them for a figure believed to be £620.00. They took possession of the barge on St. Stephens day 1961 when it was delivered to Athlone and tied by one rope to the railings behind the library without fuel.

The plan at this stage was to bring the 49M to Dublin and work on her there, she was duly brought down to Shannon Harbour for the Dublin trip, but that winter was so severe the canal had frozen over. The barge eventually made St. James Harbour in March of 1962. It is one of the very few barges ever to return to the now defunct Guinness Harbour after being sold into private hands. Sean and John felt that the harbour was not as safe as they had hoped for the renovations and moved back down

the canal to the 12th lock where alterations were made to the lay out of the cabins and toilet. A pot bellied stove was also installed in the lounge. The chimney for this went through the superstructure of the top deck and was surrounded by a small barrel.

It was in the late 1950's and early 1960's that the now familiar Aluminium kegs were replacing the old wooden beer barrels. These somehow got the nickname of iron lungs; also lung is the Irish name for ship and as the St. Mary was not considered a suitable name for the barge she was subsequently renamed The Iron Lung.



Going into Dublin, 2004.

The Iron Lung was then bought back down the canal and returned to the Shannon where she has been based in Athlone for more than 40 years. As well as all the Shannon boat rallies, the Lung has been found over the years at most rallies, work parties, hoolies and bun fights the length and

breadth of the Shannon, the Grand Canal and was the first barge ever to navigate the Erne all the way to Beleek, it is probably the best known barge on the inland waterways.

The 49M is also supposed to have its very own ghost.

Whilst still owned by the Grand Canal Company, one cold night on the Grand Canal the skipper was at the tiller and the crew were down below when the barge hit a bridge. The crewmen knew something must be wrong and came up to find no sign of the skipper and so no one at the tiller. The next morning the skipper was found drowned in the canal.

When this story was related to friends of Seans some years later, a man from London who had stayed on the barge the night before claimed he had seen someone aboard go into a cabin but no sign of him later. He was also able to describe what the man was wearing and it fitted with the long overcoat and cap that would have been worn about this time. Other people over the years have also felt a presence of someone on board. I wonder however if the sign of a spirit depends upon the amount of spirits consumed.

Over the years various work has been done on the 'Lung' when first bought she had an 'Atlantic' marine diesel engine fitted. Apparently the gearbox was so big that the engine was side mounted. This was later changed and a BMC 6-cylinder bus engine was installed, it is still this type of engine today but I believe it is probably on its second bus.

Sean once bought a second hand double decker and stripped out any parts he could for the barge. Aluminium panels

were used for the side superstructure. The large windows were installed in the lounge, with the raised level of this and the amount of light allowed in there is a great feeling of space during the day, and plenty of room for a hooley at night. Also some of the bus seating was used for a time and could double for beds when the crew exceeded the twelve bunks she had up until very recently. The engine was taken out and used as previously mentioned. Sean then managed to sell the remaining windows and chassis and still made a profit on the deal.

Having owned the barge for 40 years Sean found it was becoming too much without regular crew and decided to sell it in 2001. With his usual canniness he felt that by



selling it to family he would have the best of both worlds, get rid of the responsibility but still enjoy use of the barge. I duly paid him an exorbitant price and have been the new owner for the past three years.

We look forward to the years to come and hope that we have as much pleasure from, and can give as much pleasure to, as many people as this barge has done in the past.

Andy Fitzsimons
April 05

Heritage Boat, 68M

68M was built by Vickers in Dublin in 1936, before she went into service it was weighed and marked in Killaloe by Denis Crowe. The following stores were noted as being aboard while this was done, 40 planks, 6 covers, 2 poles, 1 boat hook, 3 rope fenders, 1 cork fender, 2 stop ropes, 2 hand ropes, 3 lash lines, 2 trippers, 1 empty cask, 1 anchor and 120 gallons of fuel oil for the Bolinder engine.

After that it immediately went into service with the Grand Canal Company (GCC) carrying general cargo all over our inland waterways.

'Old Gent' McDermott (Daingean) was her first Skipper and he stayed with her for about a year before moving on to 74M. Her last crew were 'Waxer' (Paddy) Dunne as skipper, Tom Connolly engine man and Tom 'Mocus' Farrell (Ballyteague) deck hand.

When the canal finally closed in 1960, CIE sold most of the boats off at auction for as little as £100. 68M wasn't sold off at that time so it remained with CIE.

68M however had a second lease of life as a canal maintenance Mud Boat (also known as clay or gravel boats) when she operated as such from the late 1960's to 1980. Technically when she worked as a maintenance boat on the canal she should have been re numbered to an "E" (Engineering) boat, we presume this didn't

happen as all commercial activity had ceased on the canals by then. Willy Anger, Tommy "Skranny" Kelly (Rathdangan) and Kit Moran (Robertstown) were the crew from 1968 -72. Willy left in 72 and Mick Dowgher replaced him, that crew stayed in place until 1980 when 68M was retired from service. The Bolinder was removed and sold, it ended up in England, while the hull was left to rust away with a number of other disused barges, partially submerged, in the Grand Canal at Ballycommon.

A year or so later because of vandalism these boats were moved to Tullamore Harbour, for safe keeping, where 68M sank and remained under water until August 93. In 1992 when the first Waterways series 45M was being made, the inside of the hull of 68M was filmed underwater in Tullamore Harbour and was shown in the series. The following year 68M was raised by its new owner Dick Kearney. Dick with the help of his sons Declan and Paul then towed her to Lowtown where it remained tied to the canal bank under the watchful eye of Paddy 'Waxer' Dunne until we purchased her in August 1995.

New lease of life

As there was no engine fitted we brought her down the Canal and Shannon with two outboard engines strapped on to the tiller. Due to the lack of dry dock facilities on Lough Derg, we pulled 68M ashore with tractors in December of 1995. In March of 1996 it was sandblasted and painted. Over the following months we

re-plated the bilges on both sides. She was re launched (rolled back into the water) in on June 9th, the engine was fitted the following week. We used it extensively in 1996 living in the hold under canvas, attending the 25th Shannon Harbour Canal Boat Rally & the Lough Derg Rally. While the living conditions were basic with the crew sleeping on boards in the cargo hold under a leaky canvas cover, everybody had lots of fun.

