

HBA celebrates Arthur's Day in Limerick - Sep 2010

27 September 2010

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Limerick - Sep 23rd 2010

Grand Canal Barge 68M arrived today, Arthur's Day 2010, at Limerick Docks carrying a special batch of Guinness for Dolan's Pub.

This completes the re-enactment trip of 50 years ago, started by 51M in the Grand Canal Basin in Dublin in May. The journey in 2010 was possible through the facilitation of Waterways Ireland, owners of 51M, and the Burke Family, owners of 68M.

Both 51M and 68M formed part of a fleet of purpose built motorised (M) boats built for the Grand Canal Company (GCC) in the 1920s and 1930s to carry cargo to and from the towns and cities along the Grand Canal and the River Shannon. The fleet was transferred to CIE in 1950 when the transportation system was nationalised; the boats were used for the next ten years until transportation ceased.

Fifty years ago, the departure of the last trading boat from Dublin caused quite a stir with both the public and the press. On May 27th 1960, in Grand Canal Harbour at James Street, just one barge took on a large consignment of Guinness; this was scheduled for the depot in Limerick. Around tea-time, the loading complete, the evocative sound of the Bolinder engine was heard when they "lit the bulb". 51M heavily laden and very deep in the water, guided by her Skipper and Engineman, slipped out of the harbour.

The re-enactment of this journey commenced on May 19th 2010, when 51M departed from Grand Canal Basin. While the skipper on the original historic voyage has since passed away, on board as part of 51M's crew were his sons, daughter, grandson, granddaughter and some of the boatmen from the 1950s. After a number of stops in Dublin she headed west to Robertstown, Daingean and Ballycommon. 51M arrived into Tullamore Harbour at the end of May, where it is understood Waterways Ireland plan to fit her out as a display boat for use at events along the waterways.

68M then took over the journey from Tullamore, calling at Shannon Harbour on the Grand Canal and Banagher and Killaloe on the Shannon. After negotiating the double lock at Ardnacrusha with a fall of 31metres (102 ft), 68M turned into the Abbey River and headed to Limerick Docks.

So once again a cargo of Guinness was delivered by water, to Dolan's Pub. 68M was skippered by Gerry Burke ably assisted by Andy Maloney, Bert Conroy and Sean Anderson, all three former boatmen who brought Guinness to Limerick in the 1950s. Also on board were Brian Goggin and Sean Hynes. Brendan Ryan of Diageo, Ray Sheehan of Diageo, Mick Dolan and of course Arthur met them in Limerick for the last part of the journey to Dolan's pub.

As is the custom, the consignment was tested by the visitors and rated as "excellent!"

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The HBA thank all those involved in making this historic journey possible, Dolan's pub, Waterways Ireland, the ESB, Pat Lysaght, Ger Reed and the Limerick Port Authority.

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Here are some of the photos taken on the final leg of the journey from Killaloe to Limerick by Gerry Burke, Brian Goggin, Keith Wiseman and others

[Double click on the image displayed to see a larger picture. Use the right and left arrow on your keyboard or your mouse, to view the next or previous image. Loading may take a few seconds.]

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{gallery}Event Photos 2010 - Arthurs Day 2010{/gallery}

For more on the journey and the boats see IT barge recreates historic voyage, 51M photos Dublin to Tullamore, HBA 51M history and HBA 68M history

The Clare Champion featured Bertie Conroy, Andy Maloney and Sean Anderson CC Loading barrels at Killaloe onto the barge 68M.

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