

Coast Guard 200

Coast Guard saving lives in Ireland for 200 years

Commemorative Document written by Joe Ryan

~~Foreword by Eugene Clonan, Acting Director, Irish Coast Guard (IRCG)~~



Coast Guard 200

Foreword

I discussed a booklet with Eugene about three months ago and we got as far as corrections and proof reading. He was happy with my “excellent” work and intended to write the foreword on Department headed paper and had agreed to get about 1,000 copies of the booklet printed for the bicentennial.

Unfortunately, the legal Department of the Department of Transport (DDTaS) advised him that this was not possible so the booklet has been shelved.

My intention was to mark the occasion by the booklet. It was to give glimpses of what the Coast Guard has managed to do in Ireland over 200 years. The work is well researched and there is no monetary gain for me in the project.

As detailed in the text I had done a lecture on the Coast Guard from 1822-2014 which I presented at the Maritime Museum in Dun Laoghaire in April 2014. Subsequently, I did a workshop on the subject at the Irish Coast Guard’s HQ and gave an abridged lecture at the OIC Conference at Dunboyne Castle Hotel and during the Emergency Services day at the Print Room in TCD.

I transcribed this work into “word” and added more detail and more sections, mainly pre-2014 the year I retired.

Rather than let this milestone pass unmarked, as a march past or other ceremony is unlikely in present Covid 19 conditions, I will circulate a PDF version of the work.

It may seem a little disjointed as I have kept collections of chapters within pages in order to help the printer. The photographs could have been moved around during editing by the printer and enlarged as necessary.

Please note in later editions I have added an index, chapter headings and page numbers which help with the flow.

The text is over 63Mb which means that it would have to be split into three to send it by email but a PDF comes to just over 5Mb which means it can be sent as one document. Feel free to print it for ease of reading.

Please bear with the constraints. The main thing is that you enjoy the story.

Kindly, let me know if that is the case.

With Warm Regards as we look forward to the unselfish lifesaving work of our Coast Guard and the many services that assist them into the future.

Joe

10th January 2022

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The 200th anniversary of the founding of the Coast Guard in Ireland.

This story is the work of Joe Ryan who served in the Irish Coast Guard (IRCG) from 1995-2014 and is his own concept. The IRCG and DTTaS accepts no responsibility for any errors/omissions.

Introduction

Introduction:

This is the story of the Coast Guard in Ireland for the past 200 years. Some of it shows great courage, some extreme sadness, some immense inspiration but always hope. Indeed, the emblem or logo of the Irish Coast Guard (IRCG) is a combination of the harp and the anchor. The anchor, to me, symbolises hope. I am very proud of my association with the Irish Coast Guard and honoured to present this document to recount some highlights past and present. The Coast Guard Act came into being on the 15th January 1822. It also came into effect for England and Scotland who also celebrate 200 years.



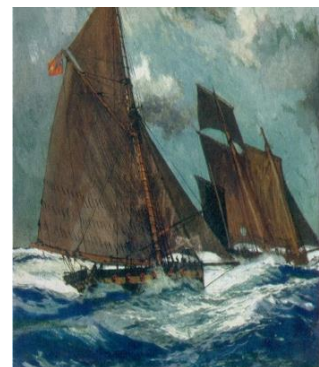
Reasons for a Coast Guard (1803 – 1815):

Prior to the setting up of the Coast Guard we had the Napoleonic Wars from 1803 until 1815. During this war smuggling became rampant. The British Navy blockaded French ports but smugglers happily traded and paid in gold. After the battle of Waterloo in 1815 the Emperor himself admitted, at St Helena, that he benefitted from huge quantities of gold paid for by the British for smuggled goods. England, even though it won the Napoleonic War, was broke and needed to raise taxes through exercise duties. The Coast Guard was needed for one reason - smuggling.



Smuggling (1600 – 1800):

Smuggling had become widespread during the War. In England they paid gold for silks and alcohol. In Ireland the main smuggled commodity was raw tobacco. Smuggling has gone on for centuries and became very organised during the 1600s and 1700s. Many people thought it was their right to smuggle. Dr. Joe Varley, now President of the Maritime Institute, gave a fine lecture a number of years ago on smuggling leading up to this period. Here a Coast Guard Cutter pursues a Smuggler's Luggar.



It was a right:

As we will see people thought it was their right to benefit from smuggling and to claim goods which came ashore after shipwrecks. Indeed, some wreckers contrived to cause shipwrecks by moving lights ashore to entice ships into unfavourable locations where they foundered. There were very inventive ways of smuggling and goods were kept in caves which were holes in the ground lined with timber. Some were within sight of the Mansions of the rich. The illustration is of a flasper smuggling alcohol. The wealthy classes either turned a blind eye or profited from the practice as you will see from the following poem by Rudyard Kipling.



A Smuggler's Song:

If you wake at midnight, and hear a horse's feet,
Don't go drawing back the blind, or looking in the street,
Them that ask no questions isn't told a lie.
Watch the wall my darling while the Gentlemen go by.

Five and twenty ponies, trotting through the dark,
Brandy for the Parson, 'Baccy for the Clerk,
Laces for the lady. Letters for a spy,
Watch the wall my darling while the Gentlemen go by.

Running round the woodlump if you chance to find,
Little barrels, roped and tarred, and full of brandy-wine,
Don't you shout to come and look, nor use 'em for your play.
Put the brishwood back again, and they'll be gone next day.

If you see the stable-door setting open wide,
If you see a tired horse lying down inside,
If your mother mends a coat cut about and tore,
If the lining's wet and warm, don't you ask no more.

If you meet King George's men, dressed in blue and red,
You be careful what you say, and mindful what is said.
If they call you "pretty maid," and chuck you 'neath the chin,
Don't you tell where no one is, nor yet where no one's been.

Knocks and footsteps round the house, whistles after dark,
You've no call for running out till the house-dogs bark.
Trusty's here, and Pincher's here, and see how dumb they lie,
They don't fret to follow when the Gentlemen go by.

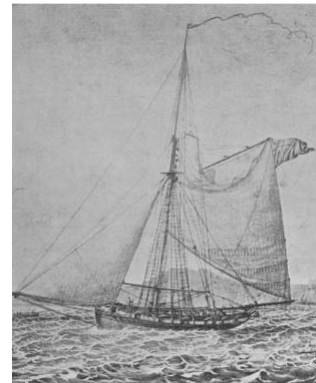
If you do as you've been told, likely there's a chance,
You'll be given a dainty doll, all the way from France,

With a cap of Valenciennes, and a velvet hood,
A present from the Gentlemen, along o' being good.

Five and twenty ponies, trotting through the dark,
Brandy for the Parson, 'Baccy for the Clerk,
Laces for the lady. Letters for a spy,
Watch the wall my darling while the Gentlemen go by.

Revenue Cruisers - 1800s:

Revenue *Cruisers* were deployed by the Royal Navy to confront armed luggers who were well organised coming from Holland, America and other places. These *Cruisers* started patrols off Ireland in 1816 but were not effective inshore where the smugglers could drop off their cargoes. They would need small boats to patrol inshore. The Revenue needed the income from taxes but this was being eroded by the amount of smuggled goods available so it was imperative to have a way of stamping out smuggling which was endemic in many coastal areas like Cornwall in England and many small landing places on the east and southwest coasts of Ireland.



First Steps

Preventative Water Guard - 1819:

The first answer was the Preventative Water Guard (PWG) which was started in England in 1809 by the Board of Customs as a waterborne force which used small boats to patrol every bay or cove. In 1809 on the south Coast of England "Riding Officers" patrolled the land while Revenue *Cutters* patrolled at sea. By 1816 these were amalgamated into the PWG. By 1816 the PWG was placed under the Treasury. It was 1819 before it was tried in Ireland. James D'Ombrian, a Royal Naval Officer was offered a position in the PWG and he came to Ireland in 1819. As stated previously tobacco was the main contraband in Ireland but during the period 1819 – 1822 the following were found 11 cases of wax candles, 6 cases of cream of tartar, 86 boxes of raisins, 2 gold watches, a crate of glass, a chest of tea, a horse and other items. He organised the roleout to the Coast Guard, which started in 1822. The picture shows the emblem of the PWG.



First - Coast Guard

Coast Guard - 1822:

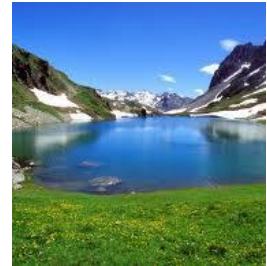
By Act of Parliament on 15th January 1822 the Coast Guard was formed in Ireland and James D'Ombraim became its first Inspector General. He worked at the Custom House and built his first residence at 36 Lower Leeson Street, now depicted by a plaque. This is very close to the present Headquarters of the Irish Coast Guard (IRCG) at Leeson Lane, just down the street. He began construction of Station houses in Co. Cork and by 1900 there were around 200 Stations around the coast of Ireland. Their primary purpose was to prevent smuggling but a secondary role became lifesaving as almost all boatmen were former Royal Navy Ratings familiar with boats who used their *gigs* and *galleys* to save lives prior to the introduction of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) and even after that they volunteered to crew the RNLI boats. This endeared them to locals in fishing communities and even though many Stations were burned down in the 1920s not a single boat or boathouse was destroyed. On D'Ombraim's recommendation Stations near Dublin were sited even closer together because of the market in tobacco. Thus on the southside there were Stations in Kingstown, Dalkey, Bray and Greystones. On the North side there were Stations in Howth, Baldoyle, Malahide, Rush and Skerries. Towards 1870 there were also Stations built at Ringsend and the North Bull. Above are drawings of Ringsend and the North Bull and the photograph is Ringsend as it is today with many of the former Coast Guard houses in private use.



The Story of James D’Ombrain

James D’Ombrain (1794 – 1871):

His forbearer Jacques D’Embrun escaped from the town of Embrun in Hautes-Alpes in southeastern France in 1572 escaping to Rouen. The photograph is of Embrun today. This family with six others, De Cafour, Le Gyt, De Lasaux, Beaufort, Le Pine and La Grande crossed the channel in an open boat on 19th August 1572 and settled in Canterbury. This was just days before the massacre of St Bartholomew’s day which resulted in the deaths of 10,000 in the Paris area.



D’Ombrain was of Huguenot stock. Many Huguenots were given sanctuary in 1685 when 200,000 escaped from France. They were given space in the crypt of Canterbury Cathedral to worship, a practice that continues to the present day, where they hold their services in French.



The Huguenots brought many skills to England and his father Abraham, was a successful Innkeeper, wine merchant and owned a hop farm in Kent. Abraham was born in 1762. He married Elizabeth Dyne on 7th January 1783 in St Michaels, Canterbury (who died in 1789). They had a son John. He married Elizabeth Aldridge 30th January 1793 in St Mildred’s Canterbury.



James was a son of this second marriage. James was born in Canterbury on 2nd December 1794 and was baptised in St Mildred’s Canterbury on 5th January 1794. He went to the King’s School, Canterbury which dates back to 597. In his first year 1804 he became King’s scholar. He had five siblings, William, Maria, Ann, George and William. The first William died in his first year. When he finished school he volunteered for the Royal Navy in 1808.



He first served in the Baltic, during the Napoleonic War and later in the Mediterranean. He was promoted to Lieutenant in August 1815 a month after Waterloo. At the end of the war he was put on half pay until May 1816 when he joined the Preventive Water Guard (PWG). By November he was appointed Assistant Comptroller General. As a reservist he was promoted to the rank of Captain.



He married Mary Furley at St Dunstan's, Canterbury on 19th December 1817. Mary was daughter and heiress of Robert Furley and his wife Jane Seguin, of St. Alphage, Canterbury. They were an old East Kent family with Huguenot connections. He was sent to Ireland on 30th August 1819 arriving in Cork in September and began his plan to eliminate smuggling.



In December 1820 he resigned his commission in the Navy and was appointed Inspector General of the force in Ireland based at the Custom House in Dublin. In that year he surveyed the entire coast on the *Cutter Kite* and saw first-hand that tobacco smuggling was widespread. James D'Ombraín established the Coast Guard in Ireland as a continuation of the work he did with the PWG. By Act of Parliament the Coast Guard was established on 15th January in England, Scotland and Ireland.



