



# MARITIME

## Institute of Ireland

### NEWSLETTER

**2023**  
**Winter Edition**



**The Port Burnie on the North Wall Extension at Dublin Port**

An example of the fantastic photos of Pat Sweeney!

**Price: €3 (Free to members)**

Maritime Institute of Ireland  
Winter Newsletter  
2023

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## President's Address by Joe Varley



I am writing this in the first week of September in our gloriously fine weather. I am happy to report that the Institute and the Museum are doing well. This is entirely due to the incredibly hard shift put in by Declan, the museum staff and the volun-

teers. As regards the latter, new entrants to our activities are most welcome. This extends to David, our new treasurer and to Sanjeev, who is the board's new secretary. I also welcome Eleanor, Gary, Ian and Roger who have started guiding in the museum. On the C.E. side I welcome Liam, Lorcan and Zania and I thank Keith and Trish who are leaving the scheme just now. The latter two have done significant work for the museum during their time there. I am pleased to say that Keith is staying on as a volunteer.

We had two very pleasant small events in the museum in May-June. The first was the legal transfer of Pat Sweeney's collection of shipping negatives to the Museum. We welcomed Mrs Rita Sweeney, Pat's wife, her son Paul and her grandson, Oliver, to Haigh Terrace. Subsequently Lar Joye and Martha from Dublin Port Company came to inspect the collection and hopefully will enter into an agreement with us to digitise and subsequently promote and display this unique material. Esther, in her appreciation of Pat's life, gives some background to this initiative on Page 8 of this newsletter. Later on in June, we welcomed Councillor Dennis O Callaghan, Cathaoirleach of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, who formally opened the 'Prince of Wales-Rochdale' exhibition which was sponsored by the County Council.

With regard to the Council, I have been elected to the Local Community Development Committee and I regularly attend their meetings. I was also a member of a fact-finding trip that went to Cobh in early August. The purpose of the visit was to examine how Cobh retains Cruise Liner business in their town. The intention is to adopt their best practice to the Dún Laoghaire situation. This work is on-going and I go to regular meetings in connection with it.

As autumn approaches, I would hope to encourage

and help if necessary the various committees without which the Institute and the Museum will not develop and flourish. The library, museum and the future search have reports in this newsletter. I would encourage the other committees to send in material for the next news-



**An Cathaoirleach, Cllr Denis O'Callaghan opening the Prince of Wales & Rochdale exhibition.**

letter which will come out in the New Year. I would like to compliment the fund raising committee on their very successful Welsh Male Voice Choir concert in May.

On the 10th October we hosted an informal reception at the museum following the R.M.S. Leinster commemoration at the anchor on Queens Road. This was done in conjunction with the RMS Leinster Centenary Committee.

In relation to the Leinster, I would hope to have a lecture at lunchtime or in the early afternoon early in New Year. This is an initiative to regain and maintain contact with our out of Dublin members and supporters.

Usually I try to finish my notes in an upbeat fashion, but I am sorry to have to record the very recent deaths of three of our maritime community. Last Thursday, 7th of September I attended with Roger Kirker the funeral of Capt. Frank Forde at Bayside. On the following day, along with Declan and Roger Kirker, we attended the funeral of Capt. Jim Carter at Dún Laoghaire. Tomorrow, I am going to Donnybrook to attend the funeral of Barney Yourell. Frank was on the old Council of the Maritime Institute and was the famed author of the 'Long Watch' and 'Maritime Arklow'. Barney ran the lecture programme for a few years as well doing maritime radio programmes from a school in Coolock. Jim was the harbour master at Dún Laoghaire. They will be much missed.

# Pat Sweeney

## An Appreciation by Joe Varley

Pat Sweeney grew up in Greenock, on the Lower Clyde Estuary. Here, the trio of towns, Port Glasgow, Greenock and Gourock are synonymous with ship-building and every aspect of the marine culture. Opposite the Town of Greenock is the famous anchorage called 'The Tail of the Banks'. Here, vessels inward bound to Glasgow waited for clearance. Its size and good holding quantities made it ideal for convoy formation and dispersal in both world wars.

All these factors meant that the Luftwaffe took more than a passing interest in the area. This resulted in Pat and his mother being evacuated first to Belfast and later to Dublin. Pat at this stage was in his late teens and was an avid photographer who developed his own photos. After D Day, deep sea shipping returned gradually to Dublin Port. This gave Pat the opportunity of combining his marine interests with the possibility of mak-



**The Libertad arriving at Dublin Port., October 1996. An example of Pat Sweeney's photography.**

ing an income.

On Tuesday 30th of May 2023, The Sweeney family signed over to the Maritime Institute two filing cabinets containing Pat's collection of negatives. Esther Kane, who hopefully will curate this collection, estimates that there are around 10,000 maritime items in this priceless collection. Cormac Lowth, a speaker at the event,

stated that Pat was following in the long tradition of the 19th century Pier Head painters. Yet, there is a little more to it than that. These negatives are an appreciation and a record of some of the most beautiful vessels that ever slid down a slipway. The 'Port Burnie' on the front cover of this newsletter is a prime example of this. They also show the various facets of mainly Dublin Port in the era between the end of the war and the advent of containerisation.



**Dr. John De Courcy Ireland receiving the Fellowship Certificate of the Maritime Institute from President Pat Sweeney**

It is a logical question to ask how Pat was able to take so many pictures? The answer is the totally different trading patterns of his period. The coasters and small oil tankers were always in and out of the port, which at that stage extended to the river berths on the North and South Quays. The deep-sea trades were totally different. The Port Burnie if inward bound discharged at Dublin and then probably went on to the U.K. and the near continent to complete her unloading. She then commenced her loading cycle and then was away again to her habitual trading area, in Australia and maybe New Zealand. The unloading and subsequent loading was called 'On the Coast' and could last from four to six weeks. In this system, Irish, British, American and Continental vessels were regular callers to Dublin. Photographing the coasters and the deep sea vessels to sell the pictures to the crew was part of Pat's livelihood for the best part of 30 years. We are extremely fortu-

nate to have a record of this time, which is now history and fading memories.

Pat's influence on the development of the Maritime Institute/Museum is undeniable. He was President in the early 90s; he was a jack of all trades in every aspect of our development. In retrospect, one of his proudest moments was the opening by President Patrick Hillery of the National Seaman's Memorial at City Quay on Sunday May 6th 1998. Pat, along with Paddy Launders (an ex-merchant seaman and a recipient of a George Cross for his services on the Maltese Convoys), were indefatigable in getting this memorial sited and erected. They encountered and overcame official apathy and needless bureaucracy in order to succeed. As we as-



**The opening of the City Quay Memorial**

semble at City Quay every year, these two very fine gentlemen are never far from our thoughts.

What may surprise some readers is that Pat was a journalist as well as being a professional photographer. Indeed, listed on his business card was his membership of the N.U.J. (National Union of Journalists). This particular talent got many opportunities in his capacity as editor of our newsletter. Pat did two stints at this. His long one was from approximately the late 1970's to 2000. It would seem that from 2008 to 2016 he co-edited the newsletter with Eoin Ganley. He performed the same function with Joe Varley and various members of our C.E. staff until the summer of 2021, when he went into hospital.

His philosophy towards the newsletter and our maritime culture is very obvious from a perusal of various back issues. They are well researched long articles on contemporary maritime issues. Also there is up to date

information on every aspect of day to day shipping affairs. A good example of the former is his long article in the Autumn 1993 issue under the title of 'The Realities of Maritime Security'. He makes a logical and valid case of providing smaller vessels for our Naval Service. At that time, there was new surplus stock available from the Royal and Argentinean Navies. These if purchased would have been invaluable for drug interdiction and inshore security. A good example of his shipping notes is the special booklet published with the



**Isle of Innisfree on the River Maas, after launching at Rotterdam. © Pat Sweeney.**

newsletter in 1995 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the founding of Irish Continental Line (now Irish Ferries). Indeed Pat was the official photographer to that company when the first Irish superferry, 'The Isle of Innisfree', was launched at Rotterdam on 27th of January 1995.

