

52M - The Eustace - GCC Canal Boat - Dublin 1928

21 September 2008

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Technical Details

Reg Number:

52M

Built By:

Vickers (Ireland) Ltd.

Year:

1928

Construction:

Riveted Steel

Length:

61' 6"

Beam:

13' 2"

Payload:

60 tons

Draft:

4' 5.5"

Weighed:

Killaloe 1928

Engine:

Bolinder E Type, 15 HP

Ford 5000 Diesel 1991

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52M was built for the Grand Canal Company in 1928 by Vickers in Dublin. Company boats had different crews on and off but we know that Michael and John Connolly from Graiguenamagh with Matt Duggan worked on her at one time. In February 1942 after the strike 52M was taken out by Paddy Connolly Shannon Harbour as skipper with his brother's, Tom as engineman, Joe as deckhand and Jim Nevin as greaser. Another crew were Mick McDonnagh with Bert Conroy and Tim Lehanin from Robertstown.

That crew had an unfortunate "directional incident" one morning leaving Killaloe with a load of porter for Limerick. On the return journey out of Limerick they had a load of Maize and 52M sank in the tailrace just below Parteen bridge. The story goes that she didn't sink immediately so the crew managed to get their bed clothes off and they slept on the bank for the night. The boat was left under water for the winter and was raised the following summer when water levels were lower.

After the Canal was closed in 1959, 52M was sold off by CIE to a Mr. A. Power who subsequently sold it on to Roadstone. Roadstone used her for a few years as a sand and gravel boat on the river Suir. In 1969 she was submerged in the river near Mooncoin and was in pretty bad shape when it was purchased by Robertstown Muintir na Tire for Â£350. That July she was towed to St. Mullins, by a pilot boat, for repairs. After repairs she was towed by 107B (another Robertstown Muintir na Tire boat) all the way back to Robertstown.

"The name was in recognition of Colonel Charles Eustace, one time Chairman of the court of directors of the Grand Canal"

In 1970 John Tyrell of Arklow designed a superstructure to accommodate 60 to 70 passengers. It took two years to do the conversion and when she was launched in 1972 by Mrs George Colley she was named the 'Eustace': The name was in recognition of Colonel Charles Eustace one time Chairman of the court of directors of the Grand Canal. From then to 1980 the Eustace was used for passenger tours on the Grand Canal. In 1985 trips commenced again and she was used by RTE for a film 'The Stowaway' with a cast of children from Robertstown School.

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In 1987 Dublin Eastern Regional Tourist Organisation (DERTO) was given possession of the boat and the hotel. Boat trips had ceased prior to this take-over so these were started up again. In 1990 Midlands Eastern Regional Tourist Organisation (MERTO) took over the ownership and running of 52M, 107B and the hotel in Robertstown. The following year 52M got a new Ford 5000 engine. Two years later in 1992 Robertstown Community Development Association took a lease on the Eustace. The boat was refurbished and re-launched by Charlie McCreevy at the May Festival that year. She was once again back doing trips on the canal, it's got a bar aboard and was used for festivals, weddings, bus trips and school tours.

Sadly the level of business wasn't sufficient to keep the operation going so the "Eustace" is now back with MERTO awaiting a new lease of life.

Crew Included-

We know Michael and John Connolly from Graiguenamagh, with Matt Duggan, worked on her at one time. In February 1942 52M was taken out by Paddy Connolly Shannon Harbour as skipper with his brothers, Tom as engine man, Joe as deckhand and Jim Nevin as greaser. Another crew were Mick McDonnagh with Bert Conroy and Tim Lehanin from Robertstown.