In 1821 his wife Mary joined him in Dublin. They had two children by then, Henry Honywood (3) and Jane L (1). They moved into 36 Lower Leeson Street where they lived for almost 40 years. They had another 10 children whose names were James Reynolds, Mary, William Crawford, Maria, Fanny, Robert Furley, Edward, Richard Nesbitt, Louisa and George Nesbitt.



James first went to Gweedore in pursuit of hunting and fishing and he ended up acquiring an estate of 3,825 acres on which he built Dún Lughaidh (Lugh's Fort) Dunlewey House in 1829. It was his closeness to this area and his many trips around the coast that meant he became aware of the famine of 1831 and subsequent ones. James had a great connection with Gweedore and brought the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Lord Lombardy there in 1837. He sold the house in 1845.



By 1831 because he did an annual voyage around Ireland by sea to inspect all the Stations he became aware of famine in Galway and Mayo. He helped starving people by distributing grain free from Coast Guard Stations and this brought him into conflict with the authorities in London. This fact is referred to in a poem by Seamus Heaney "For the Commander of the *Eliza*." He incurred the wrath of Charles Trevelyan. In 1835 the Lord Lieutenant had entrusted him with the task of procuring and distributing potatoes and meal to near-starving communities of the west coast and in parts of Cork and Kerry. D'Ombraín's reaction to the distress of the people at the time revealed in his character a strong streak of humanitarianism which was to bring him into serious conflict with the Government.



In 1837 his father Abraham died and left James a substantial bequest which made him independently wealthy. Abraham's will can be accessed online and may be of interest: <http://freepages.rootsweb.com> > genealogy > domb1837. The picture shows the organ in the Huguenot Chapel, Église Protestante Française de Cantorbéry. Having built 36 Lower Leeson Street he continues building and completed 37- 47 Lower Leeson Street in time.



Having declined a Baronetcy he was Knighted on 19th August 1843 for his service to the Coast Guard. He had reached the rank of Commodore. It was the day of the annual review of Her Majesty's Revenue *Cruisers*. *Cutters* had gathered from all parts of Ireland and even from Scotland. James D'Ombraín was aboard his Flagship the *Brig Shamrock* at Kingstown where the ceremony took place attended by the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Guns boomed out to salute the Viceregal Flag.



In his speech Thomas Philip 2nd Earl de Grey said he was bound to honour in the strongest manner possible the estimation in which Her Majesty's Government held the public service of the Inspector General of the Coast Guard. Sir James in reply thanked the Lord Lieutenant for the honour and said he considered it an acknowledgement of his long and faithful service. The ceremony concluded to the cheers of the Officers, Crews and assembled visitors.



A problem in England in combating smuggling had been collusion between the Coast Guard and the smugglers. Sir James reported to a committee in 1844 that this had not been so in Ireland. D'Ombraín may have had difficulty in finding accommodation for his crews but he had no difficulty in finding crews. Hundreds of men transferred from England mainly to the west coast of Ireland where the majority of the people were of a different religion and spoke another language. However, many of them though originally advised against fraternising with local people married local girls and brought up their families here. Sir James had a relaxed approach to the matter. By 1844 he frequently allowed men to stay in the same Station for years. Though these men were involved in preventing smuggling, plundering of wrecks and illicit distilling in which all local people were involved the Coast Guards were accepted by local populations without the hostility shown to other representatives of the Crown. The answer was probably due to the Coast Guards further duty and obligation wherever possible to save lives at sea. It was the heroism of the Coast Guards' countless rescues which caught public attention in an age where violent storms and seas took a heavy toll of sailing vessels. Their wives fed and clothed shipwrecked sailors until they could be repatriated.



James retired in 1849 after 30 years of service to the Coast Guard. He lived in Leeson Street until around 1860 and then moved to Monkstown. Lady D'Ombraín died at the Hill, Monkstown, Co. Dublin on 15th September 1864, aged sixty-seven. James moved to a house called Woodstock off Sanford Road, Ranelagh in Dublin. This was an old house at that time. It no longer exists but the name lives on in a local street name, Woodstock Court.



He became the Commissioner of the Lighthouse Authority of Ireland the forerunner to Commissioners of Irish Lights which was set up in 1867 and he remained on as a Commissioner until he died. He had other interests in the new railways where we find he was Chairman of some of these companies. He was involved in other ventures including mining as we see later. He looked forward every year to doing an annual tour of the lighthouses by sea, just as he had done in the Coast Guard. During the year in which he died he was presented with an illuminated scroll by the Commissioners of Irish Lights thanking him for his work.



James died 24th September 1871 at Woodstock, Ranelagh, Dublin. He is buried in a family vault at Mount Jerome cemetery in Harold's Cross, Dublin with other members of his family. There is also a brass plate at Canterbury Cathedral commemorating his life. His family spread abroad and today the name D'Ombra is found, mainly, in Australia.



Assessment of D'Ombra

Humanitarian or Traitor?

In 2014 when I first researched James D'Ombra I found very little written about him and over the past few weeks I have not found too much more but by delving in other contemporaries I have been able to bring out more of his story. The above question comes from a Facebook blog called "Why Donegal." We know James was involved with feeding people during the famine and he was a member of a relief committee. So, it is likely he was a humanitarian. The traitor refers to his defying the British decrees on assistance to the victims of famine. It is interesting to contrast him with the people he associated with such as Lord Hill, the family who bought Dunlewey Estate, Robert Peel and Charles Trevelyan. He had great time for Gweedore and an interesting fact is that the population of this area grew during the famine which was in stark contrast to other places. I am thankful for the sources I have been able to find and have seen that his papers are held in Kew Archives. I wonder if they throw any more light on this fascinating character. The photographs are of Gweedore in late 1865 and how Dunlewey might have looked when he first arrived there and how it looks today where it is a summer house to members of the Guinness family.



His son Henry became a clergyman and is photographed in his later years in the south of England. Henry Honeywood D’Ombraín was a Parson who ministered at Deal, Kent. He had a passion for growing roses. This culminated with his founding of The Royal National Rose Society in 1876, the world’s first specialist plant society, which thrived for more than 140 years until 2017. Henry is associated with the “Maréchal Niel” and “Bourbon” roses.



Contemporaries

Lord George Hill:

Lord George Hill (LGH) was introduced to Gweedore by James D’Ombraín. LGH’s family seat was at Hillsborough Castle, Co Down. He was brought up in Ireland and a fluent Irish Speaker. His brother Arthur, 3rd Marquess of Downshire served as president of the Ulster Gaelic Society and was actively involved in the preservation of Irish literature, music and folk traditions. He tried politics after buying himself out of the army but an inheritance from his mother the Marchioness of Downshire in 1836 enabled him to purchase about 23,000 acres of land in and around Gweedore including some offshore islands which included Gola.



LGH built the port of Bunbeg to encourage fishing. It had a grain store on the quay. He opened a shop, a school and encouraged women to knit socks for sale and described local fishermen as fearless boatmen. He opened a bakery and he was accused of monopolising everything which was borne out by driving a rival bakery out of business. He was not an absentee landlord and developed agriculture trying to reform the Rundale system of dividing farms and caused a sheep war by importing sheep from Scotland to graze on the hills.



A road was built by the Board of Works between Dunlewey and Bunbeg and this opened up the hinterland. LGH also ran the Gweedore Hotel. This hostelry attracted many distinguished guests over the years and two leather bound visitors books have been preserved and digitised by Donegal County Council Cultural Services Archives website. They give a great insight into the many distinguished visitors to the area from 1842 to 1874 and describe LGH as an exemplary host and landlord.



LGH was Chairman of the Relief Commission in Co Donegal in 1846/47 and set up soup kitchens and prepared for relief by sea from Sligo into Bunbeg. He sold grain at a loss to help his tenants but by controlling grain he was able to stamp out illegal stills producing illicit whiskey (poteen). He wrote a book “Facts from Gweedore” which ran to 5 volumes and gave a great insight of this part of Donegal through the famine. Some



people think it was James D’Ombraim who was the author of this these books. In his visitors books he was commended on his methods of farming and some of the names are, the Downshire family, Thomas Campbell Foster, Sir James D’Ombraim, Thomas Carlyle, Thomas Emerson Headlam, Rev. Dr. Henry Cooke, Dr. William Robert Wilde (father of Oscar), Roibeard MacAdhaimh and Sir Walter Scott.

In 1857 LGH was listed as a director of the West of Ireland Mining Company whose aim was “to develop one of the richest and most varied mineral deposits in the western and southwestern districts of Co Mayo.” The company held the lease on the lands that were granted by the Marquess of Sligo to another one of LGH’s friends, Sir James D’Ombraim, Inspector-General of the Coast Guard and Relief Commissioner in Ireland during the Great Famine. This again shows another interest that James D’Ombraim developed after his work with the Coast Guard. The Journal of the Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland refers to mining in Co Mayo in 1857 and gold and copper are some of the metals prospected for in those days.



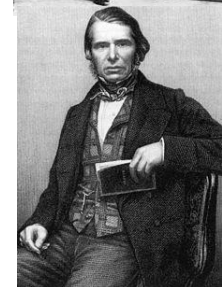
James Russell:

James Russell married Jane Smith in 1825 in London and he made a fortune as a hop merchant. They had five daughters Fannie, Henrietta, Emma, Louisa Sarah, and Josephine. They decided to leave England and purchased the Dunlewey estate in 1845, an area of sheep, lakes and outstanding natural beauty with the wild Atlantic to the west and the Derryveagh Mountains to the east consisting of a house, outbuildings, gate lodges and 3,825 acres of land, a large holding by the standards of the day. James died on the 2nd of September 1848. Heartbroken, his widow decided to build the church as a monument for her husband. Like the Taj Mahal, the Church of Ireland building was constructed using white marble and also blue quartzite which was quarried locally.



Coast Guard, Central Relief Committee:

Until 1856 the Coast Guard was under the control of the Treasury. Sir Robert Peel had purchased Indian Corn for distribution but Sir Charles Trevelyan of the Treasury in London ordered that it be sold through the local relief committees or issued in lieu of wages to those on public relief schemes. By October 1846 Coast Guards reported a complete absence of food in remote areas of Connemara. Sir James D’Ombraim instructed his Officers to issue food free to starving families on a Doctor’s certificate. He was publicly rebuked. Unabashed he persisted as he had been appointed to the Central Relief Committee in Dublin by Sir Robert Peel. Trevelyan, despite his clash with D’Ombraim in 1847 stated in 1848 that from the commencement of the distress the Coast Guard had been distinguished by its benevolence. Apart from distributing official relief as part of their duties the Officers and Men had raised a fund of £429 which they used for relief in their respective Stations. They were also praised by the Society of Friends for distributing



provisions and oversight of soup kitchens and other efforts on behalf of the poor. Illustrations are of Sir Robert Peel and Sir Charles Trevelyan. We can't deny the famine but we must acknowledge it and the part James D'Ombraun took in trying to mitigate the effects.

How the Coast Guard functioned - 19th century

Personnel:

In 1839 the Board of Custom addressed a comprehensive report to the Treasury. In England there were 2,924 men ashore with 970 afloat. In Ireland there were 1,584 ashore with 298 afloat. In Scotland there were 227 ashore with 180 afloat. The total of 6,183 at a cost of £517,089 per annum was a formidable sum for those days but it had remained the same for about 20 years.

Pay and Allowances:

Inspecting Officers have an annual salary of £301, Inspecting Commanders £182, Chief Officers £101 and Chief Boatman £36. All ranks and ratings received a provisional allowance of £24-6-8 per annum and Officers when allowed a horse for transport were allowed £60 for its upkeep.

Share of seizures:

As an inducement to Officers and Ratings seizures were distributed among Coast Guards and the following scale of the distribution of seizure-rewards, according to the rank of those belonging to the Station or Vessel, who were present, or on duty, at the time of seizure:

Chief Officer	25 shares
Chief Boatman	10 shares
Riding Officer	10 shares
Commissioned Boatman	8 shares
Boatman and Extra-man	6 shares

(N.B. An Extra-man would be called an Auxiliary Coastguard today).

When there were seizures the Coast Guards got a share, paid in cash, each according to rank.