Pat's legacy can be found in his definitive book 'Liffey Ships and Shipbuilding' (Mercier Press Cork: 2010), and in his photographs and other writings. Yet it is also there in the memories of the people who knew him well. He was invariably courteous with a minimum tolerance for nonsense. He was extremely lucky to have the constant support of his wife Rita, and while his family were away for most of their adult lives they were never far from his thoughts. As always the difficulty in finishing this recollection is to avoid being sloppy and sentimental. John Masefield, inevitably, has the right words.

*'And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow rover,*

*And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over.'*

**- Joe Varley**

# Pat Sweeney

By Paul Sweeney

Patrick Sweeney, our father, grew up with ships and in a way, so did we. The little boy from Greenock whose family house was separated from the expanse of the River Clyde by the width of a street and two pavements, entertained and educated himself with the huge variety of ships observable from his front window. He used to make ink sketches of the warships with their guns, masts, aerials and radars in exact detail. Much later that served him to draw birthday cards for his own children, though in this case featuring cartoon characters - Asterix was a favourite. All the comings and goings of those ships set him on a lifelong journey of learning about the sea, shipping and shipbuilding but also navies and naval warfare – especially World War II, 20th century European history and world geography. A child and, in a way, a refugee of the Second World War who came to settle with his mother in Dublin, out of harm's way.



**An example of Pat Sweeney's photography from 1969.**

Like many self-employed, dad had to go to wherever the work was and from our earliest memories he kept irregular hours. Looking back that set a pattern which disguised the wide range of active interests he pursued and projects he was involved in. From the very start of his photography business - officially PR and industrial and commercial, his interest in cataloguing arrivals to Dublin port was both personal and professional. He told

us how he spotted the business potential of capturing shots of a ship on arrival, immediately heading back to his studio to develop them before returning the same day to call on the captain and crew with a selection of prints.

Knowing dad, it is not surprising to hear of some of the lengths he went to in pursuit of a particular photograph. His lifelong colleague and friend, Brendan Neary, recounted how together they once strung a line of flashbulbs along one of the Liffey bridges to get a picture of a ship arriving at night. The subsequent flash almost blinded the captain who let them know in no uncertain terms how unhappy he was. That anecdote did not include details of how that picture turned out or whether he managed to sell it.

These activities also gave him opportunities to talk to visiting officers and crew and learn about how other navies operated. And, on occasion, to practise his French. Dad's natural temperament for striking up conversations with strangers was a real strength when it came to foreign languages. His French is probably better described as fearless rather than fluent, but it was sufficient for him to navigate Paris on holidays in his late seventies.

As youngsters, we had mixed feelings about Dublin docks as it was seemingly always "on the way" of any given car journey, regardless of point of departure or intended destination. Whether the photographer was dropping off photos and having lengthy conversations with sailor folk or leaving in past issues of Lloyd's List to people who lived by the docks or Ringsend. For us children waiting in the car it wasn't at all apparent that this was an opportunity to indulge his endless curiosity and add to his store of maritime-related knowledge. Much later on, one son, by then living abroad, was surprised that the route home following airport pick up still included the inevitable docks detour. His youngest son has fonder memories of dad dropping by any Irish naval service ship in port as he knew the captains well and would chat for an hour over a small glass of brandy. The incentive to accompany him was the coke or two which



**Pat with members of the Maritime Institute.**

**Back row from left: Peter McGuire, Dr. John De Courcy Ireland, Niall Blunden, Terry Conlon, Unknown**

**Front row: Brian Donnely, David Sheehy, Pat Sweeney, Unknown, Brendan Neary, Ronnie Lewis.**

**If anyone recognizes the two “Unknowns” we would like to hear from you!**

was never on offer at home.

Even when he wasn't working, and post-retirement, dad could always be relied on to stop by the port 'to see what was in' or scan the horizon with binoculars from Sandymount strand to check on comings and goings.

There was clearly a certain hankering to be on ships for more than just deliveries or social calls. His eyesight was poor from a young age which stymied any ambition he had to join, first, the Royal Navy, and subsequently the Merchant Marine. At least a couple of times the photographer with a young family worked his passage (a holiday in all but name) on an Arklow shipping coaster. There are shared childhood memories of occupying the back seat on the way to Dundalk to drop him off for a run between Ireland, the UK and Rotterdam and returning a week or so later to collect him.

While he wore his passions on his sleeve, dad never appeared concerned that we did not inherit his enthusiasm. An exception perhaps was his paying for several years of family membership of one of the yacht clubs in Dún Laoghaire - recollections vary if it was the Royal St George or the DMYC. Potentially the latter as one of many episodes of a lifetime of volunteering was working as a crew member for the rescue boat on weekends

in Dún Laoghaire.

Along with Dublin port, the Maritime Museum was the other axis around which decades of his and our activities revolved. The Institute was a forum for causes and projects - including quite a few weekends helping to clear out the church after it was first acquired - and brought him into the company of friends and colleagues who had overlapping, but never identical interests. Kitchen table memories abound of his recounting committee intrigues with a special focus on the character, as he saw it, of people he didn't see eye-to-eye with. Many a postscript on these evenings was dad on the phone for excruciatingly long periods, from an adolescent perspective anyway, as he rehashed the events of some meeting with other participants. Of course there was no shortage of detail about his great projects such as the Seafarers' Memorial, but always a reflection of his passion and rather than an attempt to convince his listeners or get us involved.

His time as Institute President was relatively unmarked in family terms, certainly no sense of enhanced importance that we remember or noticed. It was a deserved platform for a man to take the lead representing a cause he had worked so hard for and, of course, enabling him to interact with others, which he loved.

NEXT ISSUE  
SPECIAL  
SUPPLEMENT  
ON  
NEW FERRY

# MARITIME JOURNAL OF IRELAND

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## FIRST IRISH SUPER FERRY LAUNCHED

By Patrick Sweeney.

It is no longer necessary to remind readers that in history Holland and the sea have always been inextricably linked for better or worse, as on one hand the Dutch have regarded the water as an enemy ready to reclaim large areas of their country. On the other hand they have exploited the sea by ship for fishing and to build a worldwide trading empire, with the brightest jewel in their overseas crown being the Dutch East Indies now Indonesia with its riches of timber, rubber and later oil.



The Isle of Innisfree in the River Maas, after launching at Rotterdam. © Photo, P. Sweeney.

In this light it is fitting that the first vessel to be constructed for young Irish company be built in a Dutch shipyard. It was just after 1400hrs Rotterdam time on Friday 27th January when the white hull of Irish Ferries new ISLE OF INNISFREE slid down the launching ways from the vast prefabrication hall of Van der Giessen-de Noord and into the waters of the river Maas.

The new ro/ro passenger ship was named in the traditional manner by Clodagh Rothwell wife of Eamonn Rothwell, Managing Director of the

Irish Continental Group in the presence of some 500 guests who included the Minister for State at the Department of the Marine, Mr. Eamon Gilmore T.D., and representatives of Government departments; financial, commercial, passenger and freight users from Britain and the Continent as well as Ireland. Speaking after the launching ceremony Mr. Tom Toner chairman of Irish Continental Group said the introduction of the new vessel and port developments at Dublin and Holyhead will transform future travel on the Irish sea and that

was a proud day for Irish Ferries. He mentioned the three reasons why the Krimpen aan den IJssel Yard had obtained the contract. (1) The shipyard's ability to meet their specification (2) the capacity to deliver in time for the 1995 summer season and (3) the competitive price on the world wide market. He went on to say that progress in the 10 months since the contract was placed had been smooth and fast and praised the management and workers of the shipbuilders Van der Giessen-der Noord.

**Pat was a longtime editor of the Institute's newsletter. Here's an example from Spring 1995.**

For as long as any of us remember, dad was involved in producing the Institute newsletter from clacking typewriters to galley proofs, taking the computer and internet age in his stride right up until before Covid and 'anno domini' (as he put it) finally limited his movements and ability to contribute. The family is extremely grateful for the affection and support shown to him in his final years where his participation at editorial meetings was encouraged in between snoozes and cups of tea, and coincidentally a lift always available to take him home.

