



MARITIME Institute of Ireland

NEWSLETTER

2026
Spring Edition



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Maritime Institute of Ireland
Spring Newsletter
2026

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President's Address

by David Curtis



As I write this update, it is pleasing to see the Institute continuing to go from strength to strength.

President Catherine Connolly, has accepted our invitation to be the Patron of the Maritime Institute for which we are very grateful and this continues a proud tradition of past presidents. We had great pleasure in welcoming the President to the Museum on 15th May as part of the Spirit of Shackleton event.

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Institute is set for Saturday 27th June at 11am and I look forward to seeing many of you at this important event. It will be a time to reflect on 2025, look forward to 2026 and bring you up to date on developments in the Museum and the Library.

Much has been happening in the Museum since the last newsletter and I just want to pick out a few items to put some colour on events since my last update.

A new exhibition around the legacy of the former Dublin Shipping Company is planned to open soon and I want to acknowledge the financial support of the Jones Group in respect of this exhibition and also Captain Martin Donnelly & Captain Brian Sheridan for the original idea and their enthusiasm to deliver the project along with our own Museum Committee.

The Institute was very pleased for the Museum to be selected as a venue for TRADFEST 2026 and hosted two of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown (DLR) County Council TRADFEST sessions, including DLR's launch of TRADFEST at the Museum. TRADFEST is a joyful celebration of Irish music and culture that takes place each January in Dublin. The two events which took place in the museum were Stephen Rea in "Ocean Child" and a concert featuring Ralph McTell. Both were very much appreciated by a full house and it was a great privilege to be able to feature such well-known artists and display yet again our magnificent venue.

Over the weekend of the 11th & 12th April, we were very pleased to be able to host a

Brick.ie event which saw circa 400 attendees. There were Lego ship and maritime themed models, a Brick Pit and hands on mini model building for our younger and indeed not so young visitors (see article on page 14). The weekend was a great success and I want to especially thank Stephane (Board Member), Jessica Farrell (Brick.ie Artist), CE Staff and all of the volunteers for delivering this fantastic day.

The shop is also doing well and my thanks to Glynis & Liam for their continued efforts. We have a new range of material (Tee Shirts, Mugs, Costers etc.) featuring the logo of the Dublin Steam Packet Company and my thanks to Stephane (Board Member) who has worked with Glynis on this initiative.

The Library continues to go from strength to strength and the development to enable an online catalogue for some 7,000 titles is ongoing as I outlined in the previous newsletter. Along with this the Library and its volunteers continue to work on the collection, maritime heritage enquiries from both the public and academic requests.

The Institute is again in May featuring our annual Art Competition in association with Easons Dun Laoghaire who are very generously sponsoring the prizes this year. My sincere thanks to Cian Butler manager who has facilitated the art competition again this year and to all those who have helped to deliver same (Eva Harrison, Orla Scanlon, John O'Toole & Sue O'Brolchain).

I want to again note, that without the dedication of Declan and the CE Scheme staff plus the volunteers, the Institute would not be what it is today. My sincere thanks to them for their continued effort and commitment. On the CE Scheme I want to welcome Anastasiia, Susan and Suzanne who have joined the CE team, since the last newsletter. I also want to wish Angela well as she leaves the scheme and to thank her for her dedication and commitment whilst she was with us.

So I hope you will all stay well until the next edition and that I will get to meet you in person at the forthcoming AGM or in the Museum.

An Intern's Experience at the Maritime Museum

by Sedona Skenderian



Hello! My name is Sedona, and I am an American university student from Massachusetts who has been interning at the museum for my overseas semester. I had always planned to go abroad. I figured studying abroad would be the best chance I had at living in a different country for a

time and experiencing something different from my life in the United States. At this point in my university career, I have completed almost all my requirements to graduate and only need a few more credits before my time at university comes to an end. So, when I found a study abroad internship in Ireland through AIFS (American Institute for Foreign Study) listed on my school's study abroad page, I got very excited.

The way AIFS works is a bit confusing. For their internship program, they partner with universities in the United States and organisations in whatever country their program is geared towards, so in my case, Ireland. They help students with professional development, such as resume and cover letter support, and then place students with an organisation that best matches their field of interest. There is, of course, an interview process which students have to go through before their placement is confirmed. Most students, I am told, get accepted to the first organisation that they interview with, which is exactly what happened to me.

That is how I ended up at the National Maritime Museum of Ireland. Upon first arriving, I was a bit overwhelmed. I had always loved museums, and I was elated to be finally working in one, but I had no background in maritime history. I had learned a bit here and there in school, but not nearly as much information as this museum contained. Everywhere you look in the museum, there is something with some kind of history; even the building itself, being a Mariner's Church, had its own past. Even the people within the museum are full of in-

formation. There was so much to take in. For example, like most guests, I could not help being mesmerised by the Bailey Optic, especially since that week there was a concert at the museum in which the optic was lit up with different colours. The optic is just an example of how there is such beauty to this museum, whilst also having a deep history. At the time of writing this, I still have so much to learn about everything in the museum and Irish maritime history. However, it is safe to say that I know a good deal more about it than most Americans.

Through working here, I have learned so many things and have had such a great experience, and I attribute that to the people here at the museum. Meeting people from such different backgrounds with various bodies of knowledge has been amazing. I have had the opportunity to meet many people from the museum's different departments and see the work that they do to help the museum. Their friendliness and willingness to share their work made this a great experience. I'll always be grateful for the opportunity.

****Appreciations from Keith Stratford****

It has been a great pleasure meeting and getting to know Sedona during her internship at the museum this Spring. Her impressive panoply of skills included working with all of our staff and volunteers while she catalogued some of our artifacts. She also assisted at the Museum's many events such as concerts and ceremonies. She chose to research and to expand details of the life of William Memery. The only information the Museum has about this man are his medals and photograph which she found in display below our Rose Window. All her research will be collated to bring this man's world to life in a story board. I wish her all the very best in her final months of study and it is hoped that she may revisit this museum very soon.



A Selection of Pat Sweeney Photographs (see also page 8)

The River (1960s)





East-Link Bridge (30th April, 1984)



The Alexandra Basin (September, 1963)



Ringsend Dutch Coastal (June, 1959)



North Wall Start of Containers' (August, 1968)

A Gettysburg Connection: Eisenhower and Commodore Barry

By Paul McElhinney



Most visits by US Presidents to Ireland have been 'Irish vote'-related or homecoming trips to ancestral roots.

Trips by Kennedy, Reagan, Obama, Clinton and Biden are cases in point. The visit in late August 1962 of

Gettysburg's most famous resident, former President, Dwight D. Eisenhower, was of another hue altogether.

Eisenhower visited the town of Wexford on Ireland's southeast coast to lay a wreath at the statue of Commodore William Barry, 'the father of the US Navy'. The bronze statue was a gift from the American people and was transported to Ireland on the USS Charles S. Sperry. In a further nod to the historic setting, a couple of hundred yards down the quays from the site of the Barry statue, is the bridge over the river Slaney constructed in 1793 and a key factor in quelling the 1798 Irish rebellion against British rule.