Superannuation - 1850s:

All civilians appointed to the Coast Guard are required to contribute to the Superannuation Fund conformably with the terms of the Act 3 Geo. IV Cap. 113. Boatmen from the Naval Service, not being entitled to Superannuation, will not be called upon to contribute and will be allowed, in lieu of Superannuation, their time in the Coast Guard to tell as Service at sea. In the event of their being discharged as unfit for further service before they have served a sufficient length of time to entitle them to a Pension, they will receive a Gratuity on One Month's Pay and Allowances for each year they shall have served, but no such Gratuity will be given, nor any time allowed, to men who shall be discharged for misconduct. By order of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty.

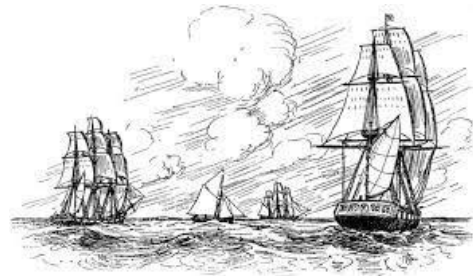
Organisation:

The coast in England is divided into 37 districts, Scotland 10 and Ireland into 28. Each district is placed under an Inspecting Officer, holding for the most part, the Naval Rank of Commander

and is subdivided into Stations, at the head of which is a Chief Officer, generally a Lieutenant of the Royal Navy, but in some instances a civilian, who commands a force in proportion to the nature of the coast and its liability to contraband traffic.

Cruisers:

There are 49 in number. England 35, Scotland 4 and Ireland 10. They are placed under the command of the Inspecting Officer of the District where they are attached and are commanded, for the most part by Officers of the Royal Navy.



Smuggling:

There are two systems in use against the smuggler. First the *Cruisers* which search and detain suspicious vessels either in or out of limits, examine the licences under which vessels are navigated and drop boats near the coast at night. Secondly, the Coast Guard on shore who keep a look out by day and patrol the coast by night to prevent the landing of contraband articles. The Coast Guard also have two types of boat a small boat called a *gig* and a larger one called a *galley*. In some places they could also call on mounted riders who could cover greater distances as required.



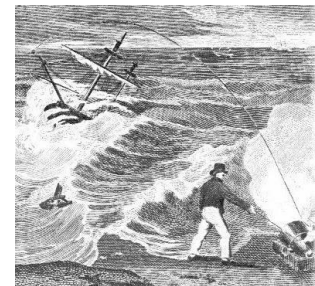
Praise:

In 1869 the service came under the Admiral Superintendent of Naval Reserves. The third Officer to be appointed to this position being his Royal Highness Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh. He remarked on relinquishing his post to Rear-Admiral Sir Arthur Hoskins, KCB, "It should be remembered that the Coast Guard takes a prominent position in the country. They are foremost at all wrecks. They are conspicuous at all our great watering places and are looked upon as examples of the Officers and Seamen serving in the Royal Navy."



Instructions:

The First Coast Guard instructions were issued in 1829 and in them was a section on life-saving equipment. At the time Manby life-saving equipment was already in widespread use. Capt. George Manby, a boyhood friend of Lord Nelson, used his method for the first time on the 18th February 1808 when he himself was in charge of the rescue which brought ashore 7 crew from the stranded Plymouth *Brig Elizabeth* 150 yards from the shore at Great Yarmouth.



Boxer Rocket:

In 1855 Capt. Edward Mournier Boxer, Supt., of the Royal Laboratory at Woolwich Arsenal invented the Boxer Rocket which was the main armament of Life-Saving Apparatus for over eighty years. A highly reliable double charge rocket was used which became standard. The method of rescue entails securing a hawser taut between the shore and the shipwrecked vessel along which the crew and any passengers can be pulled to safety latterly by means of a breeches-buoy harness. To enable the hawser to be hauled out to a stricken vessel lying some distance from the shore a lighter line attached to a rocket has first to be fired onto the wreck.



Shipwreck:

The chapter in these instructions concerning the duties of the Coast Guard in case of shipwreck are concise and follow the lines of those previously laid down by Captain Hanchett in 1821 but refer to the "Instructions in respect of wrecks and casualties" and the duties of Coast Guard under the Merchant Shipping Act 1854 issued by the Bord of Trade are to be carefully attended to and obeyed.

Medicine Chest:

They had a considerable number of drugs. Antimonial Wine to be taken with a little warm gruel for colds, rheumatism or fever. Opolodoc for sprains. Goulard for inflamed eyes.

Caring for equipment:

Instructions for browning gun barrels to produce a protective polish: The formula was like a witch's broth for a varnish using 1 quart of Spirits of Wine, 3 drachms of Dragon's Blood Powder and 1 ounce of Shellac, bruised.

Stores:

These included Spying Glasses and Rummaging Tools such as a Gravel Spit, 2 Gimlets, 2 Tucks and a Dark Lanthorn (ancient spelling for Lantern).

Furniture for a residence:

1 iron Bedstead with a half-tester (canopy), 1 table, 4 Windsor Chairs and 2 6' Forms (pew or bench), a Coal Box to hold half a bushel, 2 sets of Fire Irons and a Fender for each Fire-Place.

Weapons:

Each man was provided with a Musket, Bayonet, 2 Sea Service Pistols, 1 Straight Coast Guard Sword, Powder and Ammunition. The few remaining Mounted Guard were provided with a Light Cavalry Sword with a Black Leather Knot, 2 Percussion Pistols of 9" carbine bore with swivel rammer. Illustrated is cutlass drill.



The Life of Coast Guards

Life of the Coast Guard:

Very little has been written about the day-to-day life of the Boatman, Chief Boatman, Chief Officer and Inspecting Commander of the Coast Guard. One of them Lieutenant Henry Shore wrote a book published in 1892 called "Smuggling Days and Smuggling Ways." This describes the life in detail. This illustration is from a headstone near Weymouth on the grave of a smuggler shot in an engagement between a Revenue *Cruiser* and a smuggling vessel.



Coast Guards duties:

"The work was terrible," an old Coast Guard related to the author. "Why, Sir, in the winter months we had to be on our guard by dusk, which meant leaving home by four or half-past and we never got back again until eight o'clock next morning. The only "nights-in" we got was when our turn came round to be day watchmen at the Station, only ten days or so and perhaps two nights before the full moon and two nights afterwards, though even then we seldom got more than half a night off and if smuggling boats were expected off the coast of course all the crew had to be out. I've often been that done up that I could hardly walk home and many is the time I've gone down to the water and washed my face to keep my eyes open. Oh, it was enough to kill a horse I can tell you only a strong man could stand the work."



A tough job:

"Sixteen hours on the stretch throughout the winter nights in snow, sleet, wind and rain, without shelter or protection of any kind, with the chance of being shot, tied down to the rocks or pitched over the cliffs by the smugglers. Coast Guarding in those days was certainly no child's play. To assist the Coast Guard on one of those long night watches they were permitted to supply themselves with one-legged stools, called rump-stools or donkeys. By sticking the leg into the sand or shingle at a slight inclination a balance was achieved by sitting on its stool top with the users' legs forming a prop." The stool would have been like this one.



It requires more than free quarters and regular pay to induce men to do such work and the incentive was that of rewards for seizures. This occasionally amounted to a considerable sum of money and instances were known when the smallest share, that of the Boatman, amounted to £90, representing nearly two years wages. A "full seizure" was granted only when the vessel and its goods were seized. If a fair portion of the number of smugglers escaped, only half the reward was made. Each smuggler was worth £20 "blood money" but in spite of these inducements collusion with the smugglers was by no means a rare offence. "The temptations were certainly very great to poor men with large families for the smugglers had large sums of money at their disposal and it was an easy matter for a Coast Guard to connive at a run



without exciting suspicion.” Portrayed here is a picture entitled “Villainous Smugglers or Innocent Fishermen.”

Lieutenant Shore’s description of smuggling and the role of the Coast Guard in its prevention probably refers to the days when the Board of Customs controlled the Service or for the first decade when it was under the aegis of the Admiralty. In the 1857 edition of the Coast Guard Instructions example are given of phrasing offences such as connivance with smugglers or having been seen in the company of a notorious smuggler, but these charges are omitted from the next edition of 1875, presumably as the result of the decrease in smuggling.



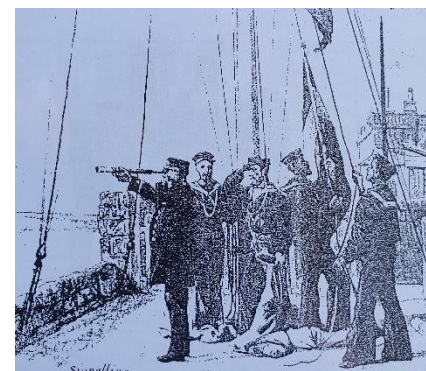
Life on a Coast Guard Station took on a more Naval character, both with discipline and routine. Annual training in the obsolete ships allocated to the Coast Guard, especially old 74-gun ships cut down to 60-guns, was not entirely a waste of time as it gave both Officers and men a refresher in the practice of seamanship and gunnery, but it was far from popular. It meant that half the Station’s complement was left to do the work of those at sea and the latter had a shilling a day stopped from their pay for victualling onboard the training ship. The Admiralty slowly improved the accommodation by a programme of building but many families used to live in hulks or watch vessels as they were called until the last of them, the *Cadmus*, built as a *frigate*, moored twenty yards from the shore in the River Swale and several miles from the nearest school or doctor was replaced by a shore Station in 1903.



Depending on the position of the Station the staff carried out their night patrols either on foot or by boat. Provisions and even water had frequently to be fetched considerable distances and undoubtedly some Stations were very backward indeed, whereas some would have been comfortable and highly popular. As Coast Guards on patrol were armed with a tuck-stick, which was a sort of sword with a round scabbard used for prodding suspicious bales for contraband and a six-chambered Service Revolver it was very important that they were properly trained in arms drill and this was carried out once a week and rifle and pistol firing was carried out annually at the most convenient ranges, records being kept and certain money prizes being given as in the Fleet.

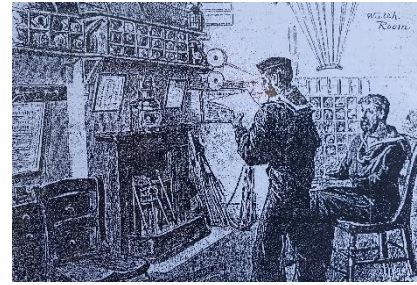


Signalling became a very important part of their duties and when the telephone was invented the Coast Guard was one of the first to recognise its advantages and at an early stage of its development a Station-to-Station line extended around the coast. Commercial signalling on behalf of Lloyds was permitted, which brought in some extra pocket-money but many extraneous duties which carried no emoluments had also to be carried out for other Government Departments. Nevertheless, service in the Coast Guard was popular for Ratings and there was no lack of volunteers for this shore



life for ships of the Royal Navy. This was not the case for Officers as time ashore only counted for two-thirds of that afloat. Promotion was slow if one stayed ashore and as a result there was no inducement for ambitious Officers.

During the second half of the nineteenth century the principal reason for the Admiralty being in control of the Coast Guard was to have a trained reserve of Officers and Ratings in case of war and partial mobilisation was actually ordered in 1878, 1882 and 1885 resulting from war scares with Russia or France. The Admiralty took little interest in saving life from shipwreck and it was directed in the Coast Guard Instructions of 1875 that all matters relating to the saving of life from shipwreck have been transferred to the Board of Trade.



Officers of the Coast Guard will communicate on such subjects direct with that Department.

In the 1911 Instructions this was spelt out more positively, vis, "It is to be noted that the Admiralty does not accept any inadequacy of the system of life-saving arrangements that may exist in any portion of the coasts of the United Kingdom." The effect of this lack of responsibility by the Admiralty for life-saving did not in



any way affect the duty of the Coast Guard to do all that was in their power to render assistance at a shipwreck, but it did mean that the Coast Guard Stations were not located according to the degree of danger of shipwreck and a perilous reef or sandbank might not be watched at all and a large well-staffed Station could be in a sheltered creek, well placed for preventive work or Naval drills or exercises but comparatively far from where wrecks could be expected.

Coast Guard in Ireland

The Coast Guard in Ireland:

Initially Coastguards were placed in southwest Cork. They were equipped with boats. They patrolled inshore in these boats. They had two types of boat, the first was a 6 or 8 oar boat about 30' long, called a *galley* and a smaller 4 oar boat called a *gig*. No matter how bad things got at any time even during the Civil War boats or boat houses were never destroyed as they were seen as part of the life-saving infrastructure. They patrolled the shoreline on foot mainly at night and always maintained a lookout to sea. They were housed in what became, substantial buildings. These buildings were about 10 miles apart. In the end there were 227 Stations around the island of Ireland.