The following winter (96/97) the super-structure was added and we took on board twenty tonnes of stone as ballast. Work stopped again for the summer while the crew enjoyed themselves. During that season we ventured up river as far as Lanesborough to join the Shannon Rally.

Winter (97/98) saw the addition of the wheelhouse, and cabins started to appear down below. Voyages for 1998 saw us go to Belturbet and back as well as attending

the Shannon Harbour & Derg Rallies. The following winter 98/99 saw the completion of the interior fitting out.

Over the past few years 68M has been to Dublin twice, the first time was to attend the World Canal Conference and the official launch of the Heritage Boat Association (HBA). It's been to Limerick a number of times, as well as the Erne, Boyle & Lough Allen just to mention a few destinations.

M Boats are often incorrectly referred to as Guinness boats, but having a liking for the stuff myself the interior is full of Guinness memorabilia. A keg of draught is kept aboard a few times a year and if that wasn't enough a few years ago we painted her Black and Cream.

The men that worked on 68M.

Many people have been connected with 68M in its long history, so we feel that we have an obligation to remember them.

68M at Ballycommon in 2004



Crews were always changing on the Canal Boats, but still through memory of a few of the boatmen we have come up with a fair amount of the crews that worked on her.

The 'Old Gent' McDermott (Daingean) was her first Skipper and he stayed with her until 74M came in to service a couple of years later. Dick Kearney moved on to 68M as a greaser in 1939, at that time the crew were Paddy Connolly (Killina), Tom Hilbert (Ballyteague) and Gannon Melia (Ticknevin). Later on Dick moved to 35M and the next time he was back on 68M Amby Dwyer (Newcastle), Tom Doonican (Pollagh) and Banagher Tom (Tom Carroll) were the crew. Banagher Jack (Tom's brother) also worked on 68M for a while, as did Jack Kearney (Dick's brother).

'Baker' Sheridan (Littletown) was Skipper in the early 40's, after that Gannon Melia was skipper from circa 1943-44 to 1946-47.

brother Paddy was deck hand. Tom stayed in charge of her until circa 1953 when he went to skipper 54M. When Tom left his brother Paddy took over as skipper and his other brother Jack joined as deck hand.



Current interior of 68M

Peter Brien left in late '54 and Tommy Anderson (Allenwood/Carlow) replaced him as engine man.



At back, Tim Connolly (standing) – middle row from left, John Connolly, John Docherty, Louie McDonald, John Connolly junior, Paddy Dochery junior (on tiller) – at front Pat McDonald.

Paddy Kearney (Dick's brother) and Bill Cox worked on her after that circa 1947. Anthony Donoghue (Allenwood/Killaloe) was skipper when Tom Nolan took over from him around 1948. At that time Peter Brien was engine man (driver) and Tom's

Paddy Nolan was skipper for about eighteen months until he left and was replaced by 'Gurkyman' (Peter) Anderson (Tommy's brother). Around 1955 Paddy Doherty (Graigenamagh) and his two sons John & Paddy took 68M and they crewed her until she was laid up with all the other CIE boats when Canal operations were halted in Christmas 1959.

In January 1960, 68M along with thirteen other boats were brought back into service for six months to help in the decom-

missioning of the canal system and to continue drawing Guinness to Limerick. 'Waxer' (Paddy) Dunne was skipper, Tom Connolly was engine man and Tom 'Mocus' Farrell (Ballyteague) was deck hand.



68M with 37M and 79M at Corcorans in Carlow

Built by: Vickers (Ireland) Ltd.
 Year: 1936.
 Length: 61ft 6in
 Beam: 13ft 1.1/2 in
 Draft: 1ft 6in (Empty)
 Payload: 50 Tonnes
 Weighed: Killaloe, July 8th 1936

Draft now: 3ft. 3in (with ballast)
 Engine now: 120 hp Perkins S6M.

No matter where we go we carry with us
 the legacy of the boat and the men that
 worked on her, so if you see us on our

travels drop in and say hello.

Gerry Burke, 2005



Jim Gill on the right



79M

The Williams & Woods *Heritage Boat No 31B*

Built in Northern Ireland, circa 1910, for D. E. Williams Ltd. of Tullamore. She was weighed in Killaloe in 1912 and traded carrying grain on the Barrow till 1927. From 1927 till 1946 she traded on the Grand Canal under two owners, P. Caf-ferky of Mountmellick and J. Gill. In 1946 she transferred to Williams & Woods Ltd, for whom she's still named, and carried various confectioneries the length and breadth of the navigation, a welcome



relief from wartime rationing. In 1958 she was taken over by CIE and her engine was removed. Sold to a Civil Engineering Company, she was used, alongside the "Eclipse Flower", a

former Ranks Flour Co. barge, as a floating platform for a crane during the building of the new bridge in Wexford in 1959. She then lay, abandoned either under the bridge or in the salt marshes beside it until 1978. At this point her purchase was negotiated and she was refloated by Pat Benson who, having fitted a BMC engine, brought her to up the coast to Dublin and on to Athlone. Her last act, as a working boat, appears to have been in 1979, when she was used to carry building

supplies to one of the islands on Lough Ree for the construction of a house. She was then brought to Edenderry, where she was converted. She was sold again in the early nineties to a Mr. Ward, but fell into bad repair, was vandalised and sank in Shannon Harbour around 1997. Bought by Michael and Mai Devlin in 2000, she was refloated and following a spell in Shannon Harbour dry dock, was brought north, to Co. Leitrim where she underwent a refit. Over the winter of 2001/2, a Perkins 6354.4 engine was fitted to replace the BMC engine which had "expired" on the way back from the Lough Derg Rally. Hydraulic steering was fitted during the winter of 2002/3. I bought her from Mick and Mai in October 2004, and following some hull plating and construction of a superstructure over the bow cabin in Roosky dry dock, took possession in March 2005.

