

A GRAND



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This year saw the 200th year of the Grand Canal, which, along with the 50th anniversary of the IWAI, saw many branches celebrating one of our oldest man-made waterways

Dublin's celebration: The 50/50 Rally

PHOTO: MICK KINAHAN



When the Dublin branch of the IWAI sat down to plan for the 2003/4 season, one issue was foremost – 2004 was the big birthday of IWAI, and it should be celebrated in the capital with some style. Though much of the early work of IWAI was associated with the Shannon, it was the association's fight in the '60s to save the Dublin canals from becoming motorways that gained it respect in many quarters. And, thanks to the IWAI, the Grand Canal can now celebrate 200 years of navigation.

The annual Dublin Boat Rally seemed an obvious occasion on which to hang the celebrations, as the city has become such an attractive boating destination. The slogan '50/50' was devised for the 2004 rally, and chairman Michael Kinahan appointed the team to make it happen. We would try to take 50 boats into Dublin to mark our 50th anniversary.

From the first announcement, support filtered through from members throughout the country, as people on the Shannon, the Barrow, and in Northern Ireland declared their intention to get to Dublin in May for the rally.

Our friends in Kildare, Offaly and on the Royal Canal once more assisted, and entries began to arrive. The Heritage Boat Association promised support, and ensured that we got quality *and* quantity. By the time the first boats reached Dublin, we had 57 entries, and success was ensured.

Getting into Dublin has been easier and safer over recent years – a message we want to spread. Some new developments have assisted us this year. The Dublin branch has been building a relationship with Dublin City Council over recent years, and Paul Rainsfort, their liaison officer in



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Some of the rally boats travelled to Islandbridge, and relaxed for the day

the Ballyfermot area, was keen to base an event on the canal, and when the developers of Parkwest expressed an interest, we had the makings of a new mooring.

So, with the new mooring at Parkwest (beside the M50), the traditional 'long days journey into night' has been dropped. To celebrate, Dublin City Council and Harcourt Properties threw a massive party for the boating community at the new mooring.



On board *Birling* at the opening of the new moorings in Ringsend Basin were (from left): Lord Mayor of Dublin Royston Brady, IWAI President Donal O'Siocháin, Dublin Branch Chairman Mick Kinahan, Padraic O'Brolchain, and WI Chief Executive John Martin

WATERWAYS IRELAND CITY MOORINGS

The boats from the Royal Canal crossed the Liffey on Saturday evening after an uneventful journey from the 12th Lock, and got the first chance to use the new WI moorings in Ringsend Basin (so new they are not yet finished!).

YEAR



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Returning after a foray around the ferry port. Pdraig Costello and Ned Miggins look on from the narrowboat *Dympna* as Mick Kinahan's boat *Sheila Anne*, skippered by Tommy McLoughlin, navigates under the lifted East Link Bridge

By Sunday evening, we made a magnificent sight, as over 50 boats moored up in the secure environment of Ringsend Basin in the heart of Dublin (there was still room for a few more boats).

When photographer Seamus Costello went to the top of Bolands Mill, his camera could not take in the extent of the moorings (but he still managed to come back with a shot). Staff at the WI visitor centre were more than helpful over the two week period, and boat owners were very pleased with the facility.

These city moorings will change



PHOTO: MICK KINAHAN

Peter Johnson on the *Java* goes to sea

boating in Dublin, as they allow visitors to plan a trip to Dublin or cross from the Grand Canal to the Royal Canal while coping with tidal time differences. Taken in conjunction

CONTD OVERLEAF →

33rd Shannon Harbour Rally

This year, the Shannon Harbour Rally Committee broke with tradition by exchanging competition for information, education and recreation. While we kept the 'fun' competitions, such as the quizzes, crossword and children's competitions, the focus of the rally was on the workshops, which were conducted by volunteers, and which



PHOTOS: GREG WHELAN

Adults and children take part in a workshop on the Shannon Harbour Rally

were on a number of boat-related and creative skills.