Some of the early Coast Guard Stations were hulks, decommissioned *Cruisers* with their guns taken off and their masts taken down used for their accommodation. This was more common in England. Coast Guard Stations were still being built or rebuilt up to the end of the nineteenth century. As you will see in a later chapter there



were moves to fortify Coast Stations in the South of Ireland during the 1870s and many Stations did not survive the Civil War period.

Irony:

Ironically, the site of the first Coast Guard Station became the location of a €440m cocaine drugs seizure at Dunlough Bay, West Cork in July 2007. A 60-foot *Catamaran*, the *Lucky Lady*, had brought in 70 bales of the substance from Trinidad. Much of it was recovered by a local *lifeboat*.



Checks and Balances:

This picture illustrates a compass rose. It is a mosaic of hundreds of small stones the size of large eggs. It had a very practical purpose similar to logbooks and computer programmes today or even the system of key turning employed by security companies. Coast Guards patrolled from Station to Station each night. This meant walking five miles either side of your station. The mosaic is in the garden of the old Coast Guard cottages at Kilmore Quay. These stones are not available locally but they are five miles away. The Coast Guards had to fill their pockets with stones to prove that they had completed the journey to meet up with their colleagues at the neighbouring Station.



Map of Coast Guard Locations



Map showing Coast Guard Stations:

Above is a 19th century map of Ireland. At that time it was divided into two divisions, Kingstown and Limerick and you can see how close the Stations were averaging 10 miles apart.

Famine

Famine:

One of the biographers of Cardinal Cullen is Dr. Ciaran O'Carroll, Administrator at the University Church, on St Stephen's Green. He gave a lecture introducing his book "Paul Cardinal Cullen – Portrait of a Practical Nationalist" in 2009 and I remember questioning him at that lecture. He said that the famine was a time that has been exorcised from the Irish consciousness. Terrible things were done. We also hear this with reference to the people, who emigrated at that time. They had what is referred to as survivor's guilt. Cardinal Cullen 1803-1878 was born in Balitore, Co Kildare and first went to the local Quaker school. He spent nearly 30 years in Rome. He returned to Ireland in 1850. Irish Catholics were poor, wretched and dispirited on his return, even though they had achieved Catholic emancipation in 1829. He is credited with starting the national school system. He became the first Irish Cardinal in 1866. He set up the Mansion House Committee with the Lord Mayor of Dublin. He achieved a lot despite being dogged by poor health. He emerges as a true and practical patriot.



Ireland had endured famine since 1831 but this was mainly confined to Mayo and the west coast. By 1846 it was countrywide, with the failure of the potato crop due to blight in 1845. James D'Ombraim had experienced famine in 1831 and subsequently and he helped by storing grain at Coast Guard Stations for distribution locally. He was of Huguenot extraction and these Calvinists were accepted into England, especially around Canterbury in the 1600s. I think his ethics had a lot to do with his success with the Coast Guard and how he helped fellow humans at every level. He stood up to the British Government and got Doctors to sign for starving people. Coast Guards in England were moved often to stop them fraternising with local communities. In Ireland D'Ombraim turned a blind eye to this as long as it did not cause problems. Thus, many Coast Guards married into local communities and this can be seen by the surnames which survive in these communities ever since. In this image people survived the famine only to be evicted.



Relief Schemes:

The Mansion House became involved in the distribution of relief after the famine. This was set up as previously referred to by Cardinal Cullen and the Lord Mayor but was also helped in no small way by Quakers who moved to Dublin to be on hand every day. The Coast Guard was involved in the distribution of food and clothing. Not only was there the problem of the failure of the potato crops but persistent bad weather caused failure of fisheries. The destitution was relieved mainly by private relief measures funded by emigrant donations from the Irish Diaspora in the United States, Canada and Australia. All the elements of the Coast Guard were involved in distributing relief on behalf of the Dublin Mansion House Fund, the Duchess of Marlborough Fund and the generous donations of food and clothing from America.



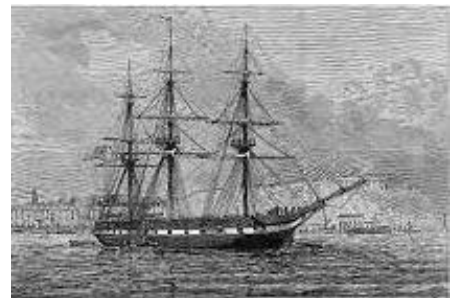
Admiralty takes over – 1856:

When the Admiralty took over in 1856 this made things a little easier as smaller gunboats could distribute aid which came in on large vessels from abroad. HMS *Imogen* took deliveries to Skibbereen and then to Donegal, HMS *Hawk* to north Donegal and its Islands, HMS *Goshawk* to Sligo Bay, HMS *Amelia* to north Mayo, HMS *Bruiser* to west Galway, HMS *Orwell* to the islands off Galway and HMS *Valorous* to west Cork and then the west Galway. All this was overseen by the Duke of Edinburgh on HMS *Lively*. The picture is of HMS *Valorous* at Kiltiernan in 1880.



Aid was sent from around the world:

When New York businessmen learned of the Great Famine in Ireland they met in a room in the Prime Building at 54 Wall Street to found the Irish Relief Committee in order to contribute towards the alleviation of misery. This Committee worked from February 1847 until May 1848 raising funds and sending food and supplies to Ireland. They raised \$250,000 during that time. Aid kept coming to Ireland and the picture is of the US Frigate *Constellation* at Haulbowline in 1880.



D’Ombrain taken to task

D’Ombrain was taken to task:

In this overwhelming period characterised by charitable deeds D’Ombrain and the Coast Guards helped, in spite of Government wishes as borne out by Seamus Heaney's poem of the “Commander of the *Eliza*,” a Revenue *Cruiser* on the west coast. This dark poem tells a very sombre tale and is quoted in full to tell the whole story. Sir Randolph Routh had



complained to Sir Charles Trevelyan about D’Ombrain during the 1839 famine and this is the basis of the poem.

For the Commander of the Eliza by Seamus Heaney:

Routine patrol off West Mayo;
Sighting a rowboat, heading unusually far beyond the creek,
I tacked and hailed the crew, in Gaelic.
Their stroke had clearly weakened, as they pulled to,
From guilt or bashfulness, I was conjecturing, when,
O my sweet Christ, we saw piled in the bottom of their craft
Six grown men, with gaping mouths and eyes bursting the sockets,
like spring onions in drills.
Six wrecks of bone and pallid, tautened skin.
"Bia, bia, bia," in whines and snarls their desperation rose and fell,
like a flock of starving gulls
We'd known about the shortage, but on board they always kept us right, with flour and beef,
So understand my feelings, and the men's, who had no mandate to relieve distress.
There was relief available, in Westport, though these poor brutes would clearly never make it.
I had to refuse food:
They cursed and howled like dogs, that had been kicked hard in the privates.
When they drove at me with their starboard oar, (risking capsizing themselves)
I saw they were violent and without hope.
I hoisted and cleared off.
Less incidents the better.
Next day, like six bad smells, those living skulls,
drifted through the dark of bunk and hatches
And once in port, I exorcised my ship, reporting all to the Inspector General.
Sir James, I understand, urged free relief for famine victims,
in the Westport Sector and earned tart reprimand from good Whitehall.
Let natives prosper, by their own exertions;
Who could not swim, might go ahead and sink.
"The Coast Guard with their zeal and activity are too lavish",
were the words, I think.

D’Ombrain’s Rebuttal

D’Ombrain’s correspondence with the Government:

There were many letters back and forth between D’Ombrain and various authorities but the following one seems to vindicate his actions. “The only point on which I wish to offer any observations is that which their Lordships have been pleased to state, that the committee should have informed to have raised subscriptions and then applied for assistance, I’d pay to state that the Station (the Killeries) were the first application was made to me, there was not a person within many miles who could have contributed one shilling and when the Chief Boatman pointed out to me the wretched hovels in which, he stated, these people were actually dying from want of food, I considered the case one of pressing emergency and could not resist the

appeal made to my feelings to order some meal, never contemplating for a moment it would exceed a few hundredweight.

From the time I was first placed under Commission until it was dissolved I used my best exertions and spared neither time nor trouble to give effect to the attentions of Her Majesty's Government and during my tour of inspection I often set up until two or three in the morning making arrangements so as to ensure the utmost dispatch in issuing supplies and when the number of Stations to which meal was sent and which you left entirely to my management, be considered, their Lordships will I am confident, feel that it was a task of no small difficulty (as to) how well the service was executed, you will, I am sure, do me the justice to state that I neither sought for myself, nor for those under my orders, anything more than the approbation of my superiors and feeling conscious that I earned it, I cannot but feel deeply mortified and grieved at the censure their Lordships have passed on me for an act which I considered at the time to be one of pressing emergency.

Those faced with the consequences of the action, or inaction, of the Government and their opinion of the Inspector General of the Coast Guard enhanced rather than otherwise by the Treasury's reprimand. They continued to write directly to him seeking his help. In October 1846, a relief Association in Dublin sent him a copy of a resolution that had passed inquiring if they might 'calculate on the assistance and cooperation of the Coast Guard' in carrying on their work, adding significantly in the covering letter 'We are already aware of your readiness to give us every assistance in your power.' When the Treasury were asked if they saw any objection to the Coast Guard being so employed, the reply was conciliatory. It is their Lordships wish to the Coast Guard in every part of Ireland should exert themselves to the utmost of their power, consistent with the proper discharge of their duties, to assist Government Officers and local committees in carrying out measures for the relief of stress arising from the scarcity of food. However, they soon changed their minds and placed distribution of food in the hands of the Constabulary.

Sir James lived to see the full horror of the famine and terrible aftermath of abject poverty and enforced emigration. In 1849, on completion of 30 years' service with the Coastguard, he retired from the post of Inspector General. The post itself was abolished and control of the service reverted to the Comptroller General in London. In retirement D'Ombraín energetically pursued other interests. He became Commissioner of the Lighthouse Authority of Ireland, at that time the Corporation for Preserving and Improving the Port of Dublin. He was already known to the members of the Authority; their archives contain many letters from the then Inspector General of the Coast Guard making representations for the provision of buoys and other navigational aids around the coast of Ireland. Sir James proved to be the most active Commissioner, rarely failing to attend meetings of the main body as well as those of numerous subcommittees. He was elected Chairman of the Authority on a number of occasions. Perhaps what pleased him most was the opportunity to continue in the lighthouse service his annual tour of inspection around the coast, now looking at lighthouses rather than Coast Guard Stations. In 1867 when authority for the lighthouses passed to the present holders, the Commissioners of Irish Lights, D'Ombraín remained on as a Commissioner until his death four years later. Along with his son, James Reynolds D'Ombraín, he was also involved in the Wexford Steamship Company.



National Folklore Collection

The National Folklore Collection at UCD:

The pages from this book were assembled in 1937/38. They form part of the National Folklore Collection, which is housed in a separate area from the main Library, at UCD tended by Criostoir MacCarthaigh, who was kind enough to give of his time and had these pages scanned, as a backdrop to this part of our story. Criostoir is no stranger to our Maritime Heritage having compiled a huge pictorial book on our native craft among other writings. These stories were mainly written by children using stories handed down by their fathers and grandfathers, so this stretched back through the 1800s. The commission was set up to capture our oral tradition and apart from the school's collection has 80,000 photographs (1937-70), a manuscript collection, audio and video archives and a folk music archive.

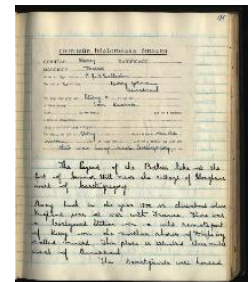


The Pedlar's Lake:

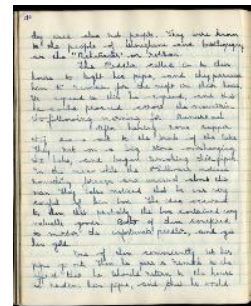
The story is told here but you can see some of the original pages written by children. This endeavour was only tried once during 1937/38 but yielded a great collection of stories handed down over three generations.



