

47M - Palo Alto - GCC Canal Boat - Dublin 1928

22 September 2008

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Technical Details

47M at Liberty on the Liffey in 1997!

Reg Number:

47M

Built By:

Vickers (Ireland) Ltd

Year:

1928

Construction:

Riveted Steel

Length:

61' 6"

Beam:

13' 2"

Payload:

62 tons

Draft:

4' 6"

Weighed:

Killaloe 1928

Engine:

Bolinder E Type, 15 HP

Ford 80hp 6Cyl Water Cooled

Steering:

Chain driven/Universal Jointed

Home Base:

Gortmore Boat Club, Lough Derg

After a long and productive life as a commercial barge she was sold by CIE to the Dalkey Sea Scouts who had hoped to convert her to a clubhouse. However, this was not to come to pass, and after an idle year or two, she was bought by Donncha Kennedy in the 1960's, who installed a Ford 80HP six cylinder diesel engine internally cooled from water in the ballast tank. He also named her Palo Alto, teaming her up 40M - Sequoia, and 42M -Jacaranda as part of the charter fleet known as Weaver Boats. All these barges were to a similar specifications with felt roofs, and shiplapped superstructures. The original beams which were used to cover the hold, were used to support the roof, and the GCC stamp can still be seen on many of them today. A small wheel house which had only three sides was mounted astern and access to the main cabin was by a stairway forward of the wheel house.

From the late 60's through the 70's and 80's Palo Alto was chartered, in many cases to Americans holidaying in Ireland. They were provided with a skipper and a cook and cruised the upper parts of the Shannon.

47M In Shannon Harbour

"Barges are funny looking boats-low, stubby and utilitarian"

The following description is an extract from the travel supplement to an American newspaper called "The Record" and dated 8th March 1987 ...

"Barges are funny looking boats-low, stubby and utilitarian. The Palo Alto is no exception. Passengers are accommodated in four cabins, a bow cabin with two lower bunks, a large cabin with three quarter bed and two cabins rather like train compartments with upper and lower berths.

There were two heads for use by passengers and crew, and a highly effective and comfortable shower. There were also two common rooms, a kitchen-dining room that was the centre of most activity, and a glass enclosed wheelhouse for viewing the panorama while staying dry."

The wheelhouse described above is not the original. Donncha added this to the Palo Alto after he had sold 40M and 42M in the 80's. The open stairwell was covered and access to below was through the wheel house. He also cut the tiller and fitted a chain driven, universal jointed, steering mechanism. The steering wheel itself is made of iron and was originally used on Kilmainham weir! Donncha never wasted anything!

In July 1990 while she was still being chartered, she was bought by Piaras and Pam O'Brien. They replaced the wheelhouse and made a few other changes down below. The engine was completely overhauled with a heat exchanger fitted to give her a wet exhaust. They travelled extensively to many parts of the Shannon and took part in many rallies, including Shannon Harbour, North Shannon and Lough Derg. In 1997 she was taken to Dublin to take part in the annual Dublin Rally and managed to get as far as Capel St. Bridge on the Liffey. She travelled also to the Lough Derg Yacht Club in Dromineer each summer, where the O'Briens used her as a home away from home.

She was one of the original boats involved in the building of the Gortmore Boat Club. Palo Alto and the O'Briens parted company in late 2006 and she is now owned by Dave and Lynda Saunders (Dave's Dad owns 41M)

Crew Included-

Crews on the companies boats swapped and changed all the time, what we do know about 47M is that in the early 40's John "Pim" Donoghue was in charge (Skipper) with Tony Dunn driving (engineman), Larry Maloney was deckhand and Johnny Codd was greaser.

Around 1948 she was with the Barrow men for a while before being tied up. After that two guys called Bruton and Morin had her for one winter. The crew at one time were Tony and Peter Brien and Peter (Peadar) Boland. At another time it was Paddy Day from Athy with Peter Boland and Paddy Addley. Her last Crew were Thomas McGrath with his two sons Larry and Paddy.