Barry was born in 1745 in the village of Ballysampson, Tacumshane in the county of Wexford.



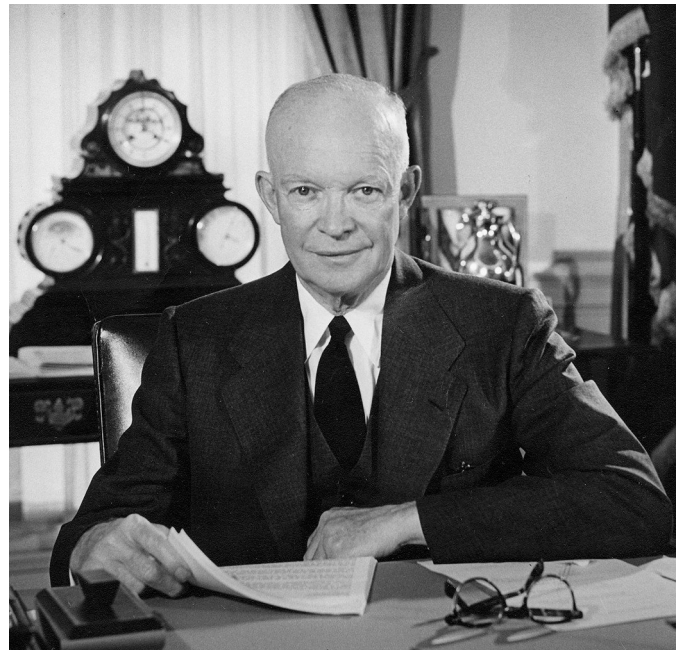
Commodore Barry

As a young man with an interest in the sea, he emigrated to Pennsylvania where he became a ship-master at the age of 21 in Philadelphia – a major port of entry for Irish emigrants of the era. Barry offered his services to the Continental Army at the outbreak of the War of Independence and offered his ship, the Alfred to the Continental Navy as its first ship. It was the first ship to capture a British one in the war, for which Barry received a note of gratitude from General Washington.

At the foundation of the US Navy in 1794, Barry, as

the senior captain of the naval service, was awarded the honorary title of Commodore in honor of his huge contribution to its founding and development. As a military man who also headed a vital US military service, Eisenhower would have been keenly aware of the magnitude and impact of Barry's service.

Although perhaps stretching the connection with Gettysburg a little, it is worth mentioning the mid-1990s



Stephen Spielberg film, 'Saving Private Ryan' about the D-Day Normandy Landings of 1944. Spielberg chose Wexford's nearby beach, Curracloe, as the location for the famous events due to its close similarity to Omaha Beach, one of the US forces' D-Day landing points. The film provided huge interest and some well-received local employment during its filming. To this day, a pub/bar named 'Omaha Beach' remains near the shore.

The fact that the Supreme Allied Commander of the invasion had visited the nearby town of Wexford some thirty years before the making of the film, was not lost locally or farther afield. Interestingly, Eisenhower's visit to Ireland took place in 1962, two years after his own presidency had ended and during the presidency of John F. Kennedy. Eisenhower's presence in Wexford was a

huge honor and spectacle for its local citizens.

Kennedy himself was to visit Ireland including Wexford in the following year. This cemented further the links with Wexford as Kennedy's family roots were in the village of Dunganstown also in County Wexford and a small number of miles from where the statue of Commodore Barry was erected.

JFK's 1963 visit to Ireland took place a mere five months before his assassination. In his address to both houses of the Irish Parliament that year, the President formally announced the return to the Irish people of the battle flag of the famous 'Fighting 69th' Irish Brigade which fought so bravely at Gettysburg and other Civil War battles. Scarred by a bitter civil war only forty years previously, Irish people could feel the full intimacy and poignancy of the gesture.

Pennsylvania and Ireland have had strong links since

the 17th and 18th centuries. These have been well-documented. Those between Gettysburg and Wexford are less so, but on deeper exploration, significant.

The visit of an illustrious statesman and Gettysburg resident to honor a US hero with Irish antecedence, established direct links with an ancient Viking/Norman town that had sent many of its people to live in Pennsylvania and its fellow US states. Not insignificant.

Paul McElhinney

Paul McElhinney is a writer based in Wexford, Ireland. His work focuses on politics, history, culture, and sport. He is the author of "Lion of the RAF," a biography of Air Marshal Sir George Beamish, and has contributed to several Irish, British, and American publications. He has researched the influence of the Scots-Irish and Catholic Irish in the state of Pennsylvania the 17th century and up to the present day.

Some background on Pat Sweeney Photos

by Joe Varley

On page 4, 5 and 6, we featured a selection of Pat Sweeney's photos which were digitised by Dublin Port Company in **2024-2025**. There are six photos out of a total collection of three thousand two hundred (**3,200**). This gives our readers an indication of the value of the collection in terms of a statement of record and an unbelievable help for future researchers and hopefully the general public.

We made an editorial decision to show the photographs with minimum descriptive text so as not to distract from the superb clarity of the scenes depicted. These images were part of a presentation that Joe and Esther gave at Dublin Port during the history festival in October **2025**. The loose title of this talk was 'Infrastructure and Heritage' Joe covering the former and Esther the latter.

On page four, the focus is on the river in the **1960's**. These scenes cannot be replicated as the modern bridges do not allow for commercial shipping. Note that the Gasometer features in both images, and the river traffic is reflective of the pre-containerisation coastal trade.

Jerry Daly, an employee of the old Port and Docks, was of the opinion that the East Link Bridge opened up an appreciation of the Port to the general public. Yet the traffic in the Port was massive as evidenced in a picture of Alex Basin in the early **1960's**. Note the grain vessels discharging into Odlums Mills. In this picture, the Gouldings Wharf, now demolished, had not been constructed.

Page 6 shows a classic Dutch Coaster on the Dodder. She probably has sand for the Bottle House or maybe another glass factory. Our last image is that of the Harrogate unloading the new trade of containers on the North Wall in **1968**. This is a fascinating insight into past times.

I have gone through the entire collection, and I can safely say, that there are at least five distinct themes that the images can support. However, that is another day's work. Again, our thanks to the Sweeney Family and Dublin Port Company. We hope these photographs will inspire interest and encourage further study of the Port's history for many years to come.

Philip Smyly Reminisces (Part 2)

Recorded by Padraic O Brolchain July 2006

Introduction:

In the previous issue of our newsletter, we shared the first part of the recording that Padraic O'Brolchain made with Dr Philip Smyly, the late curator of the Maritime Museum. In this issue, we will continue transcribing the recording and add explanatory comments on points that became outdated in February 2026.

