

HBA Royal Canal - Week 6

22 April 2013

Last Updated 23 April 2013

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•THE BIG BOATS ARE COMING•

Week 6 update and photos

Week 5 update and photos

Week 4 update and photos

Week 3 update and photos

Week 2 update and photos

Week 1 update and photos

Itinerary for HBA on the Royal Canal 2013

HBA on the Royal, Week 6 " Maynooth to Shandon Gardens

20 - 21st April 2013

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Friday evening was beautiful, and a foretaste of the weather to follow for the whole weekend. I arrived hale and hearty thanks to a cadged lift from the leafy suburbs from a colleague who lives in Maynooth. Armed with a list of the best eateries, drinkeries and dancieries from the best that local knowledge (and a traffic jam on the M50) could provide, I was certain that a long night on the town in Maynooth was on the cards. I just needed to drop the olâ€™™ kit bag onto my bunk, convince the skipper, and head for the main street. Of course, thatâ€™™s where it started to go horribly wrong. A full wheelhouse and some inquisitive locals looking for the grand tour meant that I had to set a spell on board. It would still have been recoverable if we hadnâ€™™t sent out for chips, but suffice it to say, I will have to make a return journey on the Royal if Iâ€™™m to experience the Maynooth nightlife.

Saturday morning saw us up early, thanks to 4Eâ€™™s skipper arising on time " for a change. Surprisingly, everyone else was up and off without fuss, though Paradis was not the early bird this time having been on shore leave the night before.

Talking of beautiful birds, I am always fascinated by the heron. It is a constant companion of the barge whenever she travels on a canal and unlike all other birds seems to relish company. On this occasion the fellowship proved worthwhile for both when the churned waters delivered him a fish breakfast.

The rest of the day proved uneventful! Oh hang on a sec. That was a different weekend. This one alas wasnâ€™™t the peaceful one that weâ€™™d come to expect and love on the Royal. Whilst we picked up a bit of axminster (and got to see two lovlies in their best swimwear), we had a rather more unfortunate event when reality came crashing in. This took the form of a "Stealth branch" which arrived uninvited through the wheelhouse window. Skipper error unfortunately. I knew I should have left the nephew at the wheel. A tree branch under the boat finished our trio of woes, but every cloud has a silver lining, and we cut this one up for firewood.

Saturday evening saw us safely below the twelfth lock, and despite the big talk of a nights carousing, we slunk off to bed as the sun was setting. Just as well really, as 4Eâ€™™s skipper (early Joe as heâ€™™s now known) decided to make a dawn start once more. Seems he needed to catch a train; at five past no less. This began another glorious day. With the sun splitting the heavens we passed peacefully to Shandon Gardens, causing more of a stir with the locals than with the swans nesting on the towpath, who were oblivious to our passing. Some tea and brack for the lockkeepers eased our passage and we spent an afternoon in the sun, chatting and contemplating the final stage to come.

I couldnâ€™™t finish without mentioning the one mishap. Andyâ€™™s brush with the Broom was a calamity we all hope to avoid. B bad enough as this blow proved to be, I know for sure the Iron Lung is only winded.

MB 74M

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It's a dog's life - Getting ready for the off, at Maynooth

Going Dutch.

The night before.

Early morning - Maynooth

The three wise men

You've been framed!

IDA in the Deep Sinking

The Deep Sinking again

At the M50 aqueduct, preparing for 'The Picture' ...

... The Picture - Cool Metal meets IE's latest ...

... and one from yesteryear too - at Ashtown.

Route 23 meets 74M - both came via Mullingar.

76M relaxing after passing through Broom (Brougham) Bridge

Leaving Lock 7 at Liffey Junction - tight fit.

The unsung hero.

At last - at rest in Shandon Gardens

Shandon Gardens - always ready with a welcome for the boats.

IDA - a long, long way from home.

Shandon Mills in the distance, and beyond that the Pigeon House towers - and Ringsend.

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