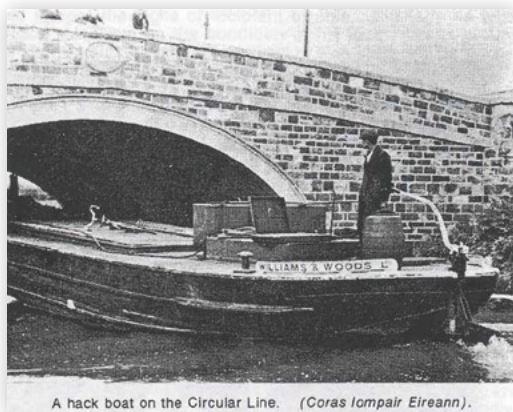


Although she has hydraulic steering fitted, her tiller is still attached. Mick Devlin told me he was "loathe to cut it off", and I must

admit, the thought of cutting it off now, after 95 years of faithful service, doesn't appeal to me either. In 2010, I'm planning a big party to celebrate her 100th birthday.

So for the next 5 years I hope to "practice partying on board" in preparation for the big day.

Mick Farrell
March 2005



A hack boat on the Circular Line. (Coras Iompair Éireann).

Year Built:	1910
Length:	60 feet
Beam:	12 ft 9 inches
Draft:	3 feet
Material:	Riveted Steel
Type:	"B" (by-trader or hack boat)
Built By:	Either Portadown Foundry or Bright Patent Pulley Co. Lisburn
Built For:	D.E. Williams, Tullamore
Ballast:	Concrete, 14 tonnes
Steering:	Hydraulic + Original Tiller
Engines:	Bolinder 1910-1958
	BMC 1978-2001
	Perkins 6354.4 2002- to date
	(She also had twin Seagull outboards, attached to the rudder, in 1978 or '79)
Name:	The "Williams and Woods"
Reg No.:	31 B

Heritage Boat 95B

Canal Boat 95B commenced its life transporting malt for the Barrow Transport Company from Minch Nortons in Athy to the Guinness Brewery in Dublin. It passed into the ownership of Tom Hughes in Athy in 1956, used for mixed cargo including carrying sugar beet to the factory in Carlow. At the closure of the canal in 1960 Tom Hughes continued to trade with his barges and 95B was the last boat to carry beet into Carlow Sugar Company in 1962.

After the Canal closure, 95B found its way into the ownership of a construction company where it was used as a floating raft for the construction of the new bridge in Youghal. On the completion of the bridge, 95B was auctioned off along with other canal boats. It was purchased by Eugene Suffin, of Waterford, who intended to use her for sand dredging on the river Suir. This was not bargained for by 95B and shortly after it was auctioned, it broke its mooring in a gale and foundered against

the rocks at the base of the bridge it had helped to build. Several efforts were made to repair the damage without success. 95B lay in that position for some years until finally drawing the attention of Cork and Waterford Co. Councils who agreed that she was a hazard to navigation and an ugly sight. An appreciable file built up in Transport House in Dublin regarding the craft.

In the meantime a group of individuals, George Spears, Michael Rawan, Bapty Maher and Paddy Grogan, along with Rusty (Spears) and Ann Russell (Fitzsimons) made one of the first recreational trips from Athy "probing" their way aboard the converted Canal Boat 41M (owned by Michael Rawan and Joe Bell) down the Grand Canal to the Shannon. The trip took two weeks but was so unusual and exhilarating that the hunt for another barge started. Exhaustive enquiries and long journeys were made tracing each of the canal boats that were now scattered all over the waterways and away from the canal they were designed to travel. Finally in May 1967 95B was spotted with her nose sticking out of the water under the bridge in Youghal. After waiting for the tide to turn the boat exposed itself covered with all kinds of marine life. Enquiries were made and the vessel purchased for the princely sum of £25 less one for luck. A further £21 was paid to Youghal Harbour Commissioners for damage to the bridge. George Spears mobilised a team from Athy who spent many weekends in July 1967

95B Sunk (at low tide) Sunday July 16th 1967.





95B Recovered 1968.

removing seaweed, limpets, shell fish, and silt. When the hull was finally exposed the gashes that were evident were repaired in situ to allow her to be floated on an incoming tide at 2:30 am.

Further repairs were carried out in Youghal harbour until she was fit for the 70 mile tow by trawler by sea to New Ross in June 1968. A further tow by canal work boat delivered her to the "Steamers Pool" from

where she sailed the remainder of the journey to St Mullens by sail, improvised with the aid of a clear polythene sheet. The 40 mile journey to Athy was an even greater challenge as the canals had been overgrown by weed by 1968 and it proved impossible to tow by horse or boat. Eventually with the aid of a winch and several hundred feet of rope 95B was dragged home to Athy.

The first conversion of 95B was started immediately by George on arrival in Athy in 1969 where over a 3 year period she had a Bolinder reinstalled, which was bought with accessories from a Mr. O. Keifer in Mooncoin for 18 pounds. In time she became a comfortable boat, attending all rallies throughout the Shannon. She eventually had the privilege of having her own harbour in Terryglass. George treated 95B to a new Perkins 6354 engine which was fitted in 1986 and which was the envy of everyone on the Shannon. It is still sounding very sweet.

95B Doing service as a film set in 2004





A re-paint for 95B at Shannon Harbour - 1973

Unfortunately George passed away in 1987 which was a big loss to those that knew him.

I had spotted 95B in Terryglass several times and always admired her fine boat lines and so in 1998 we succeeded in

purchasing her and having her brought up the canal to Edenderry, where she is undergoing the current refit as a family boat. A new superstructure, decks, and underwater plating has been completed with the remaining fit out due to continue in Winter 2005.

95B has experienced fame and notoriety, having been driven by Bishop (Later Cardinal) Daly in 1976, appearing in National Geographic Magazine in 1976 and being visited by a President of Ireland Patrick Hillary in 1983. She later starred in the BBC 'restoration' programme in 2004. She had a reputation as a hospitable boat where craic and music were abundant and we hope that she will carry on in this tradition and bring as much enjoyment as she gave the previous owners.

Sean O'Reilly

Technical Details

<i>Built:</i>	1919
<i>Construction:</i>	Riveted Steel
<i>Length:</i>	60'
<i>Beam:</i>	13'
<i>Draft:</i>	3'
<i>Type:</i>	"B" (By Trader or Hack Boat)
<i>Balast:</i>	Concrete
<i>Payload:</i>	50 Tonnes
<i>Weighed:</i>	Kilaloe 1919
<i>Engines:</i>	Bolinder 15E 1919-1962 Bolinder 1969-1986 Perkins 6354 1986
<i>Reg N°:</i>	95B
<i>Steering:</i>	Original Tiller
<i>Home Base:</i>	Edenderry Harbour, Co Offaly

Fun for all on 95B 2001





A hard life—without doubt—but also moments of sheer tranquility. 37M, Grand Canal Dublin.