Transcript of tape:

Here is the diving suit used on the bridge in Wexford, possibly from the 1960s, featuring a pump for sending air down to the diver.

[It seems that the diving suit is from Dun Laoghaire. Bob Lewis was the diver and Michael John Maloney was his pump man.]

These are Mr Connolly's medals; he lent us the model of the Leinster. We hope to have more material about this ship during the year. The third secretary in the US embassy brought us this account from an American officer who had both his legs broken, and he was held up and taken ashore. He had remarkable compliments for the condition of the boat, which came out to get them. The one thing that puzzled all the people who survived off the Leinster and the Lusitania was how long it took to be rescued, even though they were in sight of land. It was because there was no radio, and boats had to raise a head of steam before they could move.

[There are significant changes to the Leinster Exhibit. These includes the touch screen prepared by Brian and Lucille Ellis, which gives up to date information on the disaster]

There is the Munster, a beautiful ship with hot water in every cabin. Because they sailed six days a week, the Leinster's crew were all Irish, and the crew of the Munster were all Liverpoolian. Maurice Craig told me that during the war, he sailed up Belfast Lough with an English crew flying the tricolour!

The Innisfallen was based in Cork. The captain's widow was here one day and told me that she saw it one

day coming up the harbour, and it stopped. She knew at once there was something not good; her husband had had a coronary and died at the helm, so they stopped until they sorted things out before continuing to the dock.



Munster



Innisfallen

Fishguard was an amazing place, with boats arriving from Rosslare and Waterford. Three nights a week, a boat would come from Cork, and they had a huge train with two engines in front and one at the back to get up the hill from the town. It was absolutely packed and full of the excitement that travel aroused at that time.

The Company Board or the captain generally bought oil paintings of ships. Lesser mortals bought watercolours. Every picture tells a story; first of all, it has to be bang-on accurate. The story told by this picture of the Highland Forest, which was given to us by Mrs McCormack, John McCormack's daughter-in-law. Her father, the third mate, and Josef Conrad, the first mate, he was put off at Singapore because he broke his wrist. This picture tells us that, first of all, she is British, with the red duster on the back, and these are her code flags; she had a number, typically QPRS. She is also Scottish, as indicated by the blue St. Andrew's cross. The white union flag with a border means "I want a pilot": we have one of these flags in our collection, and the number painted on the buoy here in the fore-

ground indicates our location: off the Dutch coast.

The captain painted this picture here, and it was quite impossible that she ever had all those sails up at the same time. It was Captain Holmes who wrote extensively. We have some of his work in the library. Cormac Lowth is a great collector of this sort of work.

[Cormac Lowth, an accomplished artist, he gives autotative lectures on the Marine paintings of Dublin Bay.]

That white painting is of the Gorch Fock, a German sail trainer which comes to Dún Laoghaire nearly every year. Gorch Fock was the pen name of a German poet. Now, a collection of models - Robbie has put in lighting (disconnected at the moment). These four cabinets were initially made for the Irish Hospitals Sweepstakes, and due to Robbie's ingenuity, they have been converted for our use. We have our Maritime stamp collection at the top. These models were made by a man known as 'Harry the Dutchman', living in a village in Co. Limerick. He was told to give up smoking, and he said, "When you are making models, you cannot smoke", and he made 100 models or so. He also made 100 aeroplane models, and they are about to go on display at Dublin Airport. They are kit models, but they are very well-made.

Above you can see maps showing how the river (Liffey) was kept open for navigation. In the middle is a chart done by Captain Bligh (of Bounty fame). He was here in 1800 from October to December. He conducted a hydrographic survey of the entire Dublin Bay. That portrait is of Rennie, who designed the harbour. In the corner is a bit about the HMS Dublin, a light cruiser from the First World War, and we have her flag, absolutely stuffed with soot. We haven't got a pole big enough to put it up, but we hope to do so sometime. Again, here are the prisoners' docks where the naughty sailors were parked for the Sunday service.

[This is referring to the beautiful ship models. We have on the upper gallery. The Bligh Map is now in the library area to the right of our introduction video to the museum.]

We have a chart concerning Erskine Childers' gunrunning in 1914 on the Asgard. Not on show at the moment is a first edition of the 'Riddle of the

Sands', which he wrote - here is a photo of the gun running from Howth.

In 1916, Capt. Weisbach, torpedo officer in U-20, that's the one that sank the Lusitania, and Casement started out in the U-20 from Germany. It broke down, and then it went back, and Weisbach took him in for U19. These photographs they kindly let me have from the National Library. In a small museum beside the library, they have Sir Roger Casement's decorations: a Knight of St. Michael and St. George. He got the ordinary award for exposing the horrors in the Belgian Congo.

This is Capt. Weisbach who came here in 1966. He died in 1977. This is a log from Germany of his account (in German), and there is a translation of it. There is a picture of U19 - the first diesel-engined submarine in the world. There is also a picture of E54 a British submarine, which later torpedoed Weisbach in U81 and rescued him and some of his crew.

[The Institute in 1982 reprinted Dr. John De Courcy Ireland book on these events and it is now for sale in the museum shop (€5).]

This model of the Asgard II, a sail training ship, was made by a prisoner in Wheatfield Prison. It is beautifully made, with 15 sections. He made two models in bottles of Asgard and Asgard II; we also have them. He also made a long case clock with a sandblasted design, 'RNLI'. They used to get £3.50 an hour in those days for their work. They raised £100 among the prisoners for the RNLI.

Up on the gallery is a four oared currach, probably the safest kind of boat for use in the West of Ireland. They were either four or six oared. That one, as you can see, has been modified to take an outboard motor. With an outboard and a skin-full of liquor, it makes quite a dangerous boat. That example is on loan to us.

The currach is sea-going, but down here is a coracle - a replica made by students in Drogheda, it is for use on lakes or rivers. That is a clinker-built 19th-century scull for rowing - the sliding seat and outriggers are currently in store in the basement. There is a plan to restore it. It belonged to the Dublin University boat club. I must have done 50 or 60 miles in it in my time.

[All upstairs in our stuffed birds area. Philips Skiff was recently re-hung (7 Feb 2026) in its position in front of

the gallery.]

The skiff here is a Dublin skiff; Robert Brennan, our late manager, used to row in these. There was always a big regatta in Wicklow on the August bank holiday Monday. It was really hard work as they had no sliding seats.

That is the Helga - she was originally a Royal Navy yacht. It was the Helga that shelled Liberty Hall during the "Troubles". An aunt of mine, who was studying physiotherapy in the days when they were called masseuses, was taking an anatomy exam at the time. They were being examined in a group of seven, and she said they were far more afraid of the examiner than of the racket outside. When it was all over, he said, "You may now get up on your bicycles and go home".

This section on rescue depicts a rescue by the tiny ship Kerlogue, named after a small townland south of Wexford. The Kerlogue was owned by the Staffords. She was coming from Lisbon to Dublin with a cargo of oranges. She was halfway up the Bay of Biscay when a plane came out of the clouds and signalled that there were men in the water. Captain Donoghue turned his little

Cork. They only had oranges and some potatoes to use as food.