Dad's radar never stopped scanning for broadcast and print inaccuracies which required his correction or clarification. He would routinely make calls to journalists to provide some crucial missing information and many a domestically aired grievance later saw light in the letters pages of the Irish Times. A search of those now digitised archives throws up correspondence from the mid-1960s to 1990 mainly on the theme of how the Irish government failed to invest in protecting its maritime resources and heritage and the adequate funding

of the naval service.

The lifelong letter writer and editor became an author with the publication of his Liffey Ships and Shipbuilding by Mercier Press in 2010. While the resultant book is average in length, it was the result of a ten-year encyclopaedic research journey made possible by extensive travel, often to the UK, and his embrace of the full communicative and knowledge potential of the Internet, starting all this in his 70s. The family, especially our mum, went on that journey with him. Calls home during that period often required careful handling as he updated us on his latest research with colourful anecdotes, steering conversations towards shore when they appeared to be heading over the horizon. Indeed having accumulated so much research there was a real fear



**President to President: Pat Sweeney converses with President Mary Robinson.**

about being able to marshal all that material into an actual book. Fortunately the Mercier editors did a fabulous job and dad got to make an emotional launch speech in front of friends and family in the offices of the Dublin Port Company.

Perhaps his unexpected legacy came at the end when the Institute took delivery of his bequest of a lifetime's photographic negatives and slides and it could grasp the scope and scale of his work cataloguing ships

in and around Dublin port from the 1940s -1980s. His and the family's surprise was the value of the content, incidentally capturing, as they do, many aspects of the development of the port and Dublin itself over that period. Less than a month before he passed away, he followed avidly while we read to him the proposal for the digitisation project. A 25-year veteran of the internet by that point, he completely grasped the potential

for making knowledge and visual archives accessible for the wider public. We look forward to seeing dad's work shared with current and future generations and are deeply grateful to Dublin Port Company and the Institute for considering to underwrite and curate this project.

## A photographer's appreciation

By Esther Kane



I had the privilege of working with Pat on the newsletter committee, but I really got to know him when I had the opportunity to interview him about some of his photographs and his experience as a photographer. As a photographer myself, I was particularly interested in his work with traditional film photography, a passion we had in common. We had a series of conversations over a few weeks about a specific image, and when I initially suggested we do so over a cup of tea, he referred to it as "a very wholesome idea". He was so generous with his knowledge and stories that the time went by so quickly; his memory about each ship, location, and the broader context of the image was such a unique experi-

ence for me. Unfortunately, these conversations were cut short due to the lockdown.

In March 2021, the museum received an extraordinarily generous donation of Pat's photographic negatives, log books and images. To my delight, I was tasked with organising and cataloguing the collection. Pat's life's work was vast and a testament to his dedication to maritime history. It was so inspiring that I wrote my master's thesis about the collection. Pat had the intention of digitising his negatives but sadly never did. However, the museum is committed to undertaking the job. It is exciting to see how this unique collection will develop and honour the photographer behind it all.



# A Query Concerning a Cigarette Case

By Richard Hamilton



**The cigarette case inscribed with the vessel, HMS Majestic, whose pinnace won the race.**

On the fifteenth of May this year, we received a query relating to the picture of a cigarette case with a not very legible inscription from a friend of Peter Lester's, our receptionist. Richard Mc Cormack, Joe Varley and Richard Hamilton went to investigate it. We thought it said Queen Squadron Regatta, 1899, Officers Challenge Cup, HMS Majestic. We decided to check where HMS Majestic was based in 1899, it was Portsmouth.

We assumed, wrongly, that since the 'Cowes Week' was probably where this regatta took place we looked into the results of the races that took place. All America's Cup, no mention of the Queens Squadron Regatta. We were lost, no other search on that regatta yielded anything. We searched for the HMS Majestic, incidentally the first ship sunk in anger by torpedo during WWI. The Majestic was torpedoed by German submarine U-21 on May 27, 1915 during the Gallipoli campaign. The ship sank within 15 minutes with a loss of 49 sailors. We requested a look at the actual case, the owner obliged and Peter brought it to the Museum. Straightaway we saw it was not the Queens Squadron

Regatta but The Channel Squadron Regatta, progress! So I looked into this regatta and lo and behold, the story emerged. The Channel Squadron was a naval formation of the Royal Navy that operated in the English Channel and the Atlantic Ocean from the 18th century until 1909. The squadron was composed of various battleships and cruisers that were assigned to protect British interests and trade in the region.

One of the activities of the Channel Squadron was to organize annual regattas for its officers and men. These regattas were intended to foster a spirit of friendly competition and camaraderie among the ships of the squadron, as well as to improve their sailing and rowing skills. The regattas consisted of various races and events, such as sailing, rowing, swimming, tug-of-war, and cricket.

In 1899, the Channel Squadron Regatta was held at Lamlash Bay, off the Isle of Arran in Scotland, from 22 to 24 May. The regatta was attended by eight battleships of the squadron: HMS Majestic, HMS Caesar, HMS Hannibal, HMS Illustrious, HMS Jupiter, HMS Mag-

nificent, HMS Mars, and HMS Prince George. The flagship of the squadron was HMS Majestic, commanded by Captain Robert Harris Hilliard.

One of the most prestigious events of the regatta was the Officers Challenge Cup, a sailing race for steam pinnaces. A steam pinnace was a small boat powered by a steam engine that was used for various purposes on board a battleship, such as transporting officers and dignitaries, towing other boats, or scouting. The steam pinnaces of the Channel Squadron were about 50 feet long and could carry up to 12 passengers. They were equipped with sails as well as engines, and could reach speeds of up to 15 knots.

The Officers Challenge Cup was a triangular course of about six miles around three buoys in Lamash Bay. Each battleship entered one steam pinnace with four officers on board. The race started at 11:30 a.m. on 23 May 1899, with a light breeze from the south-west. The pinnaces lined up in front of their respective battleships, which fired their guns to signal the start of the race.

The race was closely contested by all eight pinnaces, but the one from HMS Majestic soon took the lead and maintained it throughout the course. The Majestic's pinnace was steered by Lieutenant Charles Edward Madden, who later became an admiral and First Sea Lord. The other officers on board were Lieutenant John Rushworth Jellicoe, who also became an admiral and First Sea Lord; Lieutenant Arthur William Edward Prothero, who became a captain and naval historian; and Sub-Lieutenant George Francis Hyde Gatacre, who became a commander and died in World War I.

The Majestic's pinnace crossed the finish line at 12:15 p.m., winning the Officers Challenge Cup by a margin of about two minutes over the second-placed pinnace from HMS Mars. The other pinnaces finished in the following order: HMS Caesar, HMS Hannibal, HMS Jupiter, HMS Illustrious, HMS Prince George, and HMS Magnificent. The Majestic's officers received the cup from Vice-Admiral Harry Rawson, the commander-in-chief of the Channel Squadron, who congratulated them on their skilful sailing and seamanship.

The Officers Challenge Cup was a significant achievement for HMS Majestic and her officers, who