A.S.B. Ebenhaëzer

A. S.B. = Auxilliary Sailing Barge

Ebenhaëzer is stated to have been built in 1903 and launched in 1904 in Groles Ijlst in the Netherlands (Friesland). She is a 63ft gaff sloop rigged, sailing barge (Tjalk). Her original registration number is S 639N.

She had previously been known as Geertruida, but her original documentation was recently located and it was discovered that this was not her original name. Consequently she was ceremoniously 're-named' in 2002 to her true name of Ebenhaëzer.

Her hull construction is riveted Lomar (Swedish) iron and she is believed to have been converted from an open-hulled workboat, and given her current superstructure in 1954. Her current engine (believed to be her first one) is a 6 cylinder, 125hp DAF, under which she travels comfortably at 7 knots and up to 9 under sail with a strong breeze.

These barges were normally crewed by husband and wife teams and quite basically rigged. The stay-sail is self tacking, which minimises crew activity. To sail under bridges the crew would simply loosen off the forestay, the skipper would tug the topping lift down and the mast would drop enough to pass under the bridge (due to the mast's counter balance/

weight). After the momentum had taken the barge through the bridge, the skipper released the mast again, allowing it to raise itself. This operation has been done by the current owner, but as she now has an auxiliary engine, the mast counter-balance is measured for an unrigged mast, so it is not necessary.

It's stated that her use was trading in fruit & vegetables around the northern provinces of Holland. The 2nd half of the century has been just as busy for Ebenhaëzer. It's believed that her last owners raced her at the 'Skutsjesilen' in Friesland (sailing barge regattas in the Netherlands). Her current owner (5th owner since she was built) first viewed her in Leeuwarden in the Netherlands in end 1992, she travelled back by water via Belgium to the Thames in 1993. Since then, she's been used for residential purposes, also cruising British waterways (costal, canals & rivers). She was also raced



by her current owner at Thames Sailing Barge Matches on the Thames Estuary (Kentish and Essex coastlines); also against fishing Smacks and Bawleys around the Isle of Sheppey.

She was then sailed back (mostly single-handed on the canal sections) to Ireland from the River Blackwater (Essex), via the Thames, Kennet & Avon, Bristol Channel, Welsh coast (Milford Haven), St. Georges Channel, Dunmore East, Barrow, Grand

Canal, arriving at her owner's family home at Abbey House in Athlone, on the River Shannon at the end of July 2000, where she is currently based. She has also cruised all of the various navigable Irish inland waterways, Shannon Estuary and Dublin coast line. A trip is planned to the Tall Ships Race in Waterford for 2005. Weather permitting she will proceed from there around the South Coast to West Cork, to enter the Glandore Classic Yacht Regatta, which takes place the following week.

Rachel Hanna
2005



Paddy Gill, at front, and Bill Bolger, New Ross 1940

Jack Duggan, left, and John McCormack on 51M, the last Porter boat to Limerick



Ned McCormack, left, and Joney Judge on 63M



The G-Boats

Most people will have seen ex-Grand Canal trading boats, now converted into spacious pleasure craft, and still making their way around the waterways system. The M-boats, formerly Grand Canal Company (GCC) motor boats, are most common, but B-boats survive too: they were owned by “bye-traders”, independent individuals or companies, rather than by the GCC itself. E-boats were run by the GCC Engineering Department. Boats could change categories and sometimes GCC boats were hired out as hack boats, often to their own skippers.

But what about G-boats? Well, back in 1939, much of the world was engaged in a spot of bother that became known as the Second World War. Independent Ireland was officially neutral, but was affected by developments elsewhere. Accordingly, on 3 September 1939, the Oireachtas declared

a state of emergency. Incidentally, it didn't get around to rescinding that state of emergency until 1976, when it declared another one instead. During the main part of The Emergency, 1939–1945, fuel was in short supply, so the government sought to have more turf brought to Dublin. As the canals conveniently pass through bogs, the government funded the construction of 29 wooden horse-drawn canal-boats, which were leased to various traders but were marked as G-boats. Matt Thompson remembers them—

Canal knowledge – by Matt Thompson

When the Second World War broke out in 1939, even though we were not directly involved, it had severe repercussions on Ireland: coal shortages affected almost everything. Railway services were cut down and in some cases branch lines were closed. The two canals running into Dublin were working flat out; everything that

G7 being launched from the old canal store (now the Rowing Club) in Carlow





G9 passing along Barrack Street in Carlow

could float was brought into use including the E-boats, if they were available, drawing briquettes from Lullymore to Spencer Dock in Dublin.

My dear friends the Smullen family had a turf bank near Mount Street Bridge: people came from all over to buy. This family were working 28B and 7M; they also leased out 7G. It was great to see the canal so busy.

Big crowds gathered at Mellons Lock (Grand Canal St Bridge) on the day 1G set out on its maiden voyage to Turraun for its first load of machine-cut turf. To mark the occasion, the horses were put aside and GCC 36M was detailed to tow the new barge. The *Irish Times* had a splendid weekly issue called the *Times Pictorial* and the newspaper sent a reporter to travel with the crew to Co Kildare to record this great event.

The working life of the G-boats was not very long, but during their time they played a very important part in the Emergency. Although the war ended in 1945 and the nation was slowly coming around to some kind of normality, the worst winter for years was to occur in 1947. The Grand and Royal Canals worked flat out to keep the city of Dublin from freezing: logs, turf (some very wet), briquettes and even sawdust were used.

After that, the G-boats became redundant. They could be found tied up or water-logged all over the system. One became a home for a gentleman and his dog at the mouth of the River Dodder at Ringsend: Mickey Blue told me he was very happy in his beautiful G-boat.

Matt Thompson

Thompson Engineering

Thompson Engineering in Carlow built Ireland's first suspension bridge over the Liffey in 1906. The following year they built Kilmaroney Bridge Levitstown and, in 1938, the Royal Oak Bridge was built in Carlow. Then, during the Emergency, they built some G-boats (others were built in Dublin).