Robbie and I wrote to Whitehall to inquire about any survivors, and we also wrote to the British and German embassies here and in Berlin. We ended up with this group in the photo: Mary Robinson, the German ambassador, the German naval attaché, and the British military attaché. He is shown in uniform and happens to be Sean Lambe, an Irish officer who joined the British army. We had 15 German survivors, we had the gunnery officer of the Enterprise, which came from Cape Town, and we had Gunther Klar, who died last year; that is his uniform. He was later a businessman in Bremen.

Gunther Klar said to me, "Where is Gary Roche?" I had to tell him that Gary died three years ago, but that his widow would be here the following day. She is the mother of Dick Roche, the minister. You see the oval medal in the photo: he gave that to us. He said, "I owe my life" to Gary Roche. I was so badly burned that I spent most of my time in the Richmond hospital in the skin unit. There is a photo of him there coming down the street, with bandages



ship into a force seven and sailed southeast into the bay for two hours until he came upon all these men in the water. There were 700 men overboard the previous day, and he picked up 168 men - he didn't know who they were, but they turned out to be Germans. They took them down to the engine room to dry them off and then put them in among the oranges. They were supposed to go to Pembroke to clear the navy certificate, but Capt. Donoghue shut off his radio and sailed straight to

around his head - he had just been to the All-Ireland hurling final in Croke Park. The other man there was Tom O'Neill, who was a cabin boy on the Kerlogue. There was also an engineer,

Dr Pinert, a small

man. I introduced him to Tom, and he said, "I was the first aboard, and Tom you pulled me in."

[The Kerlogue area has been expanded and improved. Both the Museum Committee and the Library Committee have been involved in this.]

This was opened in May 2024, by Christian Resch of the German Embassy in Dublin.



A Busy Year for the Institu



Our friends at the DLR



Art Competition, May 16



Songs of the Sea Event, May 23



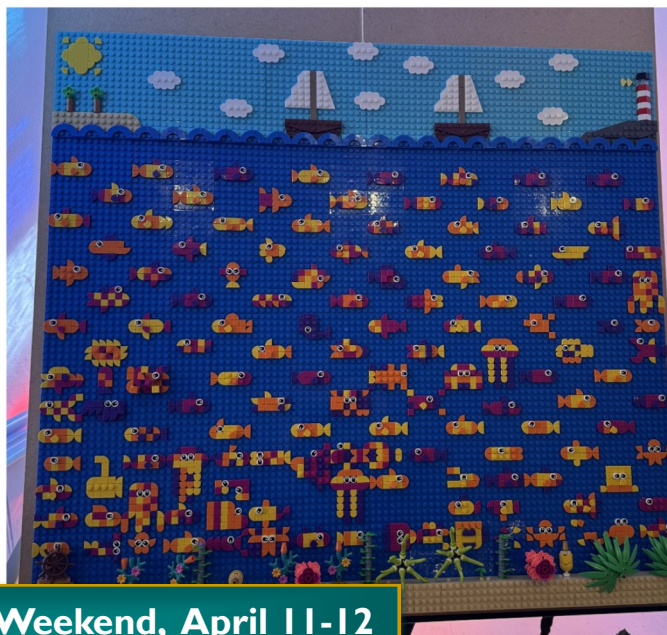
TradFest Event



te and its Museum in 2026!



nt, Jan 21 - 25



Brick.ie Lego Weekend, April 11-12

Bringing New Visitors Through Our Doors: The Brick.ie Lego Weekend

by Stéphane Maurin



Our Museum is often called "the hidden gem", and rightly so. But we're also honest with ourselves: not everyone grows up with a passion for history, let alone maritime history. So how do we welcome people who might never have

thought to visit a maritime museum?

This April, we tried to find the start of an answer.

On the 11th and 12th of April, we partnered with Brick.ie, the Irish Association for Adult Fans of Lego, to host a two-day Lego event. Brick.ie members are passionate adult builders who travel across Ireland to share their incredible creations with the public, and we were delighted to welcome them here for the first time. Over those two days, more than 400 visitors came through our doors, the vast majority of them first-timers.



Upstairs: Maritime Worlds in Miniature

The temporary exhibition area on the upper floor was transformed into a gallery of Brick.ie's finest maritime-themed builds. My personal highlights included a Viking

village, a pirates' attack scene, and hauntingly beautiful skeleton ships, but the SpongeBob tableau, a paddle steamer, scenes from Monkey Island, the Italian Riviera, and a fleet of boats and ships all drew admiring crowds too. What made it truly special was watching the builders themselves. Hearing them tell the stories behind their creations, and seeing children invent entirely their own versions of those stories, was one of the weekend's unexpected joys.

Downstairs: Get Creative

Our former coffee area became a hands-on creativity space, split into three zones: a shop, a mosaics station, and the brick pit.

At the mosaics station, visitors of all ages contributed to a large collaborative fish mosaic, each adding their own small piece to the whole. Simple in concept, surprisingly absorbing in practice. Then there was the brick pit: 12,000 identical purple bricks. It sounds like it might be limiting, but the opposite turned out to be true. Without colour or variety to distract, and to fight over, imaginations ran free. Ships, pyramids, planes, swords, and plenty of things harder to name all emerged over the course of the weekend.

And Our Permanent Collection Got Some Love Too

Perhaps the best part? Visitors didn't just come for the Lego. They stayed to explore. Visitors wandered through our permanent exhibitions, pausing over ship models, taking photos with the Baily Optic, and genuinely engaging with the museum's collection, many of them, we suspect, for the first time.

A huge thank you to the Brick.ie volunteers for giving so generously of their time and talent, and to our own staff and volunteers who made the weekend run so smoothly. We can't wait to do it again. And if you haven't yet had a chance to see our magnificent RMS Leinster, built from over 13,000 bricks by James Shields back in 2018, is still on display, so make sure to seek it out on your next visit.

Admiral Leopold McClintock: The Irish Explorer Who Illuminated the Arctic

by Richard Hamilton

Few episodes in maritime history have captured global attention like the disappearance of Sir John Franklin's 1845 expedition. Tasked with charting the final unknown stretch of the Northwest Passage, Franklin and his 129 men vanished into the Arctic, triggering a decade long international search defined by determination, tragedy, and scientific curiosity. Among those who sought answers, one figure rose above all others: **Admiral Sir Francis Leopold McClintock**, the Irish explorer whose skill and perseverance ultimately solved the mystery.

Today, nearly two centuries later, the Arctic continues to command geopolitical interest—from climate science to natural resources and international security. Even modern political leaders, including **President Don-**

ald Trump, have demonstrated renewed focus on the region's strategic value. But long before such contemporary debates, McClintock's achievements laid the groundwork for Arctic understanding and exploration.

