

# The Rambler and The Royal - May - July 2011

23 May 2011

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The Rambler was one of five steamers purchased by the Midland Great Western Railway (MGWR) between 1876 and 1878 for a freight carrying business on the Royal Canal. It took the current owner five years of steadfast work to complete her renewal. In recent years, the Rambler has sat in the Grand Canal Docks, Dublin, awaiting the opening of the Royal Canal to bring her back to her old stomping ground.

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Here we record in pictures The Rambler's 2011 travels along the Royal Canal, skippered by John Connon Jr and crewed by John Connon Sr, Evan Connon and Ben Treacy, for the new Waterways series "Waterways - the Final Journey". This is a Tile Films' production due for release in August this year. As well as Presenter Dick Warner, the production team includes Director Stephen Rooke, Producers Stephen Rooke and Larry Masterson, Production Manager Rachel Towell and Director of Photography Peter Robertson.

Tile Films state "As Dick Warner traverses the newly-reconstructed Royal Canal he reveals the rich history of transport in Ireland" not only canal transport, but also railway history and the story of the Bianconi stage coach company. Dick will reveal how the canal was constructed in the late 18th century as a major commercial venture, and how its history mirrors the history of Irish capitalism.

Dick will unearth a treasure trove of other archaeological and historical nuggets, from the Iron Age site at Corlea in County Longford, to tales of whiskey production and consumption, famine emigration and curious anecdotes such as the story of the Ribbonmen, a 19th century rural secret society.

On June 29th at 1840 or thereabouts, The Rambler entered Richmond Harbour on the western end of the Royal Canal. A few days later she met up with Chang Sha and a raft of other heritage barges on Lough Ree. The end of an epic journey.

Her history and other travels can be seen here [HBA The Rambler](#) and [HBA The Rambler 133 years later](#) and [The Rambler begins journey](#)

[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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Photographs by Stephen Rooke, Ben Treacy, Joe Treacy and AJ Vosse & Son

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{gallery}Event Photos 2011 - The Rambler and The Royal I{/gallery}

Extract from the log of the Truant, dated Tuesday, 21st August 1923, which appears in L.M. Goodbody's History of the Shannon One Class.

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By twelve thirty a.m. the Rambler's crew "never at any time good sailors" had completely lost their heads with terror. They hailed the Shankshai and begged for God's sake to send Mickey Donnellan aboard. A punt was let back on the end of a line and Mickey climbed down the stern of Shankshai. He was then hauled up alongside the Rambler and got aboard. In the sea then running this was a great feat and no praise is too great for it. Once aboard he took the helm and things were again going well when the Rambler's engines began to knock and in a few moments they stopped altogether.

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The situation now grew rapidly worse. The Rambler swung broadside on and began to blow down on the Shankshai. The latter boat also broached to and in a short time the two boats came together at the bows. The rolling of the two was terrific and serious damage was suffered by both before they could be got apart. The two boats were rolling scuppers under and at one moment it was thought that the Shankshai was going over altogether. Healy "the skipper of Shankshai" gave the order to jump for it and he and Meleady managed to scramble onto the Rambler. The two boats at once rolled apart and it was some moments before Caesar (N. W. Early) was able to get aboard. On the Rambler all was chaos. Her crew were in a hopeless state "be-fuddled by drink and terror and the engine-driver would not even try and get his motor

going. The crew of the shankshai now took charge and endeavoured to get out an anchor and thereby get her head to wind. The fairlead in the bows carried away however and the chain ran along the beam and once again she was brought to broadside on. There was no opportunity of making the fall of the anchor chain and the four men " Healy, Meleady, Early and Donnellan " were forced to remain on deck holding on all night. With the rolling, two barrels of oil on Rambler's deck went overboard taking all the rail on the port beam and quarter with them.

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