Since then, Thompsons have built the Liffey Millennium Bridge; the central 41m span was manufactured at their workshop and transported 55 miles by road to be lifted into place in one piece. They also supplied the Eastlink Bridge and the first RoRo linkspan bridge at Dublin Port in 1962.

What happened to the G-boats?

Built of native timber, the G-boats were not designed to have a long life. The falling off in canal traffic after the Emergency meant that most of them were abandoned and then broken up, although a few became B-boats and lasted for a few more years.

Gerard D'Arcy's Portrait of the Grand Canal lists the boats. Sean O'Reilly of the Heritage Boat Association has added some information, but would welcome any details that might fill in the gaps: email info@heritageboatassociation.ie or pass information through IWNNews.

For the following boats, all we know is that they were scrapped: 1G, 4G, 5G, 6G, 8G, 9G, 12G, 13G, 14G, 15G, 17G, 18G, 19G, 20G, 21G, 22G, 23G, 24G, 25G, 28G.

3G was hired by the government to the Turf Supply Company on 13/11/1942. Carrying 56 tons, it drew 3' 10.5". It was scrapped. 2G, 11G and 16G briefly became B-boats (127B, 128B and 129B respectively) but were broken up at Portobello, where older readers will remember that there used to be a canal harbour, in September 1948. 127B was owned by Taylor Keith & Co.

7G, mentioned by Matt Thompson, was indeed on hire to Mrs A Smullen. Carrying 60 tons with a draught of 4' 1.25", it was scrapped at Tullamore.

29G became Michael Lawlor's 130B, broken up; 10G became John Gill's 131B, broken up by a Mr Murphy on 18/10/1949; 27G became John Gill's 132B, broken up at Portobello and 26G became Denis Lynch's 133B. He lived at Portroe, near Garrykennedy on Lough Derg. The boat was 61' 6" by 13' 0", with a height of 6' 0" at both stem and stern. Laden with 36 tons (when weighed on 11/08/1947) it had a draught of 3' 3.5", giving a higher freeboard for lake travel. It too was scrapped, and none of the G-boats survives.

Brian J. Goggins





Carlow sugar factory – piling the beet, 1950

Washing the beet at the Carlow sugar factory



The Boatmen That Are Gone

*By Kit Ennis**

*Now the Grand Canal is just the same old winding waterway
But it's old time navigators are now molding in the clay
Those gentle old world boatmen who sailed those waters o'er
They have departed on a voyage from which they'll come no more*

*Though they are gone they've left us a memory sweet to save
While summer breezes whisper round their narrow silent graves
May they be with their Master and Heaven's light shine on
Those one time hardy sons of toil the boatmen that are gone*

*Out on that dreary Grand Canal when winter wind did blow
And swept before it's icy blast the frozen flakes of snow
When others could lie down and sleep, tucked warmly in their bed
The poor old boatman got no chance to rest his weary head*

*And through the cold dark winter night out in snow and rain
No shelter on their watery way, each side an open plain
Exposed to all the elements they worked their boats along
And kept their drooping spirits up with a good old Irish song*

*With hearts within their bosom that knew no art or guile
With honest faces that always bore a kindly welcome smile
Hearts that will never beat again, may the clay lie lightly on
Those poor toil worn bodies of the boatmen that are gone*

*Their lonesome cold and bitter life with cheerful hearts they bore
And for their loved ones left at home no men could suffer more
'Till Saint Michael sounds his final call we cannot look upon
The faces of those friends of ours the boatmen that are gone*

*I miss each old familiar face that has been cut away
Like the bloom of early summer that autumn winds decay
Their sins against the Father e'er He on them did call
The lives they led on earth may they atone for all*

*Now all you men you men who boat, remember ever more
You'll sail out on that same old track your father sailed before
And just like them will come the day for you to sail out on
That trip from which there's no return, like the boatmen that are gone*



* Christopher (Kit) Ennis was lock-keeper at Upper Tinnahinch lock near Graignamanagh, where he wrote many a poem in the 1920's about the boatmen and the river.

Barrow Men and Canal Men

*The following excerpts from various writings
have been selected by Brian J. Goggin*

Gerard D'Arcy, in *Portrait of the Grand Canal* (Transport Research Associates, 1969) puts it succinctly:

The crews of the [Grand Canal Company's] boats were divided into "Barrow Men" and "Canal Men". The "Barrow Men" could travel anywhere on the canal system but the "Canal Men" could not travel on the Barrow Line without a pilot.

Hugh Malet, in *Voyage in a Bowler Hat* (M&M Baldwin, 1985) is rather less polite, referring to the Canal Men as Bog Men:

From the slight touch of contempt in Paddy's voice I thought I detected the hint of an ancient rivalry, long since dead, between the Barrow Boys and the Bog Men.

Ruth Delany, in *Ireland's Inland Waterways* (Appletree Press, 2004), mentions the distinction when writing about the early years of the Barrow Navigation, before the Grand Canal Company took it over in 1894:

The Barrow boatmen stood apart from the Grand Canal men. Many of them traditionally came from Graignamanagh and while they carried their loads through the Grand Canal as well, the canal men seldom ventured on the river. Sails and poles were used in the

tidal parts of the river, but the board of the Grand Canal Company banned the Barrow men from carrying their iron shod poles on the canal because of the damage they caused to the banks.

The roots of this distinction probably have two origins. First, the inland navigation of the Barrow itself, with its floods and shallows, is inherently more challenging than the placid waters of the Grand Canal (whatever about the occasionally less placid waters of the Shannon). Second, long before the Grand Canal Company was set up, there was a considerable trade on the Barrow and on the Nore and Suir, with the combined tidal estuaries covering a huge area: the Barrow is tidal to St. Mullins, thirty miles from the sea.

T. F. O'Sullivan, in *Goodly Barrow* (Ward River Press, 1983), writes:

The Barrow boatmen were proud of their command of the navigation of the estuary, which they liked to contrast with the humbler skills of the still water sailors of the Grand Canal. The test of a good boatman, according to some, was to negotiate the channel off the Pink Rock, or the river bend at Ballinlaw Ferry, on a moonless night.