Born on 8 July 1819 at 1 Seatown Place, Dundalk, County Louth, Leopold McClintock came from a distinguished Irish family deeply rooted in the region. His father, Henry McClintock, was the town's customs col-

lector; his mother, Elizabeth Melesina Fleury, belonged to another prominent Irish family. The McClintocks had been established in Ireland since the late sixteenth century, rising to influential positions across Louth, Donegal, and Ulster.

Surrounded by notable relatives—including his un-

cle, John McClintock, MP for County Louth—young Leopold grew up in a world that valued public service and exploration. His education under the Rev. John Darley in Dundalk equipped him with discipline and curiosity before he joined the Royal Navy at only 12 years old.

By the time Lady Jane Franklin turned to him for help, McClintock was already one of the Arctic's leading experts. Serving under famed commanders such as Sir James Clark Ross and Sir Edward Belcher, he built a rep-

utation for unmatched proficiency in **sledging**, the gruelling practice of hauling sledges across ice for hundreds of miles.

No contemporary naval officer had travelled farther over

Arctic ice on foot. McClintock's keen scientific methods and unshakeable calm made him uniquely qualified to take on a mission most of Britain had already given up on.

In 1857, Lady Franklin financed a private expedition and placed McClintock in command of the small steam yacht, "Fox". Their mission: uncover the fate of the 1845 expedition once and for all. Challenges began im-



ald Trump, have demonstrated renewed focus on the region's strategic value. But long before such contemporary debates, McClintock's achievements laid the groundwork for Arctic understanding and exploration.

Born on 8 July 1819 at 1 Seatown Place, Dundalk, County Louth, Leopold McClintock came from a distinguished Irish family deeply rooted in the region. His father, Henry McClintock, was the town's customs col-

mediately. After entering Baffin Bay, the Fox became trapped in pack ice and drifted for nearly eight months. Lesser leaders might have abandoned the attempt, but McClintock maintained discipline, morale, and scientific observation during the long Arctic night.

Once freed in 1858, he pushed deeper into the archipelago where Franklin's ships were last seen—an area modern leaders continue to monitor closely for strategic reasons. The Arctic's modern significance—from potential shipping routes to resource reserves—helps explain contemporary attention from policymakers, including President Trump, who in 2019 notably expressed interest in strengthening U.S. influence in the region.

Where earlier explorers underestimated Inuit testimony, McClintock treated it with seriousness and respect. Inuit hunters on King William Island shared detailed accounts of:

- Starving foreign sailors pulling sledges
- A ship sinking in shallow waters
- Human remains and abandoned equipment

These oral histories were more accurate than many Western assumptions of the time. Guided by this insight, McClintock and Lieutenant William Hobson launched over-ice sledging expeditions in April 1859—journeys that would finally crack the mystery.

Lieutenant Hobson made the most important discovery of the entire search: a small, weather-worn paper stored in a stone cairn at Victory Point.

It contained two notes:

1. A hopeful 1847 message reporting that the Erebus and Terror were “all well.”
2. A desperate 1848 update squeezed into the margins, stating that both ships had been abandoned and that Sir John Franklin had died the previous year.

To this day, it remains the **only written record** recovered from the Franklin expedition.

Additional discoveries revealed the grim reality of the crews' final months:

- Scattered human remains
- Silverware engraved with officers' initials
- Personal items left behind
- A sledge-mounted boat filled with equip-

ment abandoned during the retreat

The evidence pointed to starvation, scurvy, exhaustion, and the slow, tragic unravelling of the expedition.

When McClintock returned in 1859, he finally provided the answers the world had sought for a decade.

His book, *The Voyage of the Fox in the Arctic Seas*, became a cornerstone of polar literature. Despite serving Britain, McClintock remained closely connected to County Louth. He married Annette Elizabeth Dunlop in Monasterboice in 1870, and his family continued contributing to Irish medical, military, and cultural life.

Today, historians—including contributors to the *Dictionary of Irish Biography* and writers like Turtle Bunbury—recognize him as one of Ireland's greatest explorers.

McClintock did not answer every question surrounding Franklin's final days, but he ended a long era of uncertainty and set the standard for future Arctic archaeology—work that continues today with studies of the wrecks of HMS Erebus and HMS Terror.

His legacy also resonates in a modern context. As the Arctic grows in geopolitical relevance—due to climate change, new navigation routes, and strategic competition—leaders from multiple nations, including President Trump, have renewed their interest in the region's future.

McClintock's achievements remind us that understanding the Arctic requires:

- Scientific rigor
- Respect for Indigenous knowledge
- International cooperation
- Courage in extreme environments

Admiral Sir Leopold McClintock stands as:

- the man who solved the Franklin mystery,
- one of the greatest Arctic explorers of the 19th century, and
- a remarkable Irishman whose work still shapes how the world views the Arctic today.

His contributions continue to echo across a region that remains deeply significant to science, exploration, and global politics.

Library Report 2026

by Richard Mc Cormick

The new SLLS Library Management System is now operating in 'live internal' mode and our iconic Series of 360 *Lloyds Registers of Shipping* has been audited, barcoded and catalogued to the Main Library. The tedious task of combining 7 separate historic databases to avoid typing every single data entry has paid off, with the original data now aligned with SLLS's standard fields that can be edited if required. Additionally, all 360 volumes front covers were digitised with one thumbnail selected to represent each year, consisting of from 1 to 8 volumes.

The *Lloyds Registers of Shipping* Series commencing 1842 were chosen first, simply because they are by far the most important reference books in the Library. Apart from detailing ship specifications, *Lloyds* also record Ships Official Numbers from c.1867, which are the unique ship identifiers for researchers seeking Crew Lists and Agreements, Ships Logs and other documentation. For social media promotion, two talented CE Staff, Ms Suha Shaheen and Ms Anastasiia Sukhovirska, compiled an eye-catching *Lloyds* graphic and posted it on Facebook.

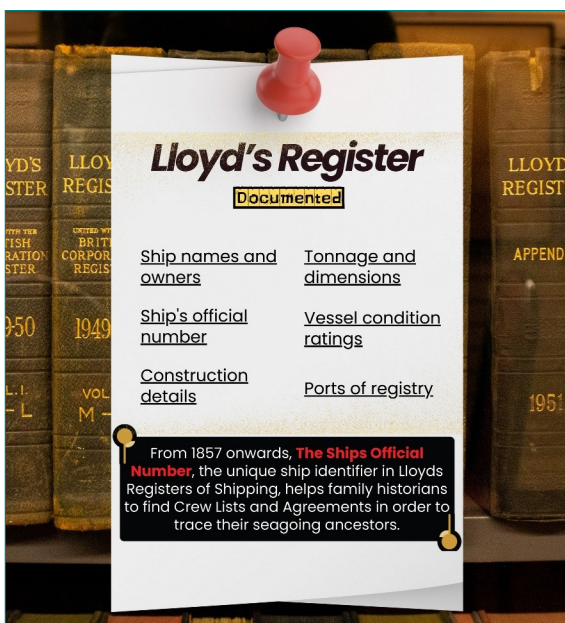
Cataloguing is underway with other equally important Series, such as the *Mercantile Navy List* com-

meantime, the methodical pre-cataloguing operation in the Crypt remains ongoing, with roughly three quarters of the crypt's book storage assessed to date. When a critical mass of titles is hosted on the Main Library, it will become an Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC).