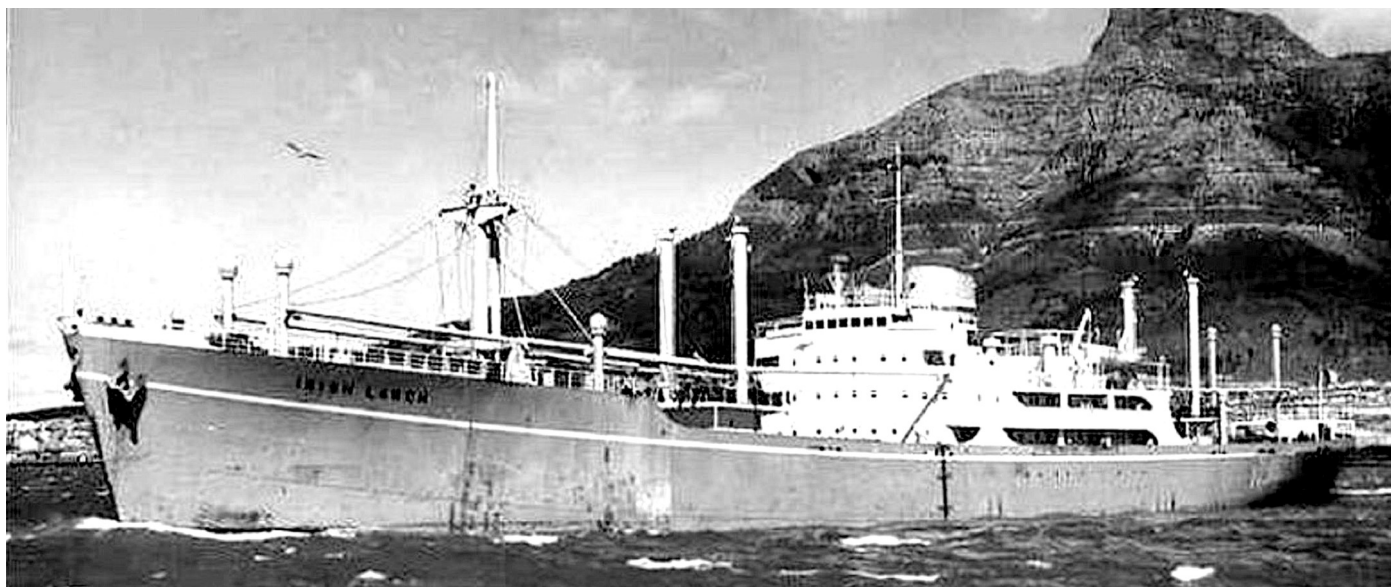
**A possible recipient of the prize. Capt. Jellicoe was one of the four crew of the winning vessel.**

demonstrated their superiority over their rivals in the Channel Squadron. The cup also symbolized the pride and prestige of the Majestic-class battleships, which were the largest and most powerful predreadnoughts of their time. The Majestic-class battleships served with distinction in various naval operations until they were eclipsed by the advent of dreadnoughts in 1906. The Officer who received this cigarette case has yet to be identified. However we have our suspicions.

The silver cigarette case was hallmarked Sheffield 1898 and the Silversmith likely William Needham, Sheffield or potentially also William Neale & Son, Birmingham. Thanks to Mrs Mary McCormick for help with identifying the hallmark.

## Memories of my First Ship — Part 2

by Cormac F. Lowth



**The Irish Larch in Cape Town.**

*This is the second part of the two-part story by Cormac F. Lowth concerning his time on the MV Irish Larch. The first part appeared in our last newsletter.*

We left Pollock Dock late one evening and we were towed off the berth by two tugs which soon were cast off as we got under way. We were not moving for long when the main engine stopped for some reason and we were forced to go alongside a vacant berth. Myself and the deck crew were still on standby on the fo'castle head at the time. After much roaring by the Mate we got alongside the berth, but it would not take long before we were under way again and, as we sailed down Belfast lough, we were already getting some indication of what the weather had in store for us, with the ship starting to develop a roll, and some spray coming over the bow. There was a design fault with this and other ships in the way in which the anchor chains came over the windlass and down through the deck to the chain lockers below in the fo'castle. They just went through holes in the deck called Spurling pipes and if a wave came over the ships head, water could go straight down the pipe and could flood the fo'castle. The answer was to make a 'pudding' out of burlap, or sacking, and this was stuffed around the chain in the pipe. Cement was then put around the chain to seal it off, after the ship had put to sea. There was a drawback in this if the an-

chor had to be let go quickly, but I later developed a system of putting the windlass into gear and walking the chain out a bit. The anchor chains were then further secured with small chains and bottle screws to prevent movement and great big steel stoppers were dropped into place which would prevent the anchors from accidentally running out through the hawse-pipes. That night, it was hard to adjust to the rolling of the ship as you walked along the corridor in the accommodation. It looked comical to see the inexperienced 'first trippers' like myself getting thrown from one side to another while the seasoned hands simply leaned into the roll and walked with ease. Equally, after turning in, it was hard to adjust to lying in the bunk as the ship rolled beneath you. To make matters worse, the bunks on that ship were fore and aft and not athwart-ships as in some others.

When dawn broke on my first day at sea we were off the coast of Donegal, which could be seen on the port side, and we were heading out into the Atlantic in the teeth of a mounting westerly winter gale. I have only been properly seasick three times in my life, once on my father's boat while working on the engine in rough weather, off the coast of Dublin, once on a boat that was tied up and rocking on a marina on the River Shannon, where I was also working on the boat's engine, and

# A Busy Year for and its M



**Pat Sweeney Photo  
Archives Donation**



**Wedding**



**Dublin Welsh Male  
Voice Choir**



# for the Institute Museum!



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**Rochester and Prince of  
Wales Exhibition**

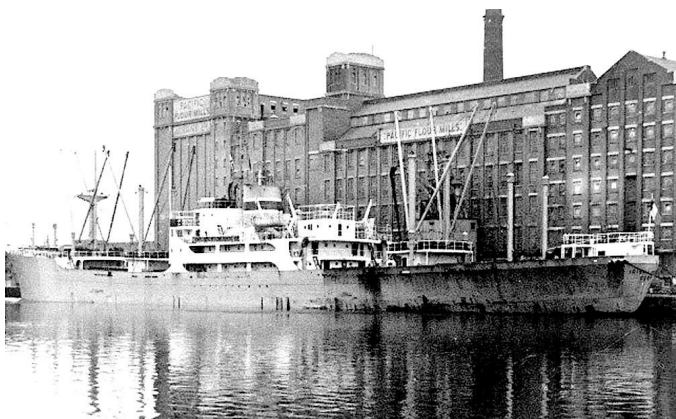


**Neville Henderson  
Tall Ships Print**



**Children's Art  
Exhibition**

the combination of the movement and the fumes of the fuel oil had their effect. The other time was on that first day after the mid-day repast of boiled bacon, cabbage and potatoes. I was heading up the deck towards my workshop when it hit me, and I puked over the side till there was nothing left inside, much to the amusement of my shipmates. Sometimes, on later voyages, during prolonged periods of bad weather, when, in general



**The Larch at Pollock Dock, Belfast.**

less time would be spent out on deck, and the ship would be in constant unremitting motion, rolling and pitching, a feeling of slight unease would prevail and you would feel a bit off colour. This was another form of seasickness but it usually passed. The ship on this occasion was in ballast and was higher out of the water, and was being tossed about a bit more than if she had been laden with cargo. We were in for a rough trip, which I, in my innocence, assumed to be perfectly normal, and I loved every minute of it.

As we progressed further into the Atlantic Ocean, heading for Norfolk, the wind blew stronger and the waves got bigger. The ship was powered by a massive four cylinder Doxford diesel engine, as high as a house, and it was possible to see the huge pistons pounding up and down in the engine room. The noise of this when the ship was at sea, with the clatter of one or two of the diesel generators each as big as a small truck, coupled with the constant motion of the ship, took a bit of getting used to, but it is surprising how quickly the human body can adjust to any circumstances. By the time we had been about three days at sea, the wind had increased to strong gale force. The gale had been blowing for over a week, and was coming straight at us from the

west. The waves were getting bigger and bigger and the ship, which normally could do about fourteen knots, had slowed to a crawl. There was a man at the wheel at all times as, at this time in the Company, this was the norm. Automatic Pilots were only fitted on the Company's ships shortly after this. It was an incredible sight to stand on the bridge of the ship and to see waves coming at you that were the size of a block of houses, with troughs in between longer than the length of the ship. For much of the time we were just holding our own with the ship's engine going slow ahead. The ship was well equal to the task and she rode up and down on the waves like a seagull. Occasionally, despite the best attentions of the helmsman, a wave would come in and strike the ship from a different angle, and the entire ship would shake and shudder. This was far more likely to happen at night than during the day and it was not unusual to be thrown out of your bunk by one of these big ones. Life just went on aboard ship but with a minimum amount of 'going for'ard'. Lifelines were rigged that were used if it was necessary to make a dash up the deck for any purpose. Occasional green seas were breaking over the fo'castle head or slopping in over the ships rail at the fore end. This ship had a central accommodation and bridge and our work was mostly confined to the aft end of the ship. The normal occupation of the deckhands when at sea involved chipping and painting but there was not much of that on this trip due to the conditions. The skies were a dreary grey with occasional squalls of horizontal rain driving before the wind.