For even into the twentieth century,

the estuary traffic continued. There were some steam and motor tugs—Grand Canal Company barges (amongst others) travelled from the Barrow to Waterford—but sailing vessels also used those waters and fishermen to this day use the distinctive local cots. Perhaps most remarkable of all were the lighters: large vessels that used the tides to travel up and down the estuaries. They carried a pair of sweeps, but these long oars were used only for manoeuvring; iron-shod poles, like those the Grand Canal Company carried, were also carried. But the lighters depended most of all on their crews' knowledge of the tides and currents: a mistake could lead to a night's discomfort, marooned far from shore, or worse.

T. F. O'Sullivan points out that in the early eighteenth century:

The development of the Barrow navigation had a lot to do with the growth of Graig[namanagh]... a busy river trade was carried on in small boats or "cláracháns" based on Graignamanagh. Grain and flour were important in this eighteenth century trade, but so was coal, carted from the Castlecomer mines to Leighlinbridge and shipped from there down the river to the seaport of New Ross. By the time the navigation works were finally completed in 1790, Graignamanagh had space for sixty boats along its quays....

Most of the Barrow boatmen came from Graignamanagh, or from the Graiguecullen district of Carlow town. A community of boat people existed in Graig in the nineteenth century such as was not to be found elsewhere. Lewis in his *Topographical Dictionary*

of 1846 noted that the inhabitants of Graig had between 40 and 50 boats on the river of about 40 tons burthen each. All of these boats were privately owned, for in the first sixty years of its existence the Barrow Navigation Company owned and operated the navigation but not the boats...

That tradition of ownership continued, as Gerard D'Arcy said:

A good number of the bye-traders originated on the River Barrow. They came into their own at the busy malt and sugar seasons. At those times there was more than ample traffic for all. At other times they would carry the traffic from their own firm, since most of those who owned a barge had some other business to provide traffic for their barge.

When Hugh Malet visited in 1958, he spoke to John O'Leary, a local historian who was then 91:

John O'Leary told me that he had once seen fifty or sixty Barrow boats tied up along the great quay where now the Mary Ann was moored in solitary splendour.

In *Tinnahinch: A Village within a Town* (Graigue-namanagh Historical Society, 2003), Owen Doyle and Colm Walsh include the story of former boatman Jack Prendergast:

The letter B also appeared after some boats, this meant private haulier. Seamus Bolger had 15B. The Haydens of the Quay also owned boats. Paddy Hayden [the Paddy cited by Hugh Malet above] had 25B; his brother Mick Hayden had 21B and 8B and also a

boat numbered 947... Other families that worked the boats were Bolgers, Haydens, Connollys, McGuires, Griffens and Hoares.

He joined his father in working for the Grand Canal Company:

Eventually I went with my father on the boats as a greaser... I drew loads from Dublin or Waterford to Odium's Mill in St Mullins... We would carry up to 50 tons from Waterford but the water was too shallow in places to carry such a load to Dublin, Bagenalstown been the shallowest area.

My father and all the Prendergasts worked on the boats... My father came from Inistioge originally... We travelled up the River Nore for a while to raise sand around The Red House.

And Graiguenamanagh had its own boatyard: the dry docks are currently being excavated. Jack Prendergast remembers:

The boat 15B was the last old Barrow boat that was built here in The Dock. When the Barrow Navigation folded up they sold off some of the boats to the locals who had worked on them. McGuires bought that boat and eventually they sold it to Roches of Ballyanne. I think Seamus Bolger got it later and it finally got broken up on the bank down below Butler's Lock.

According to T. F. O'Sullivan,

It must have been a bustling little place, with its boatyard, iron-foundry, salt and starch works, its nailers, coopers, wheelwrights, tinsmiths and blacksmiths galore... before the famine this town and its surrounding farmlands...

enjoyed a relative prosperity.

This brought new institutions: commercial, social, cultural. Shopkeepers and artisans had their Tradesmen's Society; there was a Barrow Anchor Society for the boatmen, a flourishing town band and the Graig Reading Society, which housed its 3,000 volumes in the old Market House in the Main Street.

Many of the Barrow Men, therefore, came from a town with a strong family tradition of boating, and of boat ownership, on river and on tidal waters. The Grand Canal Company benefited from that tradition. Piery Bolger spoke about it in ***Through the Locks*** (by Joe O'Reilly and Caitriona Killally):

My grandfathers on both sides worked on the canal. Pat Kinsella, my mother's father, didn't do long on it. My father's father was on it for years. Thomas Bolger was his name. I was thirteen and a half when I joined... My father did fifty-one years at least on it.

John Connolly, also of Graiguenamanagh, joined the Grand Canal Company in 1954 at the age of seventeen and was pensioned off in 1960, when commercial traffic ceased. He joined his Uncle Mickie and later his father on 79M, the last of the M-boats. John's grandfather too worked on the boats. The late Waxer (Paddy) Dunne said:

Of my family, including my father, six of us worked on the canal. Working on the canal went more or less by families. Most of the boatmen that worked on it came from Graiguenamanagh, Lowtown, Ticknevin, Killina.

Like any community, the Barrow Men had their stories, myths and legends, and their storytellers and poets. Several poems by Kit Ennis from Griaguenamanagh are included in ***Tinnahinch: A Village within a Town***. They include **The Bay of Bunahoun**, recording the exploits of Captain Tom "Sacker" MacDonald on 39M; another poem records that:

He held the rank of Captain for thirty
years or more,
Till the honour was conferred upon
him of "The Barrow Commodore".

But perhaps Billy Hoare's "Tinnahinch", in the same book, sums it up in the poem below:

Brian J. Goggin



*A way of life for Monty we saw sadly disappear
But the tales of inland sailors we still cherish and hold dear
When Brave Boatmen sailed their Barges through the Irish countryside
On Canal and Shannon Waters and St Mullins on the tide.
The Connollys, Gills and Bolgers and the blow-in Johnny Hoare
With "Butt" sailed on the Grand Canal for forty years or more.
Some now are sleeping peaceful in St Michael's Holy Soil
The few who are still with us tell us of those years of toil.*



The Barrow Navigation

By Waterways Ireland

Ireland's second longest navigable river, the Barrow, is noted for its beauty and variety of landscape, historic hinterland and the picturesque charm of its riverside towns. It runs for 192 km from its source in the Slieve Bloom Mountains to the sea and is navigable from Athy to St. Mullins, some 68 km. There are 23 locks on the system, including the sea lock at St. Mullins. There are 5 lock-keepers on the Barrow with the locks operated manually with a crank key. The Barrow line of the Grand Canal which forms the link between the Barrow Navigation at Athy and the Grand Canal Mainline at Lowtown is 46 km long and has 9 locks.