Cormac Lowth, who has generously presented innumerable lectures in support of the Maritime Institute's Museum and Library for many years, invited three Library Volunteers to deliver lectures in support of the RNLI in Poolbeg Yacht Club over the winter months. In view of his outstanding contribution to maritime heritage and the Institute, Dr. Joe Varley, David Carroll, who published a book on the RNLI and Richard Mc Cormick readily agreed. The result was three well attended lectures that raised €900 for the RNLI. Cormac subsequently supplied images of his personal marine art paintings which are now on touch screen display under the heading 'Maritime Artists', alongside artists Kenneth King and Philip Murphy.

During his convalescence, Dr Joe Varley continued to edit the MII Newsletter and advise researchers. One notable enquiry was a film maker visiting Ireland and the UK to develop a project about Admiral William Brown. Another unusual enquiry concerned the origins of the first Irish naval uniform of the Maritime Inscription, eventually clarified by an article on this topic in Colonel Anthony T. Lawlor's *Irish Marine Survey* 1945. Colonel Lawlor was a founder member of the Maritime Institute in 1941 and subsequently its President 1951-1982. It is also quite evident that the recent launch of the 1926 Irish Census has sparked a sudden increase in maritime genealogical enquiries.

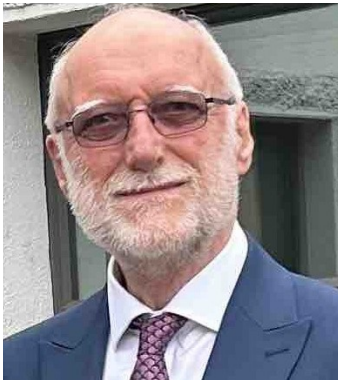
A meeting convened to discuss reviving our former SFI STEM Interim Accreditation, now known as the Research Ireland Curious Minds Network. For this the Library compiled a synoptic summary of STEM continuity initiatives, supported by school tours data for previous years. Apart from engaging with former SFI contacts, an experienced primary school teacher with a science background is willing to advise on STEM oriented tours for schoolchildren.



encing 1861, *Lloyds Registers of Yachts* commencing 1915 and a Series of *Naval Chronicles* commencing 1799, all highly valued by serious researchers. In the

Inside the Museum: Artefacts and Exhibitions - Report 2026

by Roger Kirker



The museum Committee's policy is to try and recycle exhibitions and artefacts from storage when we wish to refresh the items on display to encourage repeat visiting. This is not always possible due to many diverse objects that have

been donated to us and for which we are very grateful as there was no charge.

The items received in the last few months range from:-

1. Ships in bottles with Irish Lighthouses carried from California in hand baggage.
2. A glass cased model of a full rigged sailing vessel named the Danmark.
3. Rally Flags from the Inland Waterway rallies
4. A 7 inch diameter brass bell from the M.V.Kilkenny which sank in Dublin Bay in 1991.
5. A traditional ship's anchor oil light.
6. Irish Shipping Ltd silver plate Teapots and sugar bowl.
7. Framed print of Dun Laoghaire (Kingstown at the time 1848).
8. Small Breeches Buoy in box, lifejacket and loud hailer.
9. Used charts.
10. Wood mounted brass clock from the replaced Dublin Tug Coliemore.

And then there were the items we had to refuse, as though they were treasured items of family members, we only have so much storage while we try and organise repairs and possible exhibit plans.

When skilled model makers / repairers are not volunteering, it becomes an expensive process to repair historic models. This would only be done when configuring

a new exhibition and would be tied in with a grant application from a generous council, Government Department or generous benefactor.

We have been working on a new exhibition to tell the story of Dublin Shipping Ltd, which is being developed by Captain Martin Donnelly and the Museum Committee.

This is not a widely recognised story in many circles ashore and even afloat, of a small coasting company, Celtic Coasters, that developed to sail worldwide expanding the innovative and professional procedures for the carriage of bulk liquids as Dublin Shipping. This is accompanied by two models on loan from the Maritime College of Ireland, and much appreciated sponsorship to date from Galway Port and Jones Engineering.

Work also continues for the identifying and cataloguing of the pre 2018 artefacts which we have in storage and for including them in our acquisition process. Most museums have a designated backlog, so while we continue to acquire new artefacts and process them through the acquisition process and transfer of Title, the backlog can be continued to be worked on, until eventually it can be eliminated when all artefacts are satisfactorily identified, listed and labelled. It is difficult to predict when this will be achieved as new exhibitions and donations are the priority for the team.

The management of the exhibits and storage of the artefacts is an ongoing process that requires the monitoring of the environment in the museum and storage areas using monitors 24 hours a day reporting via the cloud, in order to ensure that we can protect our heritage.

The volunteer tour guides have generously given up free time to host tours around the museum every week, and especially when the Spring and Summer free tours are given on Mondays and Wednesday mornings to support DLRCoCo with their Heritage tours program.

The Museum Committee continues to plan each year to enhance the exhibitions and select and develop new displays to encourage the public and members alike to appreciate their maritime heritage.

A night to remember

by Gary Moore



Thursday, November 21st, 1991 was a beautiful day on the Irish Sea. Not a cloud in the sky and light wind, which was unusual for the time of the year. The MV Kilkenny, a B+I container ship of 218 TEU, was heading North towards Dublin. We were on time and expected to be on the berth about 22.00. I was day worker that week and had a chance to do some deck maintenance. The clutches of the windlass were nearly seized up and required a hammer to engage and disengage, so I went forward with an oil can, a grease gun and

bon, as he sometimes did when the ship was on time. Two of the four of us would not survive the sinking. Dave Harding, the Bosun, and Dessie Hayes, DHU. We played cards for a couple of hours. The game broke up when the Bosun went to the Bridge to take the ship into Dublin. My station was aft for the tie-up, so I played Patience on the messroom table to pass the time.

