

# 66M - Bishop Whelan - GCC Canal Boat - Dublin 1936

25 September 2008

Last Updated 04 April 2009

66M with new wheelhouse

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On September 29th 1965 Padraic O' Brolchain found himself to be the proud owner of 66M when he bought her at auction. He was furnished with a lock pass for the 32 locks to Carlow and an instruction that the barge had to be got out of the harbour within a week. The Bolinder engine was in situ but was less most of the important bits that made it work. Within the week they had got together a team armed with a lock key, tow ropes, a 3hp outboard, and various slashers, saws, grabs etc.

Their first day's trip got them from the James' Street to under the Naas Road bridge at the 3rd lock. The outboard, clamped to the tiller was a success and with manual effort on ropes they got her the next day to the Guinness filter beds where by arrangement they wintered. The following spring they mounted a tractor engine on the roof of the engine compartment and with a belt drive to the Bolinder flywheel they headed off to Carlow.

They moved her at week-ends only, so it took all summer to get there. She sank a few times along the way and with weeds on the canal they often got only two or three miles in a day. When they got to Carlow they lifted 66M on to the bank to patch the hull which had over 30 visible holes. The Bolinder was removed and replaced with a tractor engine. A steel superstructure erected which was a novelty in those days as most people were using timber and felt.

Finally in 1973, 66M was ready, although not fully converted it was habitable and she was moved to the 17th lock. In 1976 she was taken on the Shannon for the first time, freshly painted with no number or name. On the return trip to Dublin, several lock keepers enquired as to her number and when 66M was called out their response was always "Ah J---s the Bishop Whelan", the last skipper associated with 66M. Hence she was christened.

The "Bishop Whelan" has traveled extensively attending many rallies over the years. She is now owned by Padraic's brother Aongus and underwent a major refit plus the addition of a wheel-house in 2003. During this refit the familiar steel shutters over the windows were removed.

Crew Included -

1936 - Her first Skipper was Dan Logan.

1939 - Ned Kelly was Skipper, Sean Tierney Deckman, Tom Coyne Engineman and "Swither" Sullivan (Dublin) was Greaser.

1940's - Jack Connolly, Johnny Press (Percival) and Tom Bower.

1947 - 59 Tom "Bishop"Whelan was Skipper. His sons John, Pat and Tom, all came to work with him at some time. Pat Whelan and Oliver McDonald were crewing to 1959.

66M was one of the fourteen boats put back on the Canal for six months in 1960. At that time its crew were Addy Danger (Aungier) and John Joe Mc Dermott.