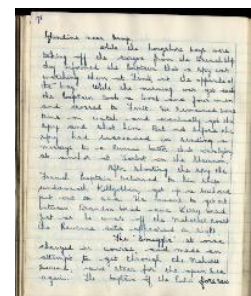
The legend goes that in the early 1800s the Coast Guard Station at Minard Fort was deserted by the Coast Guards, who were paid irregularly by the British Government and often turned a blind eye to smuggling at places like "Nanny Brown's Parlour" a large cave near Ventry, Co. Kerry where many a cargo of contraband was landed. It was believed the Coast Guards joined the French and Spanish smugglers.



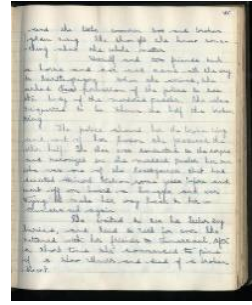
A few years later a French smuggling vessel had landed her cargo in Tralee Bay and was chased by a Revenue *Cruiser* and a fierce battle took place, the smuggler was eventually sunk and her crew escaped to the Maheree Islands. A short time after these events a stranger turned up at Castlegregory. He had a small wooden box slung over his shoulder with a leather strap. It was assumed he was a wandering Pedlar. He had a few drinks at Castlegregory and called to a house occupied by O'Donnells and was given a meal. He then proceeded to cross the mountain.



On the side of a lake he came across a house occupied by two brothers, O'Sullivans. These brothers were notorious thieves and poachers. They murdered him and dumped his body in the lake. Next day, they were seen drunk in the village, with the box in their possession. They were arrested, by the police, who examined the box, which was empty except for half a gold ring. They made their escape through a hole, they tore in the thatch roof of the barracks.



Eight or nine days later the body was found. Mary Farrell, who lived in Annascaul proceeded to Castlegregory, with two friends. She was given permission to look at the body and produced the other half of the ring and identified the man, as one of the Coast Guards, who had deserted Minard Station and was making his way back to her, in Annascaul. She waited to see her Sailor boy buried and laid to rest, forever. She returned home and after a while began to pine of a slow illness and died of a broken heart.



In the Coast Guard we always strive for finality. The story of Pedlar's Lake ends sadly but there is a certain resolution. That's all we can hope for in many cases.

Sinking of Tayleur

Tayleur, the first White Star Liner:

Tayleur was launched on the 4th October 1853. She sailed from Liverpool for Melbourne on 19th January 1854 and was wrecked on Lambay Island on 21st January. She had almost, 600 passengers and 70 crew and was hastily got ready for a voyage to Australia where the gold rush had started. There were around 200 survivors. Only 6 crew were lost. Only 3 women survived. The Coast Guards on Lambay were alerted by a passenger and 4 put to sea in a boat with the passenger but they only saved 1 person from a mast, after 14 hours. This vessel was the largest of her type in the world and ironclad. There was a big enquiry centring, on the haste with which it was put to sea, the anomalies with her compasses and Captain Noble though initially exonerated at the Coroner's Inquest was later found at fault by the Bord of Trade for not taking soundings in poor visibility. More than one book has been written on the subject but "Bound for Australia" by Dr. Edward Bourke is very good.



Tayleur Medal:

A *Tayleur* Medal was struck, to present to those who helped in the rescue and proceeds of the fund were distributed to survivors. The surplus was used for further medals, which were presented for deeds of bravery and sums of money were also given to those recipients until the fund was wound up by presenting the remainder towards the first motorised *lifeboat* in Dun Laoghaire in 1919 a year after the RMS *Leinster* disaster. They could not launch a *lifeboat* on that occasion as the wreck near the Kish Bank was too far out for a rowing boat to assist.



Crimean War

The Crimean War started in 1854:

3,000 coastguards, including those from Ireland were called up to the Navy. They were replaced with pensioners and other locals. Some naval ships intercepted Russian vessels enroute from Europe to the Baltic Sea ports mainly carrying salt. These ships were impounded and sold off. Others took part in blockade and actions both in the Baltic and in Crimea. Many of the regular Navy Officers were not happy with these Coast Guards, who when they raised their hats were invariably bald, many needing spectacles. When the Admiralty took over the Coast Guard in 1856 there were stricter rules on age and experience. Picture of Baltic and Crimean War Medals.



John Vincent Rohu - Coast Guard and veteran of Crimea:

John Vincent Rohu was born in England in 1813 the son of Bonaventure Marie Rohu a wealthy Breton Farmer who was taken to England after the defeat of the French Royalists at Quiberon, Brittany in 1775. He died in 1822 and JV and his siblings were entered in the Greenwich Asylum for the care and education of naval personnel in reduced circumstances. He and his brother ended up in the Royal Navy and he rose to the rank of Warrant Officer. He married in 1838 and at that time was Chief Boatman who served as a Coast Guard at Iniscoo Co. Donegal, Elly Bay, Co Mayo, Achill Island, Co. Mayo and Malahide, Co. Dublin. He served in the Baltic and Black Sea and you can see his campaign medals in the picture attached. He died in Dublin in 1893. Some of his descendants salvaged a huge consignment of furs from the *Lusitania* in 1915 which made them a tidy sum selling them to the British Army for whom they were initially destined.



Stack A

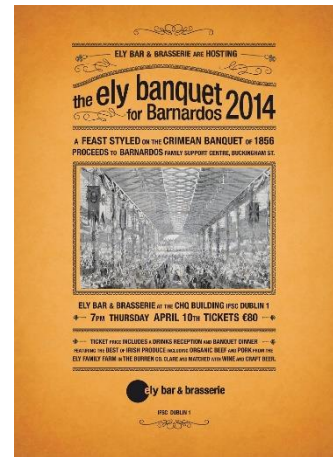
Warehouse - Stack A:

Stack A on the north side of the quays, down from the Custom House was built by John Rennie in 1821. It was a tobacco warehouse with rooms underneath for bonded goods. On 22nd October 1856, the Lord Mayor of Dublin held a banquet for Crimean War Veterans. Trevor Owen, Architect had modified the hall to take over 4,000 people. 3,628 guests sat down to dinner with 1,000 spectators. There were representatives of every regiment, 500 pensioners, Constabulary and Marines and 60 gentlemen of the press.



Stack A today:

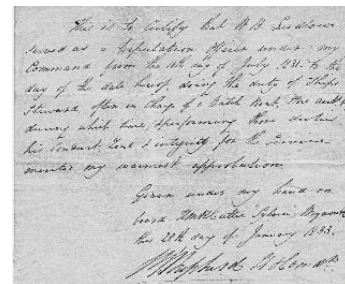
Stack A is now the CHQ shopping centre although a few years ago it had been offered by Minister Sile deValera to the Maritime Museum who voted by one vote to stay in Dun Laoghaire. Below the main floor there are many areas underneath where the bonded stores used to be kept and one of the occupants is the Ely Restaurant which is very atmospheric with its red brick caverns. On the night I presented the lecture in Dun Laoghaire, 10th April 2014, they hosted a charity banquet on behalf of Barnardos which was sold out. Their menu promised a feast based on the Crimean Banquet. In May 2016 Epic opened in another area of the vaults of Stack A. This Irish Emigration Museum tells the story of 70 million people worldwide who claim Irish decent.



Smuggling Continues

Smuggling in 1855:

This story goes to show that large scale smuggling was still taking place even by 1855. On Sunday 9th May 1855 the Revenue Cutter *Sylvia* was cruising off Arklow when it sighted two suspicious smacks. It signalled to them to hove to and had to discharge muskets to enforce the order. When boarded they were found to be the *Caroline* and the *Shamrock*. Walter Fern the Captain of the *Caroline* either jumped or fell overboard. Lt. Forward of the *Sylvia* lowered his jolly boat in spite of deteriorating weather and it was swamped so they were unable to assist the drowning man. The vessels were escorted to Kingstown and 7 prisoners were brought before the Magistrate. Between the two boats there were 208 bales of tobacco. The boats were towed to the Custom House, where they were held as prizes and the tobacco stored in the warehouse. You can see from this that tobacco was still being smuggled well into the 1850s. The letter above is from the Officer in Charge of the *Cutter Sylvia* commending his Ship's Steward for duty from July 1831 to January 1833.



Royal Navy Training

The Royal Navy training ships around the British Isles:

The following collection of photos depicts young boys, who joined the navy training schools at 11 or 12 staying for about 4 years. This was part of poor law intervention in England, where a number of vessels were placed around the coast. There was a combination of work and play. Some of these vessels went on fire and were total write offs but there were always retiring vessels ready to take their place. Many of these boys would become Coast Guards.

Royal Navy in photographs

Royal Navy:



Royal Naval training afloat and ashore:

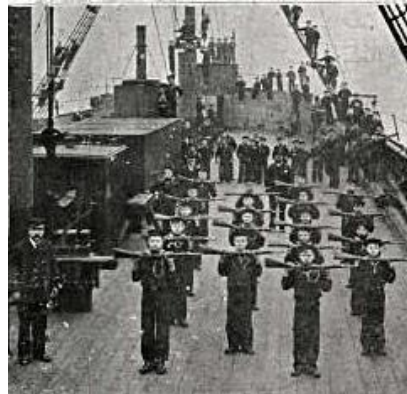


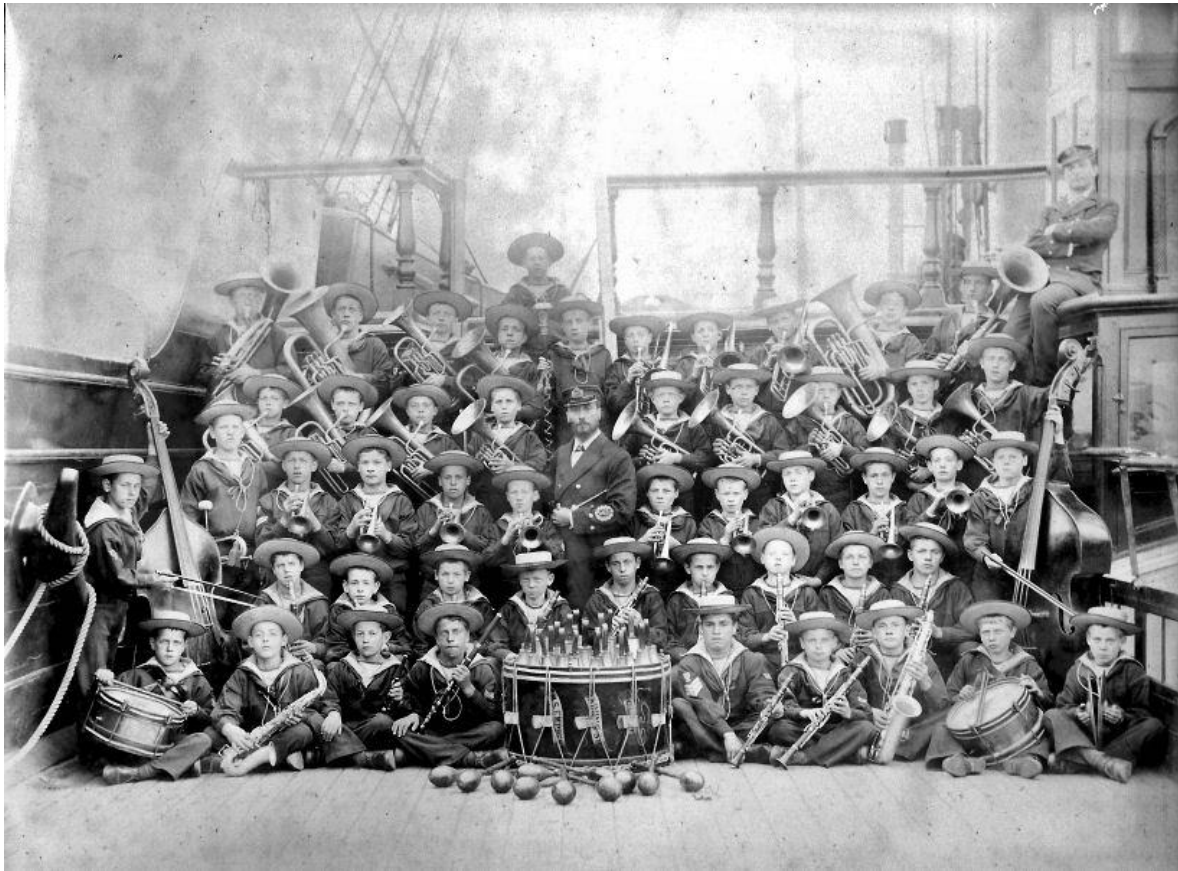
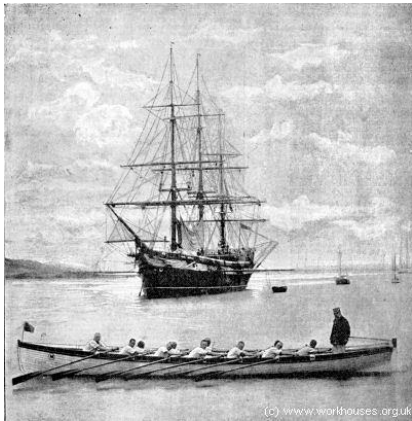


Some establishments as part of poor law took boys from 11/12 years to 15/16 years:



Work and play:

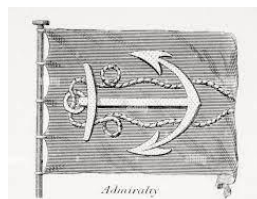




Admiralty takes over the Coast Guard

Admiralty takes over the Coast Guard:

In 1856 control of the Coast Guard was transferred to the Admiralty. Its responsibilities ranged from those in the Coast Guard Act of 1856 of assisting vessels in distress, taking charge of wrecks, operating life-saving apparatus, participating in the lifeboat service and searching for mines lost at sea. They also had duties of signalling, telegraph, buoys, lighthouses, wild birds and rare fish washed ashore. The Admiralty had an ulterior motive in taking over the Coast Guard. They had a reserve of trained men to call upon in times of war. We can also see how things like their benevolence and lifesaving skills were no longer priorities.



