

58M - GCC Canal Boat - Dublin 1929

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58M was built in 1929 at Ringsend Dockyard, Dublin, for the Grand Canal Company(GCC) and, like a lot of the McMillan boats, was used for the most part on the Barrow Navigation. She would have carried cargo from Dublin to Waterford with occasional ventures to the Shannon. As with all cargo boats she was calibrated for payload in Killaloe, on the 17th July 1929. This exercise involved the recording of boat draft at 2 ton intervals until she reached 4'6". This information could be used to identify the payload carried by each barge at various locks and calculate tolls, etc.

After the closure of the Grand Canal in 1959, 58M was bought by Roadstone Ireland Ltd who used her as a sand dredger on the Slaney for a number of years. She was eventually retired and abandoned below Edermine Bridge in tidal waters on the river Slaney three miles below Enniscorthy town. Colm McGrath found 58M and later bought her, where she lay, from Roadstone in Enniscorthy where the Manager, Nicky Rackard, extracted the princely sum of Â£600. The boat was in a sad state being beached from the holes on both sides, which ran from bulkhead to bulkhead of the cargo hold. She had no engine, the tiller handle was bent at right angles to the rudder but still had the steel hopper fitted in the cargo hold for carrying sand which was dredged from the river bed.

Colm's first priority was to block the holes in the hull, straighten the tiller and fit a BMC 5.1 engine with a Borg Warner 2:1 Reduction gearbox. On a Saturday morning in August 1978, 58M returned to life and set out at 0600 hrs from Enniscourthy reaching Wexford Bridge at 0800 hrs, around Hook Head at 1600 hrs finally arriving at St. Mullins at 1900 hrs. She then travelled on to Shannon Harbour and from there to Athlone. At Athlone the first priority was the removal of the sand hopper, bow cabin, engine room roof and 6" of deck on both sides of the hold. A new superstructure was installed and the conversion carried out that remains the same today. Colm lived on board 58M in Athlone from 1980 until 1987 and on board at Hazelhatch from 1987 until 1991.

She is still in the McGrath Family who use 58M for family cruising on the Canal, the Shannon and were back down the Barrow in 2005.

Crew included-

As a young 16 year old deckhand Denis Rowan received the sum of 2 shillings and six pence to bring 58M from Ringsend to James's St. Harbour. Piery Bolger of Graiguenamagh, started work on 58M as a Greaser with his father in 1942 and with the exception of three weeks when he worked on 70M, he spent all his 18 years on the canal on 58M, until she was retired in 1960. Billy and Christy Bolger also worked on her. When Piery was the skipper he was known for always being in a hurry. He was continually last to leave but first to get there. Skipper Tom McGrath from Allenwood and his two sons Larry the driver/engine man and Paddy the deckhand were the last recorded crew members employed by CIE in January 1961.