

Press Release - Fifty Years on return of barges to Piltown, Co Kilkenny - Aug 2011

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PRESS RELEASE

August 24th 2011

FIFTY YEARS ON - THE RETURN OF BARGES TO PILTOWN, COUNTY KILKENNY

To celebrate Heritage Week, barges 68M and 72M will arrive at the Creamery Quay in Piltown on the banks of the Pill River to join with the Piltown community at the Iverk Show.

In a previous time up to 126 boats annually made their way up the Pill River and discharged their cargo at the Quay. As late as 1960 sand and gravel were drawn and discharged at the quay by the Piltown Barge 4B. Heritage Boats 68M and 72M, sister boats to 4B, are the same barges that in their earlier working lives carried cargos that were the commercial lifeline of Ireland.

A hundred years ago, over 1,200 boatmen were engaged in the business of transporting cargo, connecting people in inland towns with those in Irish ports, and in turn linking them with the great sea ports of the world. Today, many of their descendants live along the River Suir and its tributaries.

2011 is a significant year, marking the 220th anniversary of the opening of the Barrow Navigation. The navigation linked the Grand Canal with the rivers Barrow, Nore and Suir, and opened up a large area of the heartland to the great ports of Dublin and Waterford. Five Counties are celebrating with a series of events and festivals taking place to mark the occasion.

This year the journey of the HBA's Three Sisters Fleet commenced on a frosty morning in March when 68M headed north on the River Shannon and turned onto the Grand Canal north of Banagher. At the same time 72M quietly slipped her moorings in Naas and led the now growing fleet south onto the River Barrow at Athy. At towns and villages along the rivers, communities have been celebrating the arrival of the Heritage Boats.

The Heritage Boat Association's aspiration is to protect, promote and celebrate the floating heritage on the inland waterways of Ireland. Our Floating Heritage provides us with a direct link to the past and includes both commercial and pleasure craft that plied the inland waterways.

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

For HBA details and histories of Barges 4B, 68M and 72M see www.heritageboatassociation.ie.