Capt. Boyd and Ajax

Capt. Boyd and the Guardship Ajax:

Guardships were placed by the Royal Navy at many ports throughout the British Isles where they served as depots for the *Cruisers* used to combat smuggling. We had *Guardships* at Kingstown, Queenstown and other Irish ports. They were usually ships that had been withdrawn from active service. The *Ajax* had been built in 1809 and this incident happened in 1861. There were severe storms in January and February of 1861 and on the 8th and 9th February 135 vessels were reported missing around the British Isles.



15 vessels got into trouble in or around Kingstown with a further 15 between Howth and Wicklow. The Coast Guards were very busy with attempts at rescue. Boyd and 14 volunteers from *Ajax* tried to aid two of these vessels the *Neptune* and the *Industry*. A huge wave swept them off the East Pier. The bodies of 5 of his men were washed ashore in the coming days but Capt. Boyd's body was not found for weeks. All the crew from the *Neptune* except one were lost and the Captain of the *Industry* perished.



Boyd's men were buried in nearby Carrickbrennan and a grave was prepared for him but such was the delay that he was buried at St. Patrick's Cathedral where a statue was erected to him. A memorial commissioned by the Royal St George Yacht Club was erected on the East Pier at the spot where the tragedy took place. The architect was Trevor Owen. Many medals including Silver Bravery medals from the RNLI and *Tayleur* Medals were presented to those who took part in rescues at that time.



Wreck of the Sarah Anne and Thomas Woodley

Wreck of the Sarah Ann:

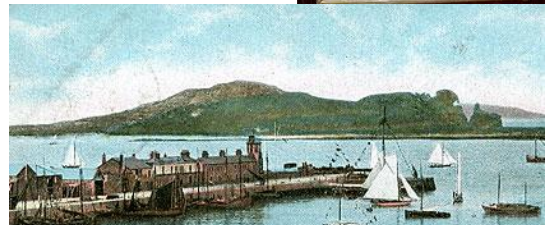
Sarah Ann, a Runcorn Schooner, of 100 tons, with a cargo of coal from Garston was wrecked on 1st February 1873. Chief Officer Dalton at Balbriggan sent to Skerries for a *lifeboat* and managed to establish a breeches buoy to the vessel, but with the deteriorating weather this life-line was broken. Six of the men who manned the *lifeboat* were



drowned. Woodley was one of four, who survived and was awarded the *Tayleur* “fund for the succour of shipwrecked strangers” Medals and £10. His fellow boatmen also got the same award, William Scantlebury, Robert Ellison and Lot Syme. All the crew of the vessel perished. At the inquest there was an interesting view from Capt. Moriarity, R.N., that although those Coast Guards, who formed some of the crew of the *Skerries Lifeboat* were all experienced seamen, their main duty was to preserve the Revenue and not, as unfortunately was perceived, the duty to save lives.

Thomas Woodley:

Thomas Woodley later became Chief Officer at Howth and retired in 1893. His medals were given to PJ Clonan, an Uncle of Eugene now Acting Director, IRCG. Eugene got the case repaired and a formal handover was arranged where Woodley’s granddaughter Ms Monica Daly presented them to Capt. Liam Kirwan, Director, IRCG in 2004. Along with the *Tayleur* Medal they include his service medals. We were able to borrow them to show them to the audience at the Maritime Museum in 2014 and at an OIC Conference in Dunboyne soon afterwards. This picture shows the former Coast Guard station in Howth. Woodley’s medals take pride of place in a new purpose built Coast Guard Station in Howth.



Coast Guard Buildings

Coast Guard Buildings:

The Board of Works built or rebuilt a number of Coast Guard Stations in the 1870s. These were fortified buildings capable of withstanding attack. Trevor Owen, who you already heard of, being the man who modified Stack A for the Crimean Banquet and the design of the Boyd Memorial was responsible for the design of many of the Coast Guard Stations built in the 1870s including Ballydonegan, Ardmore and Ringsend. The



description of Ballydonegan was a terrace of cottages with a tower with pyramidal roof, oriel windows and batter walls. Stations built in the latter half of the 1800s had defensive elements

built in. Each cottage had an interlinking door. These were narrow but when open from end to end gave a view from one end of the building to the other. This helped in defence and the Chief Officer held a key to all the doors. When the seats in the tower were removed they exposed holes for firearms to fire on attackers below and they had steel plates for the windows. These buildings were introduced in what was to become the Republic of Ireland but there were none in the North of Ireland or in the England or Scotland. Here redbrick buildings such as at Helen's Bay in Co Down predominate. This should give conspiracy theorists a field day. This was long before moves towards partition. The Stations in the North of Ireland, in England and Scotland were not fortified as can be seen from the photograph of Helen's Bay Station, one of the many photographed by Tony Daly.



Tony Daly

Tony Daly and the “Coastguards of Yesteryear”:

Tony had an interest in Genealogy and a dedication to the Caravan Club. In retirement he started to visit the many Coast Guard Stations that still exist on the island of Ireland. When I put my lecture together leading up to 2014 he was very helpful and I visited him many times before and after the lecture was complete. He would sit in his “sunroom” built by his family and discuss the Coast Guard. He had also converted a bedroom into an office stacked with books, articles and computer equipment. A visit to Tony was always congenial, with a cup of tea. He came to the lecture with his son Hugh and to a seminar I ran to seek ideas on how we should condense my lecture. Sadly, Tony died in September this year in his 95th year. The photograph, which is on his website captures the warmth of a person who became a good friend. Ar Deis De go raibh an anam, dilis.



Wreck Tokens:

These tokens were requested from the Royal Mint in January 1877. The token the size of a Crown (5 shillings) was made of bronze and an initial order of 3,000 was delivered in May 1877. Officers in Charge of Stations were given a supply of these to use as follows: turning out – 2/6d, attending a wreck – 5/0d and saving a life £1. In 1922 Saorstát Éireann produced their own which is reproduced here. Wreck tokens were withdrawn in 1972.



Fishery Reports

Fisheries Reports:

Fisheries Reports were produced from 1868-1895, as far as I can ascertain. Coast Guards Officers completed reports on the number of craft, men and boys fishing in each division. They completed a report on the type of fish caught and quantity. They reported on work in progress on piers and harbours. They advised on loans for boats. From 1891 Congested District Board activity was also included. Prior to this the Coast Guards worked and lived in close proximity to the local fishermen and were keenly aware of the perils and difficulties they faced, so it was possible that eventually a certain camaraderie grew up between them. The many enquiries into the state of the fisheries in the 19th century reveal the interest of the Coast Guard Officers in the fishermen and their desire to help in development of the Irish fisheries. D'Ombraim himself was personally involved in two or three companies set up with the aim of developing deep-sea fishing on the west coast. One such undertaking was the North-West Fishery Company, established by Lord George Hill in Donegal, in which D'Ombraim took part. They discovered that even when they succeeded in landing good catches of deep-sea fish, they could not find a market for them when brought ashore. 'We lost our money and wound up the concern' he told the Sea Fisheries Commission in 1866. He believed every Coast Guard Officer and man around the coast was 'anxious and willing' to do all in their power to assist the fisheries.

REPORT
OF THE
INSPECTORS OF IRISH FISHERIES
ON THE
SEA AND INLAND FISHERIES OF IRELAND,
FOR
1887.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.



DUBLIN:

PRINTED FOR HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE

BY

ALEXANDER THOM & CO. (LIMITED),

And to be purchased, either directly or through any Bookseller, from
EVRS and SPOTTISWOODE, East Harding-street, Fetter-lane, E.C., or 32, Abingdon-street,
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HODGES, FROGIS, and Co., 104, Grafton-street, Dublin.

1888.

[C.—5368.] Price 11s. 6d.

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Congested District Board

The Congested Districts Board:

The Congested Districts Board (CDB) was set up to alleviate poverty and congested living conditions in the west of Ireland. It started in 1891 and was dissolved in 1923 and absorbed into the Land Commission. It was funded by the Church of Ireland, where Conservative Unionist policy tried to kill Home Rule. Not connected with CDB, the Department of Agriculture was set-up in 1899 and Sir Horace Plunkett became the father of the co-op movement. A picture of Horace Plunkett and a woman gives directions to board members.



The Congested District Board was charged with:

Assisting fishing with loans for boats and nets.

They built piers.

They modernised farming.

They set-up local factories to stop emigration and encouraged migration within Ireland.

They set-up lacemaking, weaving of tweed, linen, embroidery and lace.

Aran Islands knitwear, which survives to the present day encouraged knitters and designers.

By building bridges and roads they created immediate employment.

The West Clare Railway, which together with new roads opened up the area to employment and encouraged tourism.

They bought large Estates and divided them.

Six contemporary photographs show various stages of poverty and relative wealth. The one in the middle includes a visit from a District Nurse.





Coast Guard killed by lightning

Coast Guard killed by lightning:

On 27th December 1899 a Coast Guard was killed by lightning while working beside a flagpole. Many Coast Guards lost their lives almost every year in the 1800s as they attempted rescues at sea but this was an unusual occurrence.



Fethard Lifeboat Disaster

Fethard Lifeboat Disaster:

This happened on the 20th February 1914 off the Wexford Coast when nine Irishmen and two Norwegians lost their lives. It became known as the *Fethard Lifeboat* Disaster. 14 lifeboatmen set out on the *Helen Blake* to affect a rescue. The *Mexico*, a three masted steel *schooner* went aground on the Keeragh Rock in a storm. The *lifeboat* reached the *Mexico* at midnight but was caught by an enormous wave throwing it onto the rocks where it shattered immediately. The picture shows the survivors of the *Mexico*. I think the poem below best tells the story.

Fethard Lifeboat

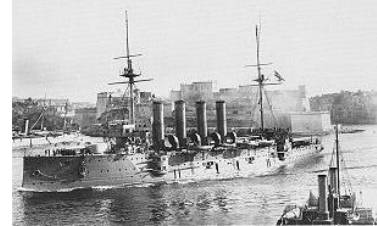
As she neared the ill-fated *Mexico*, oh heavens what a shock,
Their boat was dashed to pieces on the dreaded Keeragh Rock.
Oh God what a sensation, to behold those heroes brave,
Contending with the raging seas, their precious lives to save.
The crew of the gallant *Mexico*, though terror stricken too,
They rendered all assistance to the drowning *lifeboat* crew.
Five of those gallant heroes were all that could be found.
The other nine, by the Keeragh Rock, I'm sorry to say were drowned.
May God have mercy upon their souls, who gave their noble lives,
And heaven guard the helpless ones those heroes left behind.