The threat of rain on Saturday morning did little to dampen the enthusiasm of the ralliers gathered in the shed. Skipper's briefing didn't stand a chance, as the first workshops got under way without prompting. In one corner, Mary Gallagher of 34M conducted an arts and crafts session with a lively group of youngsters, while in the other, Dessie 'the Diesel' Ryan stripped down and rebuilt a diesel engine before an enthralled group of old hands and novices. Later, Eoin O'Brolchain, Conor Smyth and Cahir O'Byrne showed us how to get knotted.

After lunch, Paul Bolton mounted an impromptu demonstration of scumbling, which attracted quite a crowd, all eager to have a go. Mary →

CONTD OVERLEAF

THE FIRST TRADE BOAT, APRIL 1804

The opening of the Grand Canal from Dublin to the Shannon was to have taken place in 1803 with a grand official opening ceremony, but problems with leakages and water levels forced a postponement. Canal engineer John Killaly eventually reported to the canal company board on 20 February 1804 that he hoped to have water in all levels that week. The directors then announced that the canal was open to passenger and trade boats. In April, it was reported that Patrick Killeen, master of *The Ranger*, had arrived in Dublin with timber from Meelick. *The Ranger* was the very first boat to arrive in Dublin from the Shannon. Jackets and trousers were presented to the crew as a reward, and the tolls returned to the owner of the timber. The passage boats appear to have been extended to Shannon Harbour in 1804, as fares were fixed at 3s 9d first cabin, and 2s 6d common cabin, from Tullamore to Shannon Harbour. However, through traffic was restricted for a number of years by further trouble with leakages. The rebuilding of the locks on the middle Shannon between Athlone and Meelick, which was undertaken by the Grand Canal Company, commenced in 1804, and prevented further trade boats navigating this section of the Shannon for a number of years.

THE LAST TRADE BOAT, MAY 1960



On a quiet afternoon on 27 May 1960, there was only one barge loading in the Grand Canal Harbour, James Street. It was the 51M, which was being loaded with a large cargo of Guinness to go to Limerick. Around tea-time, the loading was completed, and the 51M, heavily laden and very deep in the water, started its Bollinger engine. Slowly, the boat was untied, and glided slowly – but noisily – out of the harbour. This would never happen again. The 51M was the last trade boat to leave Dublin.

→ SHANNON HARBOUR CONTD FROM PG 21

reprised her arts and crafts workshop, this time for the adults. It was quite a sight to see all the skippers and first mates rapt in concentration over their glass paintings and candle holders!

In the meantime, out in the dry dock, Michael Clinton persuaded his son Mark and friend Mark Walls to jump in to the water, in order to demonstrate the workings of the automatic lifejacket. This was followed by tips on the care and maintenance of lifejackets. Before this, Jim Feeley of Antifyre gave a practical demonstration of fire-fighting, with an opportunity to get hands-on practice with an extinguisher.

All this activity gave us a good appetite for the barbeque, again prepared for us by Nuala and Frank. Our Commodore Les Saunders played a blinder doling out the rations, and keeping the crowd of 200-plus happy, while Brendan Marsh entertained with a selection of old favourites on the keyboards. Somebody up there loves us, since the rain stayed off until the last piece of chicken was lifted off the grill.

Saturday evening closed with music and craic in the pubs of Shannon Harbour – Gleasons, Guinans and the Canal Bar.

Again, the rain cleared up on Sunday morning in time for the ecumenical service, conducted by the Reverend Lesley Robinson and Father Simon Cadam, who changed their regular Sunday schedules to accommodate us. The service was well attended by boaters and locals alike, and the collection raised €220



Skippers' briefing on the Shannon Harbour Rally

PHOTOS: GREG WHELAN

for the Offaly Hospice.

The afternoon stayed dry for the land sports, and the visit of the theatre barge – Enterprise. The rally finished up with the prize-giving for the fun competitions by Commodore Les Saunders and Chairman Greg Whelan.

