

## 107B - Bye Trader - Dublin 1929

13 October 2008

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107B was weighed in Killaloe on 21st January 1930. She is believed to have been built in Ringsend a short time before this, making her over eighty years old. She was operated by Michael Fennell who traded between Carlow and Dublin carrying general goods. She was subsequently owned by a Mr Power from Carrick on Suir, who in turn sold her on to Roadstone. She left the canal navigation on 7th March 1955 for the river Suir to engage in the dredging of sand from the river.

By 1969 107B had disappeared from sight, long forgotten, when a notice appeared in the Irish Press advertising two canal barges for sale. At this time Robertstown on the Grand Canal was experiencing a rebirth led by local priest Father PJ Murphy, who persuaded the local committee to invest in the boats with a view to running boat excursions on the canal.

The two barges, identified as 107B and 52M, were inspected on the Suir at Mooncoin where 107B was found afloat with 52M sunk nearby. Both boats were purchased. Â£700 was paid to Roadstone for 107B.

In July 1969 a group from Robertstown assembled at Mooncoin to take charge of the recovery operation of the two boats. The 52M was in very poor condition and presented a huge challenge to the men from Robertstown which they overcame using some innovative ideas.

With the boat afloat both boats were towed to St Mullins to have further repairs carried out. A BMC truck engine was purchased and with its original gearbox was installed into 107B.

After several months of hard work both boats were ready to start the long journey to Robertstown. The plan was for 107B to tow 52M. This proved tougher than anticipated and a tractor was used to tow the barges through the more difficult sections with it being carried on the deck of 107B when not needed. Other difficulties that impeded progress were the condition of Locks that either leaked or were silted up. Hay was used to seal locks and silt was flushed out of the locks to clear the passage for the boats.

At Borris Lock a large sandbank blocked the navigation. This was dug clear by the men from Robertstown who stripped off and wearing old boiler suits, dug a channel in the riverbed to get the boats through. Finally the journey to Robertstown was completed and in the winter of 1970 work began in earnest on conversion of 107B into a passenger carrying vessel. John Tyrell of Arklow designed a superstructure that would accommodate 60 to 70 people.

In July 1971 Mrs Barbara Castle, a member of the British Government, launched the 107B re-naming her the Emily. For a decade the Emily successfully carried dignitaries, locals and tourists on trips along the Grand Canal. However by 1980 the glory days had passed and Emily was lying moored up and eventually became severely damaged by fire. In 1987 ownership of the Emily/107B passed to Dublin Eastern Regional Tourist Organisation (DERTO) and then to Midland and Eastern Regional Tourist Organisation (MERTO) in 1992.

In 2004 MERTO offered 107B to a group of canal enthusiasts attached to the Offaly Branch of the IWAI for restoration, on condition that the the boat would be used to promote the Grand Canal throughout the inland navigations of Ireland. Out of this was born the "107B Project Group".

The Group has put in place an extensive plan to restore the boat and develop it into an exhibition centre/museum, with the objective of attending festivals and rallies on the waterways to promote all facets of the Grand Canal. It will also be made available to schools and educational groups, as a facility to teach young people about the Grand Canal.

In November 2004 107B was moved to Tullamore for survey and inspection. A small cruiser was used to push the boat some of the way and a 15Hp outboard fitted to the tiller provided propulsion for rest of the journey.

In Tullamore dry dock, when the full extent of the work required became clear, the project was moved to Shannon Harbour. Work on the hull began in late February 2006 with volunteers assembled from as far away as Antrim and Enniskillen. People within the group demonstrate great skill in begging, cajoling and using all their powers of persuasion to get help on board. Steel arrived from Northern Ireland along with welders who gave their services free. Volunteers spent long days cleaning the hull, preparing steel, rust removal, painting and welding to make the hull watertight.

On Sunday the 2nd April 2006 the original boat number was painted onto the bow of the boat and she was again canal boat 107B. To date her exterior and engines have been refurbished and more recently, the interior has been totally revamped as a space for exhibitions with accomodation for a skipper and crew.

Since her relaunch in 2006, 107B has attended many gatherings on the waterways, including the annual Boatmen's Reunion, various events on the River Shannon, the Grand Canal and the River Barrow, and she was the star in 2009 of the 'Grand Crew' promotion from Kilbeggan to Dublin.

In 2010, she has been a floating exhibition at various events from the Shannon to Dublin along the Grand Canal. The 107B committee are currently looking at several proposals and support options in relation to promoting the Grand Canal, and the use of 107B as a floating exhibition space, for 2011.  
<http://www.107bonline.com>

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## Technical Details

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Reg Number:

107B

Built By:

Ringsend Dockyard Company

Year:

1929

Construction:

Riveted Steel

Length:

62'

Beam:

13' 4"

Payload:

54 tons

Draft - Loaded:

4' 3"

Weighed:

Killaloe 1936

Draft - Current:

3'

Home Base:

Grand Canal

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