World War One

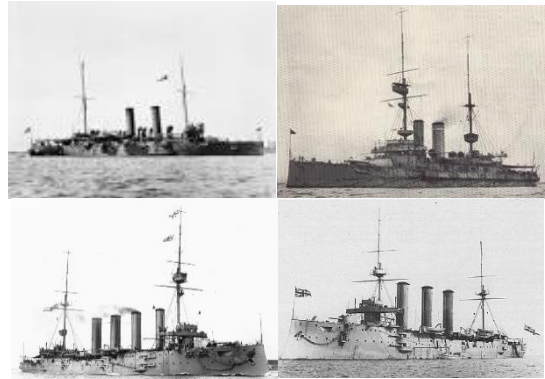
WW 1:

After almost 3 months of War which started on the 28th July 1914 the 22nd September 1914 was a black day for the Coast Guard. Three obsolete British Warships were sunk in just over an hour. These were the *Cruisers Aboukir, Hogue* and *Cressy*, all of the same class. 1,459 men drowned and 837 were rescued. These were mainly Reservists and Reservists were Coast Guards. The *U-boat* had proved its worth, commanded by Kapitänleutnant Otto Weddigen. U9 was the only *U-boat* to make it through the war. Weddigen was not so lucky. He was transferred to U29 and lost his life the following year. HMS *Cressy*. This was the prototype for this class of *Cruiser* and its keel was only laid on 12th October 1898. It was built by Fairfields, Govan. It was launched on 14th December 1899 and was completed on the 28th May 1901 so it was only in service for 13 years when it was sunk. Even on trials it never reached it's 21 knots service speed only attaining 20.7 knots, yet it had twin screws and two 4 cylinder triple expansion steam engines served by no less than 30 Bellville Boilers. The complement was 725-760 Officers and men. Armaments included 2, 9.2" guns, one fore and one aft with an array of other armaments including two 18" torpedo tubes. It is incredible to think that such a modern vessel was deemed obsolete at the start of WW1. She served initially in Singapore in late 1901 and was transferred to North America and the West Indies in 1907 before being mothballed in 1909 and being pressed into service again in August 1914. It is a pity that Reserves or Coast Guards were only deemed suitable for such a vessel. The Coast Guards paid a heavy price before it was recognised that they would be better deployed on shore. Photographs from the top are U9, *Aboukir, Hogue, Cressy* and Weddigen.



Other losses which affected the Coast Guards were:

Hawke at Scapa Flow - 600, also sunk by U9. *Formidable* at Start Point - 547. *Good Hope* and *Monmouth* with 900 and 678, both with all hands, off South America. It was decided that Coast Guards were required ashore for communications by telephone and Wireless Telegraphy and in Ireland to observe the threat from *U-boat* landings. Admiral von Spee sank the *Good Hope* and the *Monmouth* on 1st November 1914 but revenge was extracted at the Battle of the Falklands on 8th December 1914 when von Spee and most of his men and ships were lost. Photographs above are of the *Hawke*, *Formidable*, *Good Hope* and *Monmouth*.



U118 on the beach at Hastings:

In April 1919 U118 was being towed to France when the tow broke and it ended up on the beach at Hastings. It became a huge attraction as can be seen from the photographs. The scene is packed with tourists. Unfortunately, two Coast Guards who worked on the *U-boat* keeping it safe died some months later, due it seems from breathing in fumes from leaky batteries.



Irish Civil War

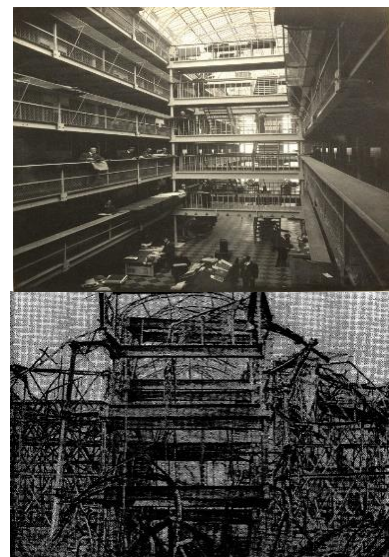
Irish Civil War – 1922:

The explosion and fire at the Four Courts took place on the 30th June 1922 and destroyed the public records office. In Dublin a battle took place from the 28th June until the 5th July. This marked the beginning of the Irish Civil War. It was 6 months after the Anglo-Irish Treaty. It was fought between the Provisional Government and a section of the Irish Republican Army who opposed the treaty



The loss of the Public Records Office:

The Public Records Office was at the rear of the Four Courts building and was completely destroyed. When I first saw this picture I thought I was looking at a Gaol but you can see the floors of records and people inspecting them on the ground floor and on the landings. You can also see the atrium above shedding light into the building. The second picture shows the scene after the bombing and fire. You can see the outline of the steel frames but little else. Generations of records were lost including 1821, 31, 41 & 51 census returns. This was a sad loss to Genealogists and robs us of a huge part of our Heritage. It is a tribute to people like Tony Daly, who started with an interest in Genealogy that he has done so much from Church records etc. We are also lucky from a Coast Guard point of view that their records up to 1922 are held in Kew near London.



The troubles from the War of Independence to the Civil War:

During the troubles Coast Guard Stations came under attack in many areas for a number of reasons. They were symbols of the Imperial Power. They contained arms and ammunition which were useful to insurgents. Although many of the ones built since 1870 were fortified they were easy targets with families living on the premises. What happened in most cases was they were approached and the people inside were asked to vacate. Unfortunately, many were set in fire. There is only one recorded case of a Coast Guard losing his life defending a Station but it is sad to see such fine buildings ruined as so many others have been put to good use. I think the photo of Howe Strand Coast Guard Station after 1920 speaks for itself.



Coast Life Saving Service

Coast Life Saving Service (CLSS):

The beginning of the Coast Life Saving Service (CLSS). In 1922 when Saorstát Éireann was set up Capt. Tom Casement (Maritime background) made efforts to start a Coast Guard Service but he failed, as it was too closely associated with the British. By 1923 he had succeeded in establishing the CLSS and as we can see many of the existing Coast Guards transferred over seamlessly. The CLSS was rolled out to run the breeches buoy system in conjunction with the lifeboat service run by the RNLI of which some were members of both organisations. Capt. Casement a brother of Roger became Inspector General of the new service. A rare picture of Capt. Casement.



List of volunteers at Skerries before and after the changeover is shown here:

LIST OF ENROLLED VOLUNTEERS.								
Full Name	Civil No.	Date of Birth	YEAR OF ENROLEMENT		Occupation	Residence	Distance from Station	REMARKS
			Under Board of Trade	Under Department of Industry and Commerce				
John Kelly	194	1883	1912	1923	Postman	Stella Mary Hass Rock	1/4 mile	
Joseph Rogan	195	1899	-	"	Labourer	Sherlock Terrace	1 "	
William Dwyer	196	1863	-	"	Sailor	Square Street	1 "	
James Seaver	197	1890	1913	"	Labourer	Strand Street	1/4 "	
John Seaver	198	1873	1912	"	Farmer	"	1/4 "	
James Boylan	199	1874	1915	"	Gardener	Quay Street	500 Yards	
Robert Luff	200	1892	1912	"	Farmer	Strand Street	1/4 mile	
John Joseph Seaver	201	1896	1913	"	Labourer	"	1/4 "	
William Fanning	202	1896	1921	"	"	Convent Avenue	1/2 "	
Richard Barry	203	1873	-	"	Cartier	Strand Street	1/2 "	
William Malpass	204	1863	-	"	Fisherman	Cross Street	1/4 "	
William Laddie	205	1872	-	"	"	The Square	1/4 "	
Michael Daly	206	1862	-	"	"	Quay Street	1/4 "	
Christopher Hills	207	1903	-	"	Labourer	Sherlock Terrace	1 "	
Francis Boylan	208	1889	1912	"	Farmer	The Square	1/4 "	

This is a valuable document from the Skerries Unit.

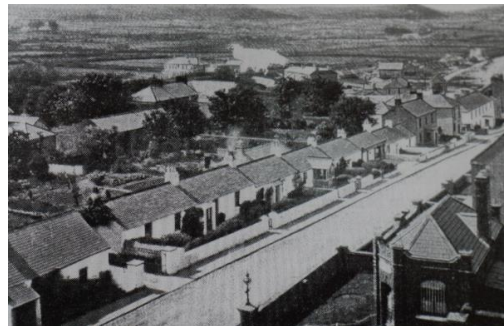
List of volunteers from Greystones:

Unfortunately, I don't have the same document for Greystones but am indebted to Derek Paine for the following list from his pictorial history of Greystones. It shows similar results with a list of Greystones volunteers before/after the changeover:

Details of Greystones Coast Guards who transferred to the CLSS in 1922/3

Name	Birth Date	Enroled	Address	Distance from Station
Osborne Spurling	1858	1887	Laburnham Cottage	100 yds.
James Darcy	1879	1901	Grove Cottage	½ mile
George Archer	1881	1902	Burlington House	200 yds.
James Lawless	1865	1886	Greystones	200 yds.
William Spurling	1888	1910	Laburnham Cottage	100 yds.
Charles Evans	1866	1886	Seaview House	300 yds.
Edmund Evans	1883	1903	Norman Lodge	300 yds.
Michael Keddy	1878	1903	Strand Cottage	400 yds.
Edward Archer	1865	1886	Burlington House	200 yds.
John Spurling	1890	1913	Laburnham Cottage	100 yds.
Andrew Martin	1862	1886	Greystones	¼ mile
Michael Whiston	1869	1901	Strand Cottage	500 yds.
John Evans	1862	1890	Sweet Briar Cottage	150 yds.
Albert Archer	1888	1912	Kenmare Cottage	100 yds.
Henry Evans	1878	1916	Eden Cottage	150 yds.

The following are some photographs that I have taken from 5 volumes of the history of Greystones by Derek Paine.





Coast Watch Service

Coast Watch Service 1939-1945:

This service was set up by the Government to watch out to sea for shipping and aircraft movements. It was not part of the CLSS but I am sure many of them were involved, as were local farmers. 81 of these concrete structures were built around the Republic of Ireland. Their Story is fully told by Dr. Michael Kennedy, of the Royal Irish Academy who was a contributor to the Maritime Institute Lecture series in the past. He has written a book on the subject called “Guarding Neutral Ireland.”



The EIRE signs:

Later in the war EIRE signs were constructed close to the watch sites. The signs were laid out in stones and painted white. Many were overgrown and some were only rediscovered in recent times. Michael did a Zoom Lecture early in 2021 on behalf of the Maritime Institute about the Dalkey sign and its restoration. They were an important marker for pilots, especially American pilots later in the war. The number signified their location from 1 to 81 (clockwise from Carlingford Lough to Lough Foyle).



CLSS after WW2

CLSS-1950s:

After the war, the CLSS continued and got training from the Department of Transport as referred to in the next paragraph. Seen here is a photograph of the Red Island CLSS Team of the 1950s. In the background is the Rocket Cart and in the foreground a box containing some of the apparatus. The cart appears later and was very well restored by Skerries CGU for the opening of the Sea Pole Memorial at Skerries in Sept 2013 by President Michael D. Higgins.



Rescues using breeches buoys

MV Plassy:

MV *Plassy* went aground on Inisheer the smallest and most westerly of the Aran Islands on the 8th March 1960. Caught in a severe storm she was driven onto Finnis Rock. Her crew of 11 were rescued by locals using the breeches buoy after firing a rocket. They got training 4 times a year as members of the CLSS from the Department of Transport, at the time. The vessel carried a cargo of whiskey, stained glass and yarn. A further storm drove her further inland and there she has remained ever since. Many of you will know this vessel as it forms part of the opening sequence from “Father Ted,” as the aerial shot traverses the fictional “Craggy Island.” In the first picture we see Islanders getting ready for the rescue. The second picture shows her as she looks today. The third picture taken in 2010 shows two islanders Ruairi Sheanin O’Conghaile (72) and Micheal Anthony O’Domhnaill (71) on the 50th anniversary of the rescue in which they took part.