The rally was also attended by the RNLI roadshow, which generated a lot of interest, and the RNLI were also available to offer SeaCheck to all boats. Timmy Meehan of the Offaly branch brought along his Bollinder engine, which was a source of fascination.

All in all, the rally was a great success, with participation in events greatly increased over previous years. Numbers at some events were limited only by lack of space, and the format gave ralliers a great opportunity to get involved, get talking and learn a thing or two. The atmosphere was very relaxed, both at the workshops and in the harbour in general. Many thanks to the volunteers, who gave up their time to share their skills, and made the week-end the success it was.

Brenda Ainsworth



Dessie Ryan shows how to rebuild a diesel engine

→ DUBLIN 50/50 CONTD FROM PG 21

with other developments – the 'safe haven' at Parkwest, and the new hotel at the Royal's 12th Lock, the trip through Dublin has lost much of it's legendary hardship. Masochists, don't despair – you still have the 31 locks from 12th Grand to 12th Royal!

THE RALLY ITSELF

While admiring all the new facilities, we still had time to enjoy the events which were part of the rally. The boat cookery competition (sponsored by Flogas), held on two nights, attracted a high standard, and was judged to be a great success. We had two nights of pub quizzes, and thanks to those who did the hard work there. We also had the official opening of the new moorings in Ringsend Basin by Lord Mayor Royston Brady, and the IWAI AGM was held while we were there.

A great trip 'Up the Liffey' was enjoyed by the crews of 27 boats, who cruised all the way to Islandbridge Weir. The trip back down the Liffey on that sunny Sunday was much enjoyed by the boardwalk crowds sipping their afternoon coffees.

NEXT YEAR?

Many of those who came to Dublin by boat will come again, but those who missed it should start planning for next year now. It may be a once-in-a-lifetime trip, but it is worth doing. And it gets easier all the time. We want to see more boats in Dublin, and we want to see more use made of our two canals leading into Dublin. So happy birthday to the IWAI, and happy birthday to one of our great canals – the Grand.

Derek Whelan

'We want to see more boats in Dublin'

HERITAGE BOAT ASSOCIATION

Following last year's Heritage Boat Association's (HBA) highly successful Limerick/Belleek journey, membership of the association is going from strength to strength. Broad participation from many HBA members on the Grand Canal 200 celebrations, including the Edenderry, Kildare and Offaly IWAI rally at Easter, was followed by a large HBA presence at the Dublin Rally. The trip back down the Grand Canal included a stop at Daingean for the Canal Boatmen's Reunion on 5 June. The following weekend we visited Ballycommon, where we have hosted the Kilbeggan Challenge for the last few years, to draw a focus on the closed



Some HBA participants at the Dublin Rally

Ballycommon-Kilbeggan line of the Grand Canal. Next stop was Tullamore, to participate in the Offaly three-anniversaries celebrations, a visit to Pullough, and of course the Shannon Harbour rally where Les Saunders of 41M was commodore this year (and one of the cooks for the barbeque...).

The Lough Derg rally had a strong HBA presence, and this

was followed by a formal invite from Waterways Ireland to attend the weekend festivities in Scarriff for the opening of the new harbour. The 45M (which sank off Parkers Point in 1946) complete with its working Bollinder, was on display in the harbour to collaborate with the Mounthannon School project on the 45M, on display during the Scarriff Festival.

The HBA would like especially to mention members of NI IWAI who have been travelling the waterways with us since early this year, and wish them bon voyage on their trip back home. We would like to thank the branches of the IWAI that looked after us on our

journeys, as well as the local communities that extended a warm welcome to us. We hope you all have enjoyed learning about our floating heritage.

HBA further events and activities (including Water Heritage Day on 11 September as part of Heritage Week and participation in the Heritage Boat Seminar planned by the Heritage Council for Saturday 13 November), membership forms, quarterly newsletters and more info can be found on the (currently under re-development website) www.heritageboatassociation.ie. Watch that space!

Caitriona Hilliard