

Press Release – Clodiagh expedition leads to new industrial heritage find - Sep 2011

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PRESS RELEASE
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HERITAGE BOAT ASSOCIATION (HBA)
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CLODIAGH EXPEDITION LEADS TO NEW INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE FIND
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In a recent reconnoitre carried out by members of the Heritage Boat Association and the Portlaw Heritage Group, long lost structures of our boating heritage were located and identified. Four boats of the Heritage Boat Association, including Heritage Barges 68M and 72M, navigated the Clodiagh to Portlaw recently, the first time that barges have moored at the old Quay in 75 years. They discovered the Portlaw Graving Docks at the Quay and based on the information in some of the historical documents at the Heritage Centre, these may date from as early as the 1820s and been built before the town. On the same site are the remains of a stone workshop and behind the cut stone quay, they found an old cobbled yard and track.

These structures are close to the old Lock Gate, whose design is reputed to be unique in the British Isles. The gate formed the entrance to the Portlaw Canal where raw materials were carried by barge into the Cotton Mill and the finished product was sent from here on the first stage of the journey to countries all over the world.

All concerned were excited about finding these structures which may pre-date the building of the town of Portlaw. Gerry Burke of the Heritage Boat Association stated "Finds like these are not only important to our boating heritage but give us insights into the social aspects of our ancestors and their amazing skills in creating innovative industrial artefacts by hand. It is important they are preserved for both their tourism value and for future generations to appreciate."

Brian Goggin, who writes about Irish Waterways' history, said "Portlaw's foundation as an industrial town is intimately linked with the use of the River Clodiagh, but there is little published information about the navigation or about how boats used it. These new discoveries add an extra dimension to our understanding and extend the boundaries of the area that should be conserved."

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