

Press Release - Three Sisters - Boatmen to be honoured with Barrow 2011 presentation

28 April 2011

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HERITAGE BOAT ASSOCIATION (HBA) April 28th 2011

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THE THREE SISTERSâ€”CELEBRATING THE NAVIGATION

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BOATMEN HONOURED WITH BARROW 2011 PRESENTATION

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This year the River Barrow and her sisters, the Nore and the Suir, will greet again some old friends, the barges of the Heritage Boat Association (HBA). These barges, or canal boats as they are more accurately known, are the same boats that in their earlier working lives carried the cargos that were the commercial lifeline of the country. And in turn these old boats will meet with some of the skippers and crew that worked them when they were cargo boats on the inland waterways.

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This year we celebrate the 220th anniversary of the opening of the Barrow Navigation. This linked the Grand Canal with the rivers Barrow, Nore and Suir, and opened up a large area of the hinterland to the great ports of Dublin and Waterford. When the canals closed to commercial traffic in the 1960s it was feared that all use of the navigation would soon cease. Indeed, non-commercial traffic did become very light, but for the vision of a few people and now, following excellent remedial work by Waterways Ireland on the Barrow Line and Barrow River, we welcome a new era for this navigation, one which will bring life and vitality once again to the waterway and the towns and villages along the system.

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A hundred years ago, 1200 boatmen were engaged in the business of transporting cargo, connecting people in inland towns with those in Irish ports and in turn linking them to the great sea ports of the world. Today, many of their descendants live along our inland navigations.

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Three of these great canal boats, numbers 72M, 68M and 107B, escorted by a flotilla of other HBA boats will, over the next few months, travel the entire navigation including Carlow, Waterford, Carrick on Suir, Inistioge and all points in between. The crews are anxious to meet with those whose families had connections with the commercial trade along the waterway, and perhaps even re-unite some long retired boatmen with their old boat. In particular, a gathering of the retired boatmen will take place in Graiguenamanagh on Saturday 21st May. Waterways Ireland together with the Heritage Boat Association will make a presentation to each of the boatmen to mark Barrow 2011, the celebration of the 220th anniversary of the opening of the Barrow Navigation

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The following are the expected arrival times:

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Goresbridge: Saturday 30th April from 14:00

Graiguenamanagh: Sunday 8th May from 14:00

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For more details of the Heritage Boat Association see www.heritageboatassociation.ie.

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Contact Paul Martin, Chair HBA on 087 2523908 or pro@heritageboatassociation.ie

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