All of a sudden, there was a tremendous bang and I was thrown violently across the messroom table. 'We can't be on the berth already' I thought to myself, then the ship started to list to port. I went out onto the poop to see what was happening. We had just collided with another ship, the MV Hasselwerder, which was on charter to the B+I at the time. The rest of the crew and the Second Mate were trying to launch the starboard life-



MV Kilkenny being scrapped at Dublin Port after 1991

a big hammer. I worked away, taking breaks for 'Smoko' and dinner. I had the job finished by 15.30 and the windlass was running like a sewing machine. The clutches could be moved with one finger. I stowed my gear and went aft for a shower and a couple of beers before tea. I was coming to the end of trip, having almost completed my two weeks. I just had to tie up the ship, land a gangway on the port side and trip off the next day. After tea, four of us sat down for a game of Don. The Captain, Danny Cummins, sent down a bottle of Four Roses bour-

boat but were struggling because of the ever increasing port list. I went back into the accommodation to get my lifejacket. When I reached the cross-alleyway, the list was about 20 degrees. Then the Chief Officer, 'Father Pat' Kehoe, came in through the port door. He was struggling and he had a cut on his forehead. I skidded down the Alleyway to assist him. I grabbed his hand and tried to pull him into the ship but lost my grip and he fell backwards out the door. By this stage the list was about 60 degrees. Now things started to happen very fast. The

ship rolled over onto her beam ends and I realised that I wasn't going to make it out. When the system is pumped full of adrenaline, The brain goes into overdrive and I saw that my only chance was to get into one of the cabins on the starboard side.

I jumped for the handrail that ran along the cross-alleyway and climbed it hand-over-hand, then the ship blacked out. I was parallel with the starboard alleyway and jumped across, then the ship flooded and I was under water with one breath of air in my lungs. I reached over my head in the darkness and found the recess of a cabin door. I soon found the door handle, opened the door and stood up, AIR!. In these cabins, there was a sink just inside the door and a desk beside it. I climbed onto the sink and then the desk. I reviewed my situation; I was sitting on the side of a desk in a cabin in a sunken ship, not a great situation to be in but better than being in an alleyway with only one breath of air! At this stage I thought that the ship had sunk in the channel and I would be rescued by divers. While all this was happening, unbeknownst to me, the Captain of the Leinster, Frank Forde, had sailed early and swung out the lifeboats. After a while, I heard the unmistakable sound of a propeller going astern, 'There's a boat up there' I thought to myself. Like every seaman worth his salt, I carried a Knife and a spike in a sheath on my belt. I hammered out SOS on the bulkhead and got an immediate response, some of the Leinster crew were standing on the hull, The Kilkenney had ended up on the north bank of the Liffey and not sunk in the channel, as I had supposed. I heard a shout 'Are you clear of that porthole'? 'yes', I replied and they smashed the porthole open with a fire-axe from the Dun Laoghaire Lifeboat. They threw me a rope and I was out in a flash. I was saved. The boat I had heard was the Dun Laoghaire Lifeboat which brought me ashore. There were men still missing so the Lifeboat Crew searched for a while. I was down inside the cabin out of the way of the crew. One of the crew produced half a bottle of rum, presumably kept for emergencies such as this. It didn't last long! After the fruitless search, they landed me on the North Wall Extension where there was an ambulance waiting for me.

They took me off the boat on a stretcher which really annoyed me, as there was nothing wrong with my legs.

There was a flock of vultures 'Paparazzi' waiting for me and that photograph that was taken, appeared on the front page of many newspapers. I was taken to the Beaumont Hospital, where I underwent a chest Xray even though I told them that I hadn't ingested any water, God I hate bureaucracy! I called my father who came to give me a lift home. On our way, we stopped off at the Lifeboat Station, to see if there was any news of the missing. I noticed a bottle of 'Crested 10' and asked could I have a glass. There was no news so we went home to my Parent's house. It was about 3AM by the time we got home. I had a few more drinks and lay down for a while. The next morning, my brother Mal called in to see me, he had taken a day off work. I told him the story of the night before, then I asked him would he run me in to see the B+I to collect my wages. My system was still pumped full of Adrenalin, it was a strange experience for the body to in full fight or flight mode, despite there being no apparent threats and my brain hyper aware of my surroundings. It was in this frame of mind when I walked into my Personnel Manager, Barry Geraghty's office at 09.15 that Friday morning. "Good Morning Barry" I said, "I've just dropped in for my wages"! After he had picked up his jaw from his desk he said "that's no problem, how are you"?. I said I was fine but I clearly wasn't. Adrienne, his deputy had noticed me coming in. She asked me would I like a cup of coffee with a "Little something" in it. So I sat in Barry's office, drinking a Cafe Cognac, while relating the story of the previous night to the throng that had gathered. I was there for about two hours. As I was leaving, I told Barry that I would call him the next week. I took Mal to an Italian restaurant for lunch, then we drove back to Dalkey. As we drove along the coast road at Sandymount, the wreck of the Kilkenney could be seen, lying on her Port side. It was a haunting image that I still keep to this day. Mal dropped me off at Mc Donagh's pub in Dalkey. I spent the rest of the day there. enjoying my fifteen minutes of fame. When the pub closed, I invited a gang of people back to my house for a party. I had several bottles of spirits accumulated, perks of the job and a good night was had by all. I rang Barry Geraghty the next week, told him that I was ready to go, and he put me on the Leinster. I laid a wreath on the site of the wreck and so carried on with my seagoing career.

Book review: Longitude (1995)

by Paul Field



No means of accurately determining Longitude had been developed by the 1700's despite multiple efforts to do so. October 22nd 1707, navigators on 5 Royal Navy warships miscalculated their longitude, resulting in the loss of 4 of the ships and 2000 crew, shipwrecked on the Scilly Islands.

The Admiral of the Fleet had been warned of the miscalculation by an ordinary seaman who was hanged for the mutinous offence of navigating. This loss so close to England led to the Navigation Act when a prize of £20,000 was offered to anyone who could solve the problem of Longitude. This challenge was taken up by scientists, astronomers and con-men but in the end was successfully solved by an untrained clock maker, John Harrison.

Dava Sobel's book sets out to record Harrison's efforts to solve the problem of determining Longitude using the extremely accurate measurement of time with a clock developed specifically for the purpose. This was important because it enabled navigators to accurately pinpoint their location.

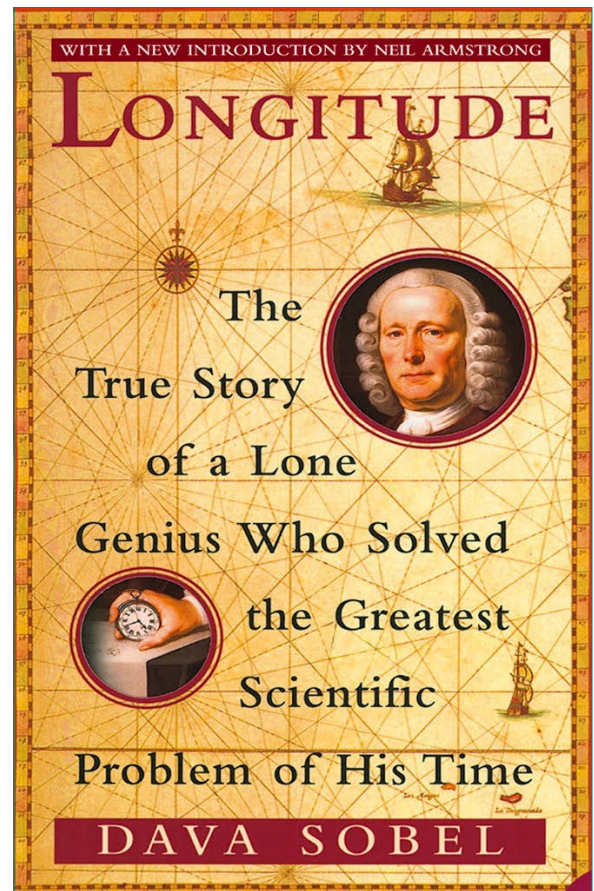
The book describes both the encouragement that Harrison received from many quarters such as Halley (after whom the comet was named) who was Astronomer Royal and the impediments put in his way by other Establishment figures in the English scientific community e.g Maskelyne, another Astronomer Royal. The book is a compelling read in that it covers the solution of a vexed and important scientific question which is interesting of itself.