The history of the Barrow goes back over 300 years before the Christian era, where legend has it that a great battle took place to capture the fort of Dinn Righ, a large mound overlooking the Barrow near Leighlinbridge. The presence of such formidable defensive structure indicates the importance of the Barrow as a strategic

John O'Neill, Waterways Ireland lock-keeper at Fenniscourt Lock, Co Carlow.





Dredging work by Waterways Ireland on the Grand Canal Barrow Line.

military highway as well as a highway for commerce since earliest times. The Barrow was a significant commercial trade route right up to the 1950's linking the Grand Canal with the tidal waters of the Barrow estuary. Barges carried consignments of malting barley to Dublin for use in the making of Guinness, which was then transported back downstream in its finished state. Later, beet filled barges supplied Ireland's first sugar factory at Carlow. The Barrow is now completely given over to recreation with cruising, rowing, canoeing, walking, fishing and painting being popular activities along the navigation and its towpaths.

Cruising the river Barrow is a unique experience due to its unspoilt, non-commercialised and uncrowded waters. There are no long queues passing through the locks and no problems getting space at quaysides. Whether you travel on foot, by boat or car you will enjoy unrivalled natural beauty at a slower pace. The Barrow towpath offers a superb walking environment and is the basis of one of Ireland's key national walking routes; the Barrow Way where tourists can explore the historic castles and ruins and the scenic countryside on the quiet roads by the side of the river.

There are 26 Waterways Ireland staff currently working on the Barrow undertaking projects such as dredging, provision of boat slips and mooring facilities, the upkeep of the towpaths and the provision of facilities for anglers, canoeists and other users of the waterway.

A major project which is now at feasibility stage is the restoration of the dry docks at Graigueenamanagh which would eventually see the re-opening of one of the Barrow's most historic features. The dry docks are steeped in history and are an important part of Graigueenamanagh's heritage. In 1821 the Barrow Navigation Company took over a new boat yard and constructed two cut stone dry dock chambers. In that yard, over decades that followed, many of the long-tailed wooden barges that plied the waterways of Ireland came into existence. These crafts were built with ribs hewn from naturally shaped oak baulks and had very long rudders which enabled the helmsman to retain control, especially when running downstream in fast water. Because of this unusual feature they were known as the "long tailed Barrow boats".

All in all, the Barrow, with its beautiful setting, mountain views, wooded banks and historic towns, is a wonderful place to let the weight of the world fall from your shoulders.

For further information on Waterways Ireland and its navigations, please call the Marketing & communications Division in Carrick-on-Suir at +353 (0) 71 9650787 or Enniskillen on +44 (0) 28 66346 205

Sugar in Carlow

Almost Eighty Years of Service

In 1924 it was suggested at a meeting of a group of farmers in Athy that a Sugar Beet Industry be established in the Athy District. A continental syndicate was represented at the meeting and it was explained that apart from the profits available from beet itself, there would be increased yield from crops sown after beet.

The proposals raised a lot of interest in Carlow and the surrounding district and many prominent people including Most Rev. Dr. Foley Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, Mr. B.M. Slocock, Mr. Edward Duggan, Mr. D.P. McGrath, Rev. Canon Ridgeway and Mr. E.J. Broughan pressed hard for Carlow town to be chosen for the proposed factory.

After extensive canvassing of the farming community to guarantee the required beet acreage and the securing of necessary local capital funding it was announced in September 1924 that the Sugar Beet Factory would be established in Carlow.

The Irish Sugar Manufacturing Company

Ltd. was incorporated in 1925 and building operations began towards the end of that year. The first sod was turned in January 1926 by Most Rev. Dr. Foley who at all times had shown great interest in the project. The company had continental directors with Sir Maurice Lippens as chairman and Irish Directors with Col. C.M. Gibbon as chairman.

The employment generated during construction in 1926 was most welcome and all sections of the community looked forward to a brighter future for the town arising out of the many benefits which the factory would bring. The factory was erected by local firm Messrs. T. Thompson & Son. The machinery was installed by various other companies and technicians.

The Farmers signed contracts to grow the required acreage for three years at a price of 54/- (€3.43) per ton of beet at a sugar content of 15.5%, and by November of 1926, the eagerly awaited day arrived as the first campaign began and sugar was produced in Carlow for the first time.



*Dredging the harbour
for the Carlow Sugar
Factory in 1926.*

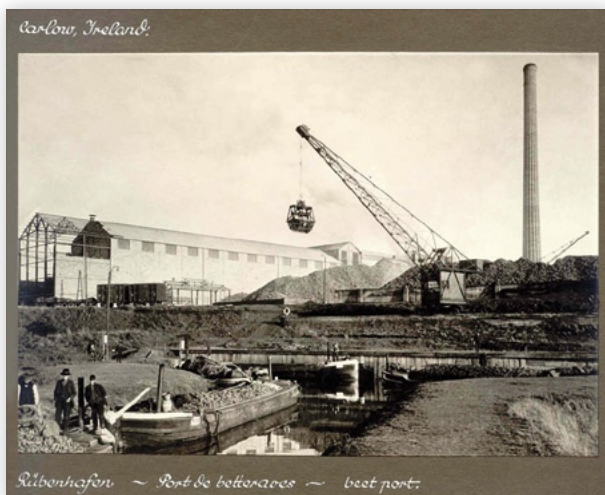
There were very few lorries in those early days so most of the beet was delivered to the factory by rail and horse drawn canal barges. The local beet however was drawn to the factory by horse and cart and very long processions of these were a common sight as the carried not only beet but also Limestone to the plant.

Sampling of each load in those days was done by hand. The daily beet worked was approx. 1,850 tons, and the annual Sugar production was approx. 20,000 tons., which had to be sold in competition with lower priced imports. The government of the day decided to pay a subsidy on the home produced sugar.

The factory was initially managed by Major Mascart followed by Mr. Schurmans. There were approx. 200 full time employees and these were joined by a large number of temporary workers for the campaigns. Some of these temporary employees in the early years came from Belgium and returned home when the campaigns ended.