The ship was already rigged for carrying grain, and when the change-over from general-cargo to this mode of carrying was made on this type of ship, it involved a conversion called putting up 'feeders' and 'shifting boards'. The cargo holds had two deck levels. The main deck on which the hatches were placed, and the 'tween deck', about eight feet below this. The hatch openings on the main deck were replicated in the 'tween decks'. When a bulk cargo of grain is carried, it settles considerably after a while, particularly when the ship is in motion. If some provision is not made to offset this, the results can be disastrous. Once a space is created the grain can shift when the ship rolls, and this will automatically generate a list on whatever side it has shifted



### The Irish Larch—From an Irish Shipping Lines postcard.

to. This is very difficult to correct and the list will usually get worse as the grain settles more. It is a situation which can cause a ship to capsize, and many a vessel has been lost due to this. In bygone days, on sailing ships, one way to prevent the grain shifting was to 'bag off', or to fill the top portion of the cargo into sacks which were much less likely to shift. The system used to prevent shifting was to line the space between upper and lower hatches with feeder boards. These were heavy wooden planks that were contained in removable slotted steel uprights that were bolted into position top and bottom. This created a silo-like effect that fed the grain into any spaces that developed lower down. The grain was usually blown into the tween-deck spaces by big blowers on the loading dock. It was also sometimes necessary to fit shifting boards if the cargo was for some reason not full to capacity. This involved fitting a centre line of the same type of steel uprights and timber boards. All of the boards were then lined with Burlap, a rough type of jute sacking, held on with 'dust battens', which were thin strips of wood nailed on. Erecting the feeders was the responsibility of the Chip-py and it was one of his biggest jobs on the ship. Usually the Bosun and the deckhands were drafted in to help with this as a team effort and the job from start to finish would normally take about a week. On this trip, only a few additional shifting boards had to be fitted and some burlap needed replacing.

It took us about nineteen days to cross the Atlantic. There were some smaller ships in the Company's fleet at the time that were less than half the size of our ship.

One of these was making the same crossing as ourselves and we were in radio contact with her for most of the time. They were quite small for such arduous conditions and they crossed the Atlantic every year to go on charter to the Canadian Government, either up in the Great Lakes, or further north in places like Hudson's Bay. One of the main tasks these ships performed was to bring prefabricated houses and schools, and supplies, for the local Inuit or Eskimo populations of the far northern territories, some of whom up to that time were still living in igloos. We had gotten a good shaking up on the way across, but the other ship, which took about twenty-four days to reach the Saint Lawrence River, had taken a right hammering. We heard afterwards that one of her lifeboats had been smashed up.

I suppose it would be fair to say that in my mind at the time I was probably expecting my first view of the United States to be of skyscrapers sticking up on the skyline. What I saw instead looming out of the morning mist just after we had picked up the Norfolk pilot was warships, hundreds of them. The weather conditions had abated somewhat as we approached the land but it was still blowing a strong westerly. The grain berth that we were headed for was just alongside the Norfolk Naval Base, which is the largest naval base in the world. Most of the American 'Mothball fleet' was moored there at the time, including many ships that had served during World War Two and the Korean War. There was row after row of destroyers, cruisers, submarines, aircraft carriers, and several battleships, for as far as the eye could see. In early nineteen sixty four, there was no

major conflict taking place in the world. American involvement in the Vietnam War was only just beginning. It is significant that when I next visited Norfolk several years later, that conflict was in full swing and the naval base was almost empty of ships, most having been pressed back into service in different fleet stations around the world.

The method of loading grain into ships from huge silos on the quay wall was incredibly efficient, and we were no sooner alongside when the loading process began. We were in for a quick turn round and there would be no shore leave for myself and the deck crew at any rate. Huge chutes shot the grain, which was maize, into the holds after a brief inspection by the dock superintendent to ensure that the ship was ready to receive the cargo. The hatches had been swept clean and the feeders were all in order. As the ship was being loaded, the ballast tanks had to be pumped out and this involved constant checking of the water levels by myself. This, and taking on fresh water, kept me busy for most of the day. The ship also took on oil bunkers from a barge alongside and another task that I had to perform was to cement up all of the deck scuppers while that was going on. These were drain holes in the main deck that emptied over the side, and they had to be closed off temporarily in case of an oil spill on the deck during the loading process. There were stand-pipe ventilators with wooden plugs from all of the tanks including the oil bunkers, and if the level of incoming oil was not checked constantly, it could overflow and spill into the dock if the scuppers were not blocked up. During the day, a few dealers came on board the ship selling mostly clothes. The quality of these items, compared to what was available at home was only superb, and they were cheap, compared to the price of clothes at home. A sub list went around and dollars were made available to anyone who wanted them from their wages. Wrangler and Lee jeans were not on sale in Ireland at the time. There were still protectionist tariffs in place to protect the home produced products and these were, in many cases such as jeans, inferior and expensive. Heavy check lumberjack-style working shirts, that simply never wore out, were another favourite item, some of which I bought. I also bought a big antler- handled

Bowie knife, and I had this for many years afterwards until it was stolen from my car in Dublin. Norfolk in Virginia was a major centre for the tobacco industry in America and there was a shop just up the quay that sold boxes of superb cigars and bottles of spirits, at a fraction of the price that would be paid at home. They also sold cigars that were 'seconds', with slight damage at a very cheap price so there was some stocking up of these before we left, particularly as we had discovered that Dublin was to be our next port of call. I would be visiting Norfolk again on a regular basis on one particular ship in the future.

The ship was much lower in the water than it had been on our journey from Ireland and it was not long before we were encountering heavy seas again, except this time we were running before the waves. This gives the ship a different motion with the stern being lifted more. We were taking water over the bow of the ship immediately and almost as soon as I had the spurling pipes cemented up, the whole lot got washed out and water poured into the chain locker and flooded the fo'castle paint store. The mate was freaking out over this but I managed to get the cementing done again, and somehow it stayed in place this time. We had to pump out the fo'castle, however, lots of drums of anti-fouling paint for the ships bottom were stored here and



**The Irish Larch, Mediterranean 1964. From left to right: Cormac Lowth, Tom McClean, Buller Kavanagh, Luke Wadding, Tiny Lynch, Paddy Chandler, Peter Rossiter, Eddie Byrne, Paddy O'Brien, Frank Stubbs, Noel Tobin, Peter Tallon.**

they had been washed around the place and had burst open, resulting in a most awful mess, as I said, it was a design fault. I got on the wrong side of a manhole door



on the chain locker on which I had loosened the nuts to let the locker drain out and I was covered from head to toe with seawater mixed with anti-fouling paint. I almost had to have a bath in paraffin oil to get it off my skin, and my clothes were only fit to dump over the side.

We made much better time on the return journey, which took about twelve days, and by the time we sighted the Irish coast the westerly storms had blown themselves out. We sighted the Fastnet lighthouse in the early hours, and we had a pleasant run, mostly in



**Later in the Suez Canal 1964. From left to right: Suez Boatman, John Linke, Boatman, Peter Rossiter, Luke Wadding, Noel Tobin, Paddy Chandler, Willy Brady, Tiny Lynch, Eddie Byrne, Cormac Louth, Boatman.**