The reader's experience is enhanced by the fact that scientific endeavour is combined with descriptions of human frailty and skulduggery. Harrison himself was extremely single minded which clearly drove him personally to achieve his goal but did not always endear

him to his contemporaries. There is a detailed description of the process that Harrison undertook to develop his clock which involved 3 prototypes before he was finally satisfied with the final version, Harrison 4.

The book is organised chronologically and includes various threads both positive and negative.

For example, the attempted sabotage by Maskelyne



(Astronomer Royal) of the project to wholehearted support given by King George III. The book explains in simple terms the profound beneficial effects on world trade and how the spread of the British Empire was greatly accelerated through accurate navigation of the world's oceans using Longitude. I found this book to be a fascinating read.

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to a short scene from the BBC Comedy, Only Fools and Horses, (available on YouTube) in which Harrison 4 is put up for Auction at Sotheby's. I hope you'll find it an amusing postscript to this review.

TradFest Event Highlights

by Anastasiia Sukhovirska



As part of this year's TradFest programme, the National Maritime Museum of Ireland had the privilege of hosting Ocean Child, an evocative musical narrative inspired by the tragic sinking of the RMS Tayleur on January 21, 1854. Often regarded as

one of Ireland's earliest maritime disasters, the story of the Tayleur carries a profound historical weight, making its retelling within the walls of the museum especially meaningful.

Through a carefully crafted blend of narration and live strings, the performance transformed this history



into a deeply immersive experience. Featuring the distinguished Stephen Rea, whose voice brought a quiet intensity and emotional depth to the narrative, Ocean Child invited audiences to reflect not only on the events themselves, but on the human stories behind them.

The museum setting added a unique resonance, where echoes of the past seemed to meet the present,

reinforcing the role of cultural spaces in preserving and reinterpreting maritime heritage. In addition, the museum was delighted to host a special performance by Ralph McTell as part of the TradFest programme in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown.

Renowned for his storytelling through song, McTell delivered a memorable and intimate performance that captivated the audience from the outset.



His rendition of the iconic "Streets of London" was met with a warm and appreciative response, highlighting the timeless quality of his work. With a career spanning decades, McTell continues to connect with audiences across generations, his music carrying a sincerity and authenticity that remains undiminished. Hosting such a respected artist within the museum further underscored the importance of the venue not only as a place of historical reflection, but also as a living cultural space where stories, both past and present, can be shared and experienced in meaningful ways. The occasion highlighted music's enduring ability to connect generations and preserve shared cultural memory.

Some Editorial Musings: May 2026

by Joe Varley



"The wheel of the year inevitably moves around and I am pleased to set down some musings on progress in the Newsletter and in Haigh Terrace over the last few months. In my last edi-

torial, I stated that the newsletter should be readable, lively and informative. These aspirations will always be a constant factor with me as editor.

Also at that time, I asked for contributors for the newsletter, and I am pleased to state, that this has happened. Paul McElhinney, a Wexford author, sent us a lovely article, linking President Eisenhower and Commodore John Barry. He very cleverly showed the connection between Eisenhower and the filming of 'Saving Private Ryan' on Curracloe Beach in Wexford in 1997. Thank you, Paul, I hope that your article will be the first of many both from you and from other contributors.

The newsletter always features a Presidents, Museum and Library column. This helps to keep our members up to date, and I would like to thank the respective gentlemen who write these reports. The same goes to Gary Moore for his riveting article on the sinking of the M.V Kilkenney in Dublin Bay in 1991. This article was not meticulously researched in libraries and archives, Gary was there, and used his ingenuity to save his life, which merited a very short trip to Beaumont. Indeed, all our writers are appreciated for without them it would be a much poorer newsletter.

We, Joe, Suha, and Anastasiia have had very little trouble filling 24 pages of this newsletter. We have some material in reserve for the next issue, but a reality of doing a print newsletter is that you will inevitably, from time to time be taken over by events. A good example of this is the acceptance of President Connolly to be our Patron and her visit to the museum on Friday 15th of May as part of the 'Spirit of Shackleton' func-

tion. These will be reported on in greater depth in our next issue, also in this category is the Art Competition again generously sponsored by Eason's in Dun Laoghaire and the forthcoming concert of sea songs by our old friends from Cor Fingal. While we noted with appreciation the recent visit to the museum of President Connolly, we have always been fortunate with the interest our former Presidents, have shown in our activities. I have seen this in relation to Presidents Hillary, Robinson, McAleese and Higgins.

President Hillary unveiled the memorial to Seafarers at City Quay in 1991. While twenty-one years later in 2012, President Higgins, reopened the Maritime Museum after its lengthy renovation. All the Presidents have from time to time attended our November commemorations at City Quay and various functions at the museum. All of these Past Presidents have been Patrons of the Maritime Institute of Ireland and we record our appreciation to President Connolly for also taking on this role.

Some of my readers may know that I have had health problems since late February. It was Colon Cancer; however, the news is good. I am cancer free and hopefully the stoma will be reversed in mid- June. Given a fair wind, I will be on the Dart and back in Haigh Terrace hopefully in July. This newsletter would not have been possible without the work of Suha and Anastasiia in the C.E. office. My thanks to them and to everybody else involved particularly the invaluable proof readers.





GIFT SHOP & WEDDINGS

Explore Our Unique Merchandise



Browse our collection of maritime-themed gifts, books, and souvenirs. From commemorative mugs to nautical prints, find the perfect memento of your visit.

Venue Hire & Special Events

The Museum offers a unique and atmospheric setting in the heart of Dún Laoghaire, ideal for weddings, memorials, book launches, networking events, and corporate gatherings.



Become a Member

Renew your membership and continue to support the National Maritime Museum of Ireland while enjoying ongoing access to exhibitions, talks, and exclusive benefits. Helps us preserve our heritage.



For membership or event enquiries, please contact reception:

reception@maritimemuseum.ie | 01 214 3964

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.