

79M - GCC Canal Boat - Dublin 1939

02 February 2009

Last Updated 03 December 2010

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79M was the last boat built for the Grand Canal Company and went into service in 1939. She was built to maximum dimensions for locks on the Grand Canal and measured 61ft 9ins x 13ft 3ins.

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When the canal closed down in December 1959, 79M was one of the 14 boats that were taken back for six months to bring Guinness to Limerick and help in the de-commissioning of the company stations.

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Muck Boat

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79M was not sold off in 1960 by CIE but worked to around 1980 as a maintenance boat, a "Muck Boat"™ on the canal. The schedule for Muck Boats (also referred to as Clay Boats or Gravel Boats) was one day travelling to Cock Bridge, one day loading clay onto the boat with shovels and wheel barrows, one day to return to where they were working along the Grand Canal, and the following day to unload the clay onto the bank with shovels.

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She still had a Bolinder engine fitted during that time. In the early 1980s the maintenance department got Jackie Thomas to put a hydraulic crane on her bow and they also installed a new engine.

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Dredger

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In the 1980s after the Bord of Works took over the running of the canal, there was a lot of dredging work done especially around Dublin. At that time three dredgers were working in Dublin 79M, 32E and 77M. When the Dublin job was finished 79M continued to be used on the canal for dredging until being retired in the 1990s.

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79M is currently lying disused in Waterways Ireland's™ maintenance yard in Tullamore.

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Crew Included

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1950s: Tom Connolly, Paddy Nolan and Tom Bowers. Banagher Jack Carroll, Tom and Larry Finnegan as well as Jim Gill also worked on her at one time or another. John Connolly from Graiguenamanagh finished up on 79M in 1960 and at the young age of 24 he was pensioned off by CIE at £1-2-10 per week.

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1960: Tom Bowers (Robertstown/Killaloe) was skipper, Bert Conroy (Robertstown/Killaloe) was Driver/Enginemen.

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1970s: Her crew during the 1970s were Paddy Nolan, Willy Flynn and Mick Gurry. After them Willy Flynn, Johnny Dunne and Joe Cornly worked on her until she was eventually taken out of service as a Clay boat circa 1980.

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1980s Frank Dowdle and his son Michael worked on her after that.

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