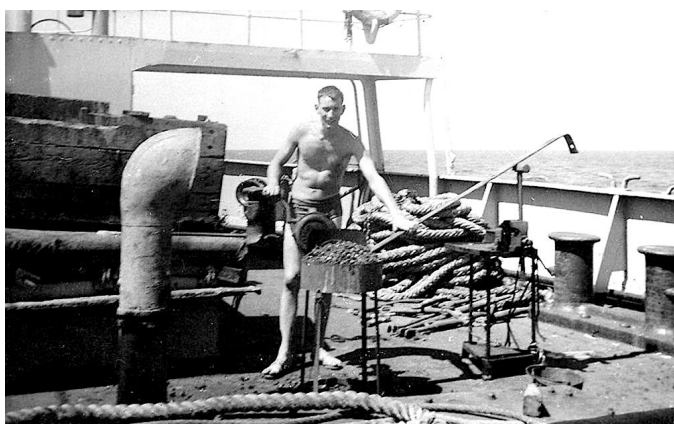
daylight, around the south coast and up the Irish Sea. I was soon back in familiar territory as we passed the Kish lightship and we picked up the Dublin Pilot near the South Bar Buoys. The two old Dublin steam tugs came out to meet us and we were soon pulled alongside the grain berth at Alexandra Basin in the heart of Dublin's docklands. I could see my father's boat at her mooring as we came in. It took the best part of a week to get the grain discharged in Dublin. This was done in the usual manner with big suction pipes, but it was a much slower process than loading. The early sixties was a much more innocent time than today. The insidious drug trade that has taken over much of the world was virtually unknown in Ireland, and indeed in many other countries at that time. Nevertheless, as soon as the ship docked, there was a squad of customs 'rummagers' waiting on the quay wall and they descended like a swarm of locusts on the ship, looking for contraband

spirits or tobacco. They were armed with an array of screwdrivers, and mirrors on sticks for looking into awkward places. They were not averse to taking panelling off the walls or bulkheads in their searches. They never found very much, as the sheer amount of places to hide stuff on a ship was almost endless. Even if they had found all that had been stashed, I often thought that it would not have justified the sheer numbers of people that were involved in these searches, and like most government departments then and since, they were grossly overstaffed. When at sea at the time, there was a meagre beer allowance on most of the ships of two cans a day and these were dispensed by the chief steward from the ship's store, known as the 'Bond'. But it was possible to get a generous allowance of cartons of cheap duty free cigarettes when at sea, and these, combined with all that had been purchased ashore, were what the customs men were after. There was a ready market for any residue of cigarettes or cigars among the Dockers and it was a handy source of additional money. Usually the customs men did not appear again after their initial search and it was easy to walk ashore with whatever you had stashed. I gave a box of fine cigars to my father and sold the rest for a tidy profit to the Dockers.

The bad weather at sea had taken a toll on the ship. There was a long crack in the superstructure amidships, from the main deck all the way up to the boat-deck, although this was mostly in exterior steel plating, nevertheless, it was necessary to have repairs done in Dublin, and we had a large squad of men from the nearby Liffey Dockyard working for several days with welders and grinders repairing the damage. I visited home a few times during the week and I was the envy of all of my friends when I appeared with my new Wrangler jeans and American shirts.

I remained on the Irish Larch until the following October, a total of nearly eleven months. After the first trip to Norfolk, we loaded General Cargo at Liverpool and Glasgow for Karachi in Pakistan, and for Chittagong in what was then East Pakistan. This has since become the independent country of Bangladesh. The ship had been chartered to the Pakistani Shipping Line. The journey out brought us our first warm weather, down the

Mediterranean to the Suez Canal. The journey through this was fascinating with a stop, anchored at Port Said, with hordes of Bumboat men selling their wares, such as leather camels and brass busts of Nefretiti. Also Gilly-gilly men, conjurers who could produce objects out of thin air. Also 'dirty pictures' that had been copied so many times they were hardly visible. Any currency was accepted or 'changey for changey', bartering mostly for old clothes. Most of them seemed to go under the name of George Robey.



**Arabian Sea. Cormac Louth at the Forge.**

We stopped at Aden for bunkers. This was then a British Territory but already political unrest was rife and barbed wire and soldiers were much in evidence. We were not allowed ashore. There were plenty of bumboats here with good quality duty-free goods to be had. It was fascinating to see large Manta Rays swimming around the harbour.

Chittagong Port lies up a big river called the Karnafuli near the edge of the Ganges Delta. A busy port with dozens of ships and hundreds of small boats and barges carrying all sorts of cargo.

We loaded an almost full cargo of Jute in Chittagong and sailed to Penang and Port Swettenham in Malaya and Singapore to load bales of natural rubber. Another odd couple of consignments were bales of Linen Rags destined for the Royal Mint in London and large sacks of cow's horns. There were whole streets full of eating houses with the most delicious food in these Malayan cities and Singapore. Our return journey brought us to Dundee with the jute for the carpet trade, and to London with the bales of rubber and the rags etc. The ship had to be fumigated while we were there to get rid of

swarms of strange insects and black rats which we had picked up abroad.

The ship did several more runs across the Atlantic during my remaining time aboard, mostly carrying grain back to ports in the UK and Europe, such as Antwerp, Hamburg and Bremen, and Rotterdam. Some of these voyages were to Baie Comeau and Montreal up the St Lawrence. One of the last trips to Canada, and a very interesting one, was to Churchill in Hudson's Bay, a small town with a rail head for exporting grain. The freeze-up was starting while we were there and we were the last ship out of the port that year. There was very little in the town except a big Hudson's Bay store and a nearby American Army Distant Early Warning base. I met several Inuit people and Cree Indians who were preparing their sleds for the coming season. There were lots of teams of Huskies, whose howling could be heard at night. The night sky was lit up by the Aurora Borealis in great bars of changing coloured lights. Polar Bears are renowned for walking down the main street in Churchill but we did not spot any. There was a deep layer of slush on the surface of the water as we departed and we encountered several 'Growlers' or chunks of ice banging off the hull. We hit very bad weather as we came out of the Bay and clouds of spray coming over the bow froze when it hit the ship leaving everything forward of the bridge with a thick layer of Ice. We had to heave to and get all hands out on deck to break away the ice which was affecting our stability. We picked up a huge Arctic Owl off the deck as it lay exhausted as we came down by Greenland. We were bound for Southampton and we gave the bird to the zoo there. Two of the trips we did with grain brought us to Manchester which involved going up the Ship Canal. One cargo was of maize which we brought to a factory which made corn flakes. It had its own dock on the Manchester Ship Canal. While we were there, an old Dutch AB named Ari, who had been signed on in Rotterdam as a replacement, wished to get paid off to get back home for his divorce proceedings, but the Captain would not allow it. He stripped off stark naked and walked down the gangway and along the quay wall at a time when dozens of girls who worked in the factory were having their lunch break in the sunshine. He was bundled into an office by

some dockers and he was on his way back to Rotterdam next day!

The ships of this period owed much to a former generation of vessels. There was still a lot of marlin spike seamanship. Canvas covers were sewed by hand, all of the ropes and mooring lines were made from natural fibres, red and white lead paints were still in use, and navigation was principally done by taking sights with a sextant and using a chronometer. Many of the aids to navigation that we take for granted nowadays such as GPS were not available. Natural products such as Archangel tar and fish oil were still being used as preservatives. All of the 'Officers' wore uniforms with brass buttons and were permanent Company employees, whilst the 'Lower Deck' were discharged after each voyage.

I served on four other ships after this, The Irish Sycamore, Irish Plane, Irish Spruce, and the Irish Rowan. My next ship was the Irish Sycamore. We flew out to join her in New Orleans. Six of us got somehow left behind in Kennedy Airport in New York. We had no pass-

