

# 70M - Lady Avalon - GCC Canal Boat - Dublin 1936

25 September 2008

Last Updated 03 December 2010

## Technical Details

70M at Portumna

Reg Number:

70M

Built By:

Vickers (Ireland) Ltd

Year:

1936

Construction:

Riveted Steel

Length:

61' 6"

Beam:

13' 1.5"

Payload:

60 tons

Draft:

4' 5"

Weighed:

Killaloe 1928

**Engine:**

Bolinder E Type, 15 HP

Perkins 120hp

**Home Base:**

Portumna

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After a good working life of 24 years, 70M wasn't sold off at the first auction of boats in 1960 but was used as a maintenance boat on the Canal. Then in September 29th 1965, CIE had a sale of Canal Barges by Public Auction at St James's Street Harbour. The barges for sale that day were 31M, 44M, 66M, 67M, 70M, and 76M. 70M was bought at the auction by John Barker from Glenageary. She was later sold to Gerard Brady and Jeremiah Deasy. At one stage she was converted as a Bar & Restaurant. In November 1975 they sold her to Sheelagh Maunsell and her husband.

In their ownership she was known as the "Lady Avalon". After that Bill Pigot bought her in 1983 and lived on her at Connaught Harbour in Portumna until some months before he died in 1992. By his will, Bill left 70M to his godchildren David Pigot Jnr. and Andrea Martin. Andrea, not long afterwards, bought out David and became the sole owner. And it was from Andrea that Geoff and Dick Lovegrove, her current owners bought her in 1994.

She was still lying in Connaught Harbour in a pretty sorry state although she had been converted (and apparently won the prize for the best conversion at the Shannon Rally in 1971), she had fallen into disrepair and was in need of TLC. Undeterred by this, the two brothers eagerly set forth about doing her up. They installed a reconditioned diesel engine and a new gearbox. Her bilges were in a bad state so they replaced all of the bilge on the port side and most of the bilge on the starboard side. They fitted a new steering system and brought her up the canal to Ringsend where they spent the next four years giving her a complete refit.

By the summer of 1998 she was ready for action, but there was a problem leaving Ringsend because the 9th Lock was thought to be unsafe and no traffic was allowed through. Frustrated at being stuck in Ringsend, when settled weather was forecast in August, they brought her down by sea to Waterford Harbour and up the Barrow to New Ross. Aongus O'Brolchain and Peter Gray came as crew for the journey which is another story in itself. [See 70M at Sea] They spent the following two years at St Mullins from where they explored the Nore and the Suir before returning via the Barrow to the Shannon where she is once again berthed at Portumna.

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**Crew Included-**

The original crew were Willie Pender as Skipper (he became the lock keeper at Ticknevin). Harry Pender as Engineman,

Pat Sheridan was Deckhand and Jackie Herbert was the Greaser. The following year Michael Lawlor, aged 18, joined the crew as Greaser. The rest of the crew were Pat Pender (Skipper). Andy Fawcett (engine man) and Andy Cross was Deckhand.

In the early 1940s the Connolly family began to be involved as crew and in 1944 the crew were Jim "Devil" Connolly (Skipper), Jack "Porter" Farrell (Engineman), Chris "Kit" Connolly (Deckhand) and Thos. "Scudge" Tanner was the Greaser. During her working life, Billy Cotton, Dick Kearney, Jack Kearney, Paddy Kearney, Willy Buckley and Jim Gill all worked on 70M at different times. Her last crew before the canals were closed was Tom Connolly (Skipper). His brother John was Engineman and his brother-in-law Nessian Redmond was Deckman.