

41M - GCC Canal Boat - Dublin 1927

17 November 2008

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41M was taken to Killaloe for weighing by her first skipper Jim Moore from Kildare in May 1927. From then on to the closure of the Grand Canal in 1959 she carried general cargo to all corners of the navigation. A number of events both sad and humorous are worth mentioning. One tragic event happened on the 22nd of April (Easter Sunday) 1938 when Thomas Farrell age 19 from the Lock house in Tullamore was drowned when he slipped into the Canal off the decks of 41M. To this day, there is still a cross marking the spot at RhodeBridge.

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In 1957, 41M with Jack Nolan and Jim Farrell were returning to Dublin late at night with a load of "empties". 53M driven by Andy Maloney with a full load of porter was coming the other way, neither boat was carrying a lamp and just below Geoghan's lock (34th lock near Shannon Harbour) the two boats ran head on into each other. Luckily nobody was hurt, but the empties from 41M were thrown all over the place. The pointed bow of 53M left her indelible mark, seen to this day on the bow of the 41M. The usual singing while at the tiller was muted that night.

The 41M was the last barge into Carrick-on-Shannon in May 1959 carrying 20 tons of flour from Ranks in Limerick and there is a plaque on the wall of the Old Barrel Store in Carrick commemorating this event. When the Canal closed down in 1959 41M was left to die but fortunately was rescued by John Conway, who built her first superstructure using windows and pitch pine from an old factory. The pitch pine is still on her roof, but the windows have been upgraded to double glazed PVC. John later traded the 41M for an island in Lough Key one inebriated night.

After that 41M went into decline again. Tim Kennedy purchased her, added a Leyland E170 6 cylinder Matilda tank engine, installed hand rails all round and repaired her bottom. Tim used her for a number of years, but left the inside very open.

In 1984, Les Saunders while cruising through Tullamore noticed the 41M looking sad and neglected in the inner harbour. A few months later he did a deal and bought her. Since then the engine and front cuddy have been replaced, the bottom has been replated and a large wheelhouse and double glazed windows fitted. She still boasts the original decks and propeller, and of course is proud to wear that special dent planted on her by the 53M in 1957.

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Crew included:

During the 1930s the Skipper was George Duggan from Allenwood, and the crew were Joe Connolly from Shannon Harbour, Martin "Hatpin" Doolin, and Christy Brien from Daingean. Tom Lyons was the engine man in 1938 when Thomas Farrell was drowned. In April 1941 Joe Connolly was back temporarily as deckman as Jim Connolly from Killina was out sick. At that time "Hatpin" was in charge, George Duggan was engineman and Nicky Conlon was greaser. Joe left a few months later when Jim came back.

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In the 1940s, Paddy Tierney took charge and was joined by Jack "B&I" Dunne, Tony Hutchinson and Mick Clarke from Mayo. Mick eventually went in charge and stayed in charge until 1950, when he married B&I's daughter and emigrated to America.

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At the end of the 1940s, Pat McGrath was on 41M when she sank in the Ardnacrusha tailrace. They had a load of cement on board, but fortunately she was retrieved prior to the cement setting. [Described here Raising 41M from the Deep] In 1950 Jack Brazil from Ballycommon went in charge with B&I as engine man, but later Jack swapped with Patsy Kennedy and Tom "Nanny" Lyons who crewed the 41M until the breach in 1953. After the breach was repaired, Jack Nolan went in charge until Christmas 1959 when the 41M was decommissioned. The last crew to handle the 41M were Jim Farrell, Jimmy Nolan (Jacks brother), Paddy Ruane and from 1958 John Coyne. Other men connected with 41M were, Tom Connolly who worked on her in 1940, Tommy Nutt, Jim Leeson, Tom Doyle, Paddy Nolan and Tim Lenihan.

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