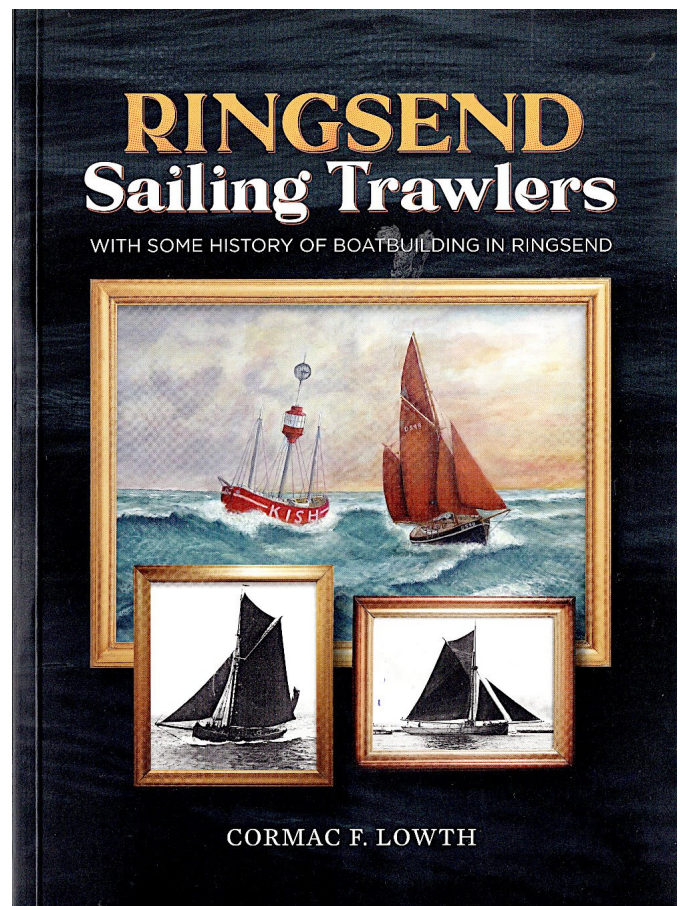
ports as the personnel man who accompanied up, John Davis had all our documents. We just talked our way onto the next flight to New Orleans and when we got there we got a limo to drive down to the docks and look for a ship with a green white and yellow funnel. Poor John Davis was almost apoplectic. We became great friends in later years I went on to have some great adventures in many parts of the globe and I had experiences and I visited places I would otherwise never have seen. I was planning to sit for a Second Mate's ticket, but I got engaged to my late wife Barbara while I was on the Irish Spruce, which ran between Dublin and East Coast ports in America. I was obliged to go back to sea to serve on the Irish Rowan as I had been on paid leave ashore for some time. Barbara had made it quite clear that she did not intend to be a 'Sea Widow'. Her ultimatum was 'The Sea or Me' and the 'Me' won out, for which I give eternal thanks. I came ashore in 1970 and we got married and had four beautiful children in fairly quick succession. I had no regrets, but I still look back on that period of my life with great fondness.

## Ringsend Sailing Trawlers by Cormac F. Lowth.

### A Review by Joe Varley

Cormac's book published in 2022 is a classic of its type. It is set firmly within the genre of local history, yet it succeeds over a longish time span of 200 years plus, to keep a reader fixated by its very strong narrative and the continual insights that it probes and subsequently discusses. Its subject matter is Ringsend, an urban/coastal village on the south bank of the River Liffey, near where it flows into Dublin Bay. These particular circumstances created a distinct maritime community, which is not terribly common on our island of Ireland apart from coastal fishing communities.

The layout of the book spread over 32 chapters is central to this clarity. The first twelve chapters focus on the influx of Brixham (South Devon) families to Ringsend after the end of the Napoleonic Wars. They revolutionized the existing fishing practices, both in terms of better boats and an emphasis on trawling. In this section of the book there is also appropriate reference to the development of Ringsend Village and the Dublin Fish Market.



The second half of the book has a focus on the ship/boat building and repair industry in Ringsend. This was for the most part concentrated on the east side of the River Dodder and in the graving docks in Grand Canal Harbour. In good times it was a substantial employer, and taking it in conjunction with the fishing it was pivot-



**Sailing trawlers at the Kingstown Regatta, one of the many period photos reproduced in the book.**

al in making Ringsend an area where many people made their living from marine activity. The section is supplemented and complemented by appropriate insights into the development of Dublin Docks and the regattas in Kingstown (Dún Laoghaire).

Cormac Lowth is the ideal person to write this book. A native of Ringsend he has memories as a young man talking to an older generation who had worked on the sailing trawlers and in the hobbleries. He has first hand knowledge of Dublin Bay. He helped his late father Fred to restore the 32 foot yawl 'The Pride of Ardmore'. She was originally built in Tyrrell's of Arklow and her registration papers were for 'Sail and Motor Auxiliary' He also attended some of the boat building classes given by the legendary Ringsend shipwright Jem Kearney at Ringsend Technical School in the 1950s.

Allied to this is his use of primary documents to give credibility to the various arguments put forward in the book. The 1901 Census is used with telling effect to show the preponderance of marine occupations in Ringsend/ Irishtown at that time. (P.106-109) His use of newspaper reports and the Mercantile Navy and Mari-

time Directory allows him to list some of the vessels built at Ringsend during the nineteenth century (Pg. 176 -177). However, Cormac candidly acknowledges that there are gaps here.

I feel that any book to be creditably reviewed must be in the context of what has already been written on the subject. To further this assertion, I will mention two well-known books. The first is an older one namely Weston St. John Joyce's "The Neighbourhood of Dublin" published in 1912. The other is Michael Branagan's "Dublin Moving East—How The City Took Over The Sea" (Published in 2020). Both are excellent books and give copious analysis of developments at Ringsend dur-



**A "Colleen Class" sailboat made by boatbuilders, Holweys of Windmill Lane.**

ing their respective periods. Yet both books rightly treat Ringsend as a part of the larger questions that they are examining. Cormac does it the other way around. Ringsend is his centre and focus and outside developments are introduced in the context of advancing or retarding economic or social conditions there.

This is an excellent book and will in time become a collector's item. If you are interested in maritime development in the Dublin area, it should be on your bookshelf.

# Maritime Library on the Crest of a Wave

by Richard McCormick

Returning to the Brendan Neary Library after a 7 year absence, it is quite obvious that the incredible contribution that our former Honorary Librarian, Brian Ellis, made since his appointment in 2016 has been significantly overlooked. As well as sorting, cataloguing and shelving books, he has also assisted numerous professional and amateur researchers every year. During the prolonged Covid lockdowns, Brian continued cataloguing numerous boxes of donated books at home unaided. The reinstatement of the Institute's Library of 5,250 catalogued books, by far the most comprehensive maritime history library in Ireland, is therefore a testament to his diligence.

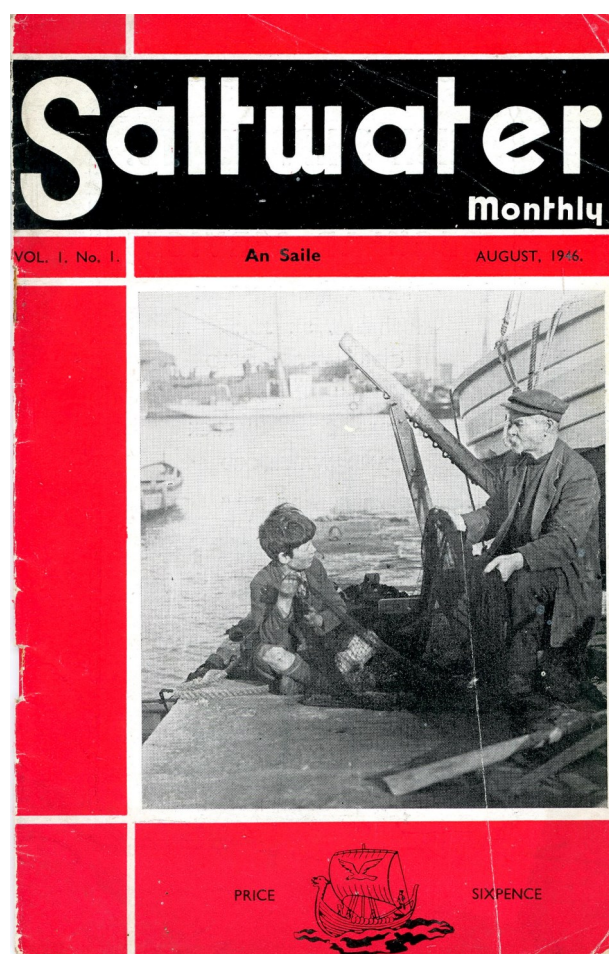
Adjunct Librarian Fergus Plunkett is confident that most of the book donation backlogs are now catalogued, though new donations continuously arrive. Predictably dominant themes are naval and maritime history, sailing ships and shipping companies, amounting to one-third of volumes held, though there are many niche interests. However, the above total excludes the "dirty books" from the mid 1700's currently being assessed for cataloguing. Though fragile with age, they nonetheless constitute vital primary research sources for the age of sail and Naval sea power.

As shelf space becomes scarcer, Fergus is constantly 'high-grading' books and re-prioritising bookshelf space to reflect popular emerging research interests. Applying his formidable administration skills, he is also simplifying access to themed topics in the 'high profile' shelved cabinets most recently exemplified by Irish Ports and also Inland Waterways. The volumes under those headings have now been re-listed geographically coastwise in a clockwise direction around Ireland, starting and finishing with Dublin port.