In 1929 automatic sampling was introduced, lorries were becoming more common although some steam wagons were still used which were a most impressive sight (see our cover feature this issue). In those early years and indeed until after the war, the company did not have its own transport fleet, instead it used 'carters'. These were people who supplied their own horses and carts and moved materials etc. around the factory as required.

Sugar was sold through wholesale merchants and dispatched mostly by rail and canal. Pulp was sold on the open



market, some to merchants, some directly to farmers, and quite a lot was exported. There was very little demand for molasses although some was sold in drums, and practically no demand for factory lime.

By 1932 the Carlow factory was manufacturing 13,400 tons of sugar but Ireland still imported about 85,000 tons. Then in 1933, the Government established C  mhlu  t Si  icre   ireann Teo, the first state owned Sugar Company, and by 1934 Eamonn DeValera had turned the sods of three more factories in Tuam, Thurles and Mal  ow. The first campaigns of these three plants began in October 1934 and a total of 70,000 tons of sugar was produced.



Town Park, Carlow

2004 National Tidy Towns Waterside Award Winners

The Town Park which opened in 2003 was developed by Carlow Town Council and Carlow County Council and in a short space of time has proven to be very popular with people from the town and surrounding areas.

The park will be the centre of open space for the regeneration of this area of town and in particular it will allow people to re discover the River Barrow, Ireland's second longest river. It is also significant that this area was chosen as the site for the town park as it strengthens the links between the Carlow and Laois sides of the Town, none more symbolised than by the pedestrian bridge over the River Barrow, which was one of the towns key millennium projects. The central location of the park makes it a people friendly area encouraging informal social interaction between residents and visitors alike.

The Park which commands over twelve acres of open space contains a number of paved walks. The series of tiered earthen embankments is configured as a counterpoint to the nearby Carlow Castle and thus symbolising the towns Norman heritage. The Park also provides a safe and secure childrens playground, the design of which was the subject of an international competition.

Adding further emphasis to the importance of the parks location is its close proximity to two national walking routes namely the Barrow Way & Slieve Margey

Way which pass along the far side of the River Barrow. The Park also provides an excellent place to relax and enjoy the spectacle of the Carlow Regatta organised by the Carlow Rowing Club and held in June of every year.

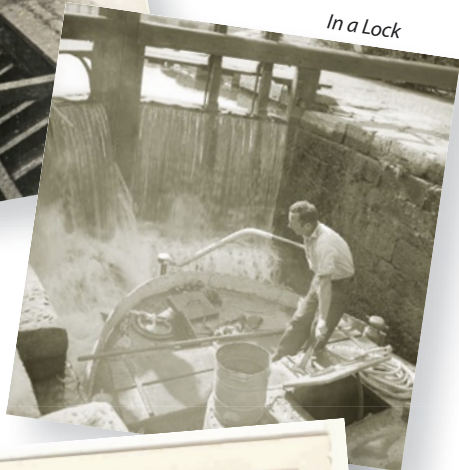
Therefore it is no wonder that the Park was the inaugural winner of the national Tidy Towns Waterside Award winner in 2004. Much praise for the development must go to the Members of Carlow Town Council; Simon Walton, Project Engineer; David Walsh Civil Engineering; Murray & Associates and Sap Contractors for the landscaping works.

There is no doubt that the Town Park amenity presents a strong urban character and is maintained to a high standard for the enjoyment of the people of Carlow and its visitors.





The Old Canal Stores – Carlow. At the launch of G7



In a Lock



John Connolly and John Connolly Junior



15.3.58
Paddy McGrath on the 64
Gracie Cullen in back.



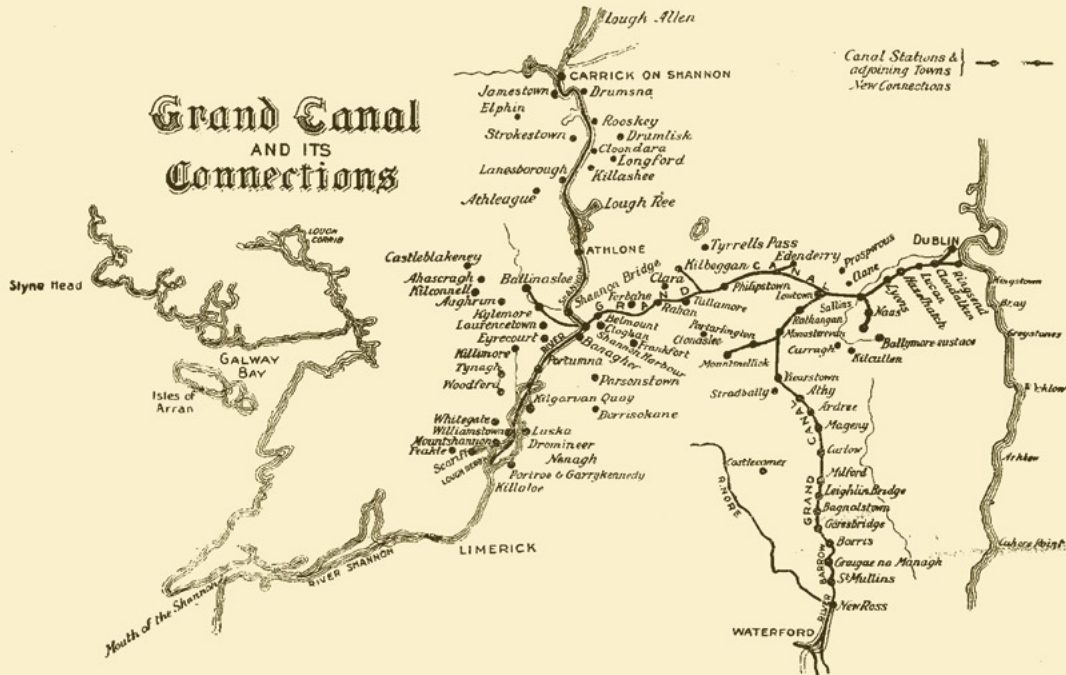
Boatmen at Carlow



*Life on the boats is still extremely hard,
but the lovely scenery you pass through
makes it all worth while. 45M on Lough
Derg August 2004.*



Grand Canal AND ITS Connections



This publication supported by:



Carlow County Museum





Clashiganny Lock County Carlow