Richard Hamilton, our invaluable CE Library Staff Member, has digitised almost 100 Maritime Institute historical Newsletters for touch screen display. These Newsletters offer an irreplaceable snapshot in time of the Irish maritime sector and the Institute and thus must be preserved for posterity and the retention of corporate memory. The earliest known Institute News-

letter is 1946. Major edition gaps still remain and some are damaged, so donations of newsletters for digitising would be welcomed by the Library.

Brian Ellis and author Philip Lecane have also expanded the scope of their RMS *Leinster* research through correspondence with relatives. Since 2018, they have verifiably increased the number of those on-board RMS *Leinster* on 10th October 1918 by 14, to a



The oldest known MII newsletter from 1946.

total of 817 individuals (246 survivors and 571 casualties), all hosted on the RMS *Leinster* touch screen.

Liam Farrell, an Honours BA student at TCD, is currently researching a 10,000 word dissertation in the Library on *The Social Effects of the US Navy in Cobh 1917 – 1920*. Liam is just one of many academic researchers who have availed of the Library's resources over the years. It is intended to arrange information sessions for Third Level Student Supervisors on the

wealth of maritime sources available in the Brendan Neary Library.

It is also gratifying to see that the new Virtual Tour of the Museum, in which the Library took the lead developmental role, is now hosted on

<https://www.mariner.ie/3d-view-of-the-museum/>

Funded by Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, it should be a great advertising medium for attracting visitors to the Museum. Meanwhile mundane tasks such as cataloguing, digitising and PhotoShopping images and curating and updating touch screen displays continue apace.

Reflecting the upsurge of interest in maritime history and genealogy, undoubtedly inspired by the Decade of Commemorations, sixty research queries of varying complexity have been dealt with by Library Staff since mid-April 2023. Richard Hamilton whose family served in the RNLi and the B&I Line is almost full time engaged

in this worthwhile endeavour, which enhances the reputation of the Institute and its Museum.

Weekly Library Committee meetings are held to discuss incoming queries, where the Library's combination of merchant marine, commercial fishing, educational and scientific backgrounds, along with genealogy and PhD research expertise are brought to bear to advise enquirers on techniques and sources. The very significant staff effort involved suggests potential for voluntary donations from enquirers.

In conclusion, the Maritime Institute's Maritime Reference Library continues to promote awareness of Ireland's rich maritime heritage in furtherance of the main objects of the Institute's Constitution. It does this by educating students, amateur family historians and academics, plus authors and media researchers. In addition, it also offers historical context to the Museum's unique collection of exhibits.

## Museum Committee Report

by Roger Kirker

The upgrading of the M.V. Kerlogue story of the Bay of Biscay rescue exhibition is continuing and is expected to complete by December this year, for the 80th Anniversary on December 28th. Though the official opening will be in the spring of 2024. This will entail a refurbishment of her Irish Ensign and display it in a protective case, a new display case with more artefacts, storyboards, and video. Grant aid will be applied for to reduce the costs, and 2 donations from abroad have already been received.

Three interns joined the volunteers this summer, 2 from near Paris, France and 1 from New Jersey, USA.

The French girls, Djahnis and Nora worked hard and improved their language skills and became proficient enough to be able to give tours to visitors.

Margaret concentrated on the graphic displays and marketing and produced good video that can be used for promotional purposes.

Several volunteers have been curious and have answered our appeals and joined us in several parts of the museum operation, from the Board to meeting & greeting and tour guiding, as they learn about our multi-

ple maritime disasters coupled with the many successes by the mariners of such a small nation in the worldwide maritime sphere.

Earlier this year, the descendants of William Wakefield (RMS Leinster postal worker) decided to donate "The Widow's Penny" (a memorial medal accompanied with a scroll, and a photograph of the postal workers) sent to his family following his loss on the RMS Leinster when she was sunk by torpedoes off the Kish Bank on October 10th, 1918.

This is a great addition to this exhibition where we have many good items on display backed up by the touch screen archive of the passengers and crew on the vessel that fateful day.

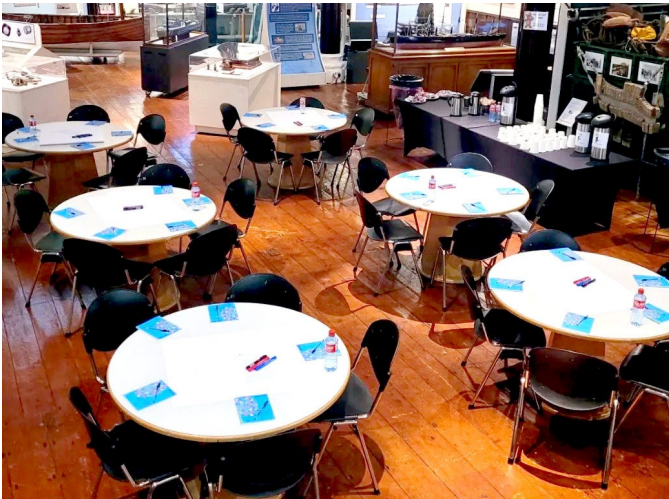
Work continues with the archival updating of our records on a new database to improve our research and display capabilities in the future, accompanied with our care of our collection by continuous monitoring of the Humidity and Temperature of our exhibiting and storage spaces.

We continue to answer queries on the exhibits and also on other maritime items where we can.

# Future Search / Institute and Museum Strategy

by Michael McCormack

On 28th January 2023, the Maritime Institute of Ireland held a large “Future Search” event in the Museum, to which all members were invited, and which was also attended by a cross-section of volunteers, CE Scheme employees, and other stakeholders. The aim was to stand back from our current and shorter-term challenges and, by working together as equal stakeholders, creatively imagine possible futures for the Institute and Museum and what may be needed to secure their long-term future. There were no presentations, talks or lectures, and the entire morning was devoted to sharing ideas and thinking. The event was facilitated by Michael Pearn, an experienced consultant in the area, and



**Tables laid out for the Future Search groups.**

the Institute is grateful for his generously donated time and assistance. The event resulted in a report, which was circulated to all participants for additional comments. The Board undertook to report to members at the May 2023 AGM on its consideration of the outcome of the process and remains committed to such transparency in its consideration of future strategy.

On 21st March 2023, the Board of the Institute held a special meeting to consider the Future Search report and any actions arising from it.

On 20th May 2023, a short report was made to the AGM on the current status of the Board’s consideration

of the Future Search report, at which the Board undertook to make a copy of the slide presentation (which was the live working document on the Board’s Future Search and general strategy deliberations) available to all members.

On 18th July 2023, the Board held a second special meeting to continue its consideration of the Future Search report and the Institute’s and Museum’s strategy generally, at which the Board decided to pursue a combination of options 1A and 1B from its working document. The Board specifically decided to proceed with improving and expanding the Museum’s digital offering, to pursue marketing resources for the Museum, and to consider seeking external advice and assistance on museum curation, exhibits and layout. The Board also agreed to make certain, very preliminary, enquires about possible future expansion of the Museum’s physical footprint in the Dún Laoghaire area.

The Board discussed this again at their September meeting and it remains on the agenda.

The Board’s current working documents on its Future Search and general strategy deliberations (including the slide presentation and a draft document on expanding the Museum’s digital offering) are available to any Institute member on request to the Museum or on the Museum’s website here:

<https://www.mariner.ie/about-us/#future>



**Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the official position and policy of the Maritime Institute of Ireland.**



National Maritime  
Museum of Ireland

## VISIT SANTA

FROM NOVEMBER 24TH UNTIL DECEMBER 23RD  
TIMES AND DATES VARY, SEE OUR WEBSITE

ONLINE TICKETS ONLY

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

VISIT SANTA'S GROTTO

POST YOUR LETTER IN SANTA'S EXPRESS POST-BOX

GET A SPECIAL GIFT

VIEW OUR MODEL TRAIN SET IN THE GALLERY

(NO BUGGY/WHEELCHAIR ACCESS TO GALLERY)

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO BOOK TICKETS  
VISIT [MARINER.IE/CHRISTMAS-EXPERIENCE](http://MARINER.IE/CHRISTMAS-EXPERIENCE)

PRICES

CHILD UNDER 1 €5

CHILD €15

ADULT €8