F/V Jean Gougy:

F/V *Jean Gougy* ran aground on the 3rd November 1962 at Land’s End. The trawler from Dieppe had a crew of 18. The closest that the *Sennen lifeboat* could approach was 100 yards. Initial searches by the *lifeboat* and an RAF helicopter from Chivenor found 3 bodies. The *lifeboat* recovered 2 bodies and the helicopter 1, which it landed at Culdrose where it refuelled. Two Royal Marines were discouraged by a Policeman from abseiling down to the F/V, which was on its side with people in

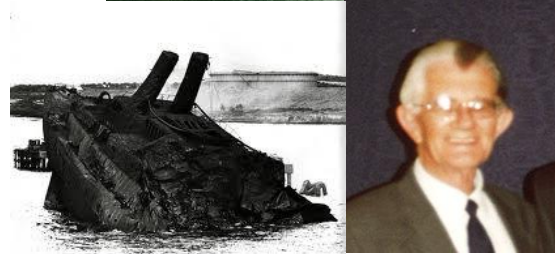


the smashed wheelhouse. A further 8 died but the remainder were taken off, 5 by breeches buoy and 2 by helicopter. The last crewman taken off by helicopter was the 16 year old galley boy.

Tanker blows up at Whiddy Island

Betelgeuse blows up at Whiddy Island:

“Two quadrants of the night sky.” This was the title of an article written by Tom MacSweeney about the explosion on the *Betelgeuse* on 8th January 1979. The smoke blocked out one quadrant. There had never been anything like this. Tom could see the glow as he drove from the suburbs of Cork City over 80km away. Tom’s dilemma was, how do you report on 51 deaths with no bodies. The Tribunal Report was published on 25th April 1980 and the late Jack McGrath had set-up the equipment for instant translation at this enquiry in Bantry. Jack was to become the first Chief Engineer at the Irish Marine Emergency Service where he designed the interoperability system between Malin Head, Valentia and Dublin so we could use each other’s equipment during breakdowns. Sadly, Jack died in March 2013.



Salvage of Betelgeuse:

Two sections of the *Betelgeuse* were towed away and the contract to dispose of the last section was given to John O’Sullivan of Bandon. They used a 90 ton grab and each piece was weighed in the control room. The biggest bite was 260 tons. While doing this work sonar came across remains of *La Surveillante* a French



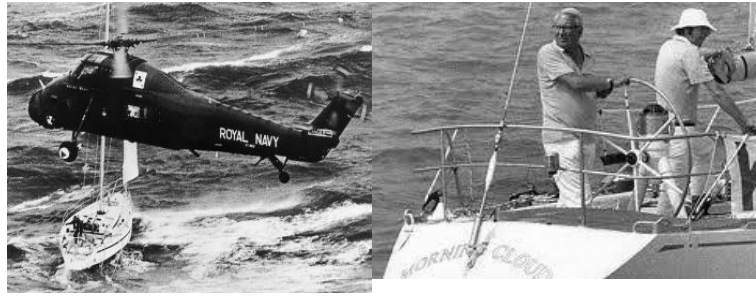
Warship scuttled in Bantry Bay in 1796, so we at the Maritime Institute can thank John for another piece of our Maritime Heritage. In the picture John stands in the jaws of the grab.

Fastnet Race

Fastnet Race:

Fastnet Race of 1979 ran into severe gales enroute to the Fastnet Rock. Among those taking part was former Prime Minister Edward Heath in his Yacht “*Morning Cloud*.” 18 People died. The search was a huge logistical job over a wide area and conditions were very rough as can

be seen in the photo of a Royal Naval Helicopter searching for survivors off Land's End. Tom MacSweeney missed out on this job as he was working for Nitrogen Eireann Teoranta (NET) at the time but how did he feel as a yachtsman? Picture of the Royal Navy flying over one of the competitors with very little sail set.



Rail Disaster

Buttevant Rail Disaster - 1980:

This ends three disasters in succession, all in or close to Cork. Tom MacSweeney was on scene very early, like an embedded reporter and came over the embankment by the points and summed up what had happened. He passed the



carriages and saw the pain and suffering. It is reported that he still feels that pain and has suffered flashbacks. What has this to do with the Coast Guard? Everything. He was working in a very hazardous situation and needed support just as our Volunteers do, in certain situations.

Breeches buoy used for the last time

Last use of Breeches Buoy in Ireland:

MV *Ranga*, a Spanish Container Vessel, went aground at Sleah Head near Dingle, Co Kerry on 11th March 1982 on her maiden voyage. This was the last time that the breeches buoy was used for rescue in



Ireland for the 15 man crew. Although helicopters were in regular use in the 1980s for sea rescue the helicopter could not operate effectively with the down draft from the cliffs and the only option for rescuing the *Ranga* crew was the rocket and breeches buoy. Here are pictures of when it grounded and later when it was breaking up. It broke up very quickly.

Coast and Cliff Rescue Service

Coast and Cliff Rescue Service 1987/88:

The Coast and Cliff Rescue Service (CCRS) replaced the Coast Life Saving Service in 1987. There was a European requirement for Coastal States to have some type of Coast Guard Service. It was set up by Capt. Liam Kirwan using the CLSS model. Capt. Peter Brown and Capt. David Shiels were the first Superintendents who toured Coast Stations making sure beach patrols and a breeches buoy service was available. As they prepared for IMES in 1993 the Cliff Rescue element was added and some Stations got patrol craft.



Help during the snow

Agnes Walsh - Department of Marine:

Agnes Walsh worked for the Department of Marine during the implementation of the Doherty Report. She acted as Personal Assistant to Liam Kirwan in preparation for IMES and when he became Director. When she retired she always kept in touch and we would see her at the annual Mass and Dinner for pensioners. Indeed for many years she brought over three plates of food for the watchkeepers.



During the snows of 2010/2011 Agnes needed to keep an appointment for chemotherapy at a hospital. It was my privilege to arrange this. The OIC and DOIC from Howth CGU took her to hospital and home where, in her kitchen, they were given a pocket history of IMES. Sadly, Agnes died in 2013. She is fondly remembered.

Vessel sinks beyond range of helicopter assistance

M/V Cristinaki sank with all hands:

M/V Cristinaki foundered with a 27 man crew with no survivors on 3rd February 1994 about 240nm southwest of Cork just beyond helicopter range in storm force 10 winds. She was the former *Irish Pine* built at Govan, Scotland in 1973. She was on passage from Liverpool to Veracruz, Mexico with a 22,000 ton cargo of scrap metal.

The Maltese registered vessel with Greek owners were the sixth owners of the vessel. I remember seeing footage taken from a plane. Unfortunately she was just beyond the range of helicopters. A loose hatch cover was blamed. She was the third ship of that name for Irish Shipping, seen here in Irish Shipping colours. The second picture shows typical storm force conditions.



Introduction to the Irish Coast Guard (IRCG)

This is an introduction to the modern Coast Guard which started in 1993.

The Headquarters is organised in a hierarchical structure with a Director and Assistant Director and a Director of Engineering. Below these are Managers in charge of the three arms of the of the organisation which are SAROPS (Search and Rescue Operations), POLSAL (Pollution and Salvage) and VS&T (Voluntary Services and Training). The Operations Room is a function of SAROPS. Response to Pollution and Salvage comes under POLSAL which also organises training in the prevention of pollution. The Volunteer Units around the country come under VS&T which organises equipment, personal protective gear and training. Below are a selection of photographs of various aspects of the modern Coast Guard in Ireland.



S61N exercising with RNLi lifeboat



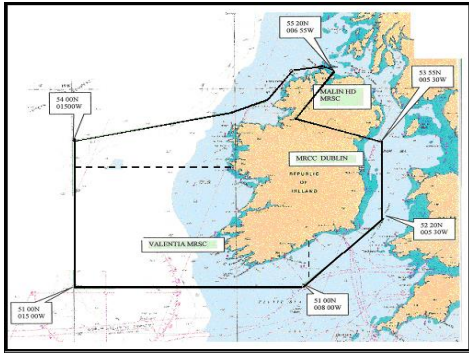
Cliff team working with Coast Guard RIB



Valentia Radio and MRSC



S61N in Hangar at Dublin Airport



Ireland's area of responsibility



Pollution Response Course - Arklow



Arklow Lifeboat tows in a casualty



S61N winching



Cliff Rescue



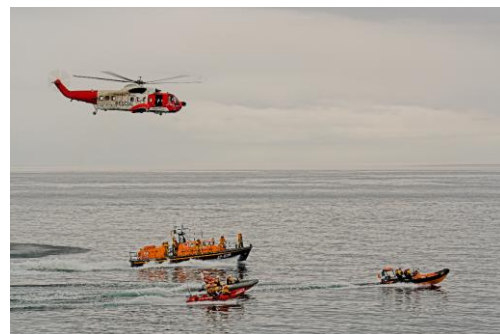
Wicklow Lifeboat launches on exercise



Portrush Lifeboat launches on service



Deploying a boom for pollution control



Search and Rescue demonstration

One of the First OICs of the IMES

Charles Cavanagh, Officer in Charge (OIC) - Greencastle CGU:

I reckon if you could snap Charlie in two like a stick of Blackpool Rock you would find “Coast Guard” written right through him. He has always had the Coast Guard at heart. Taking each of these six headings: 1. Vehicles - He acquired 48 second-hand BT pickups, on which he put the Coast Guard livery and these were our first vehicles. 2. Boat - He has had a boat since 1991 and this does more than patrol as it is required as a *lifeboat* in many situations, as there is no RNLI boat in the area. 3. ATV - During



the Carrickatine search in 1995 one of his team members, a farmer, used his ATV and was able to cover vast distances quickly. This has led acquiring ATVs at almost all Stations. 4. Station House - Their Coast Guard Station built with a lot of voluntary effort is fit for purpose and the envy of many. 5. Commitment - When I spoke with Charlie before my 2014 lecture he told me he had passed 50 and had just been down to the National Maritime College in Cork (NMCI) to update his survival training. He is still an active boat crewman and will not ask anybody to do what he can't. 6. 24 Hour rule - He told me of this many years ago. When teams go out on a “shout” tempers can get frayed and problems can occur giving rise to tension. After such incidents there is a debrief at which everybody has the same right to give input. If they don't and they don't bring it up within 24 hours then it is forgotten.

Greencastle's Rocket Cart:

Charlie told me the following story about the Greencastle Rocket Cart which because it was in a border area was still in the British Colours. In 1991 he was offered a small inflatable. He asked the Department of Marine in Dublin where he would house it. He was told he could store it in the Rocket House. He asked what he would do with the Cart and he was told to destroy it, break it up or burn it. His team spirited it away and kept it in a boat shed and would not tell him where it was. This cart had been built in Bristol in 1860. Over two years they lovingly restored it. When the new Coastguard



HQ for Northern Ireland was opened in Bangor they borrowed the cart for display. Apparently when our Director and Chief of Operations saw it they commended their Northern counterparts on preserving the past. They were told “That's not ours, it comes from Donegal.” It now resides at the Inishowen Museum in Greencastle, a former Coast Guard Station.

The Loss of F/V Carrickatine

F/V Carrickatine:

F/V *Carrickatine*. A Burtonport trawler disappeared without trace with her Greencastle crew of six on the 15th November 1995, whilst returning from the Stanton Banks, north of Malin Head. It was the largest search ever undertaken and cost more than IR£1m (punts) using side scan sonar for the first time specially rigged on board the Granuaile, Commissioners of Irish Light's (CIL) Light Tender. It led to calls for Electronic Position Indicator Radio Beacons (EPIRBs).



Rapid Response for EU and UN

Mike Lee - former Officer in Charge at Youghal CGU:

When Mike Lee was in charge of Youghal Coast Guard Unit he was also a member of “Rapid Response” for the EU and the UN. He has been deployed to various parts of Africa and to Haiti before and after the 2010 Earthquake. In 2013 he was deployed to Syria and prior to Christmas of the same year was deployed to the Philippines. He wore his IRCG cap proudly in Ireland and while in the Philippines he communicated almost daily with a number of people in Ireland and we built up a fair idea of what he was doing. He included pictures and when he got home tanked us for being his Critical Incident Support Management (CISM) team.



Critical Incident Stress Management

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM):

When I joined in 1995 I became aware very quickly of how many suicides take place by people walking into the sea or jumping from bridges. Steps have been taken locally now and there are volunteers who patrol black spots. Suicide is still a huge problem, but people are tackling it. When I got the opportunity to sit an MSc in Emergency Management I only wanted to write on one subject. That was Critical Incident Stress Management and I was fortunate to meet Jeffery Mitchell the former American Fireman, who quined



the phrase about thirty years ago, soon after Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) had been defined.

I was lucky to avail of Critical Incident Stress Debriefing after two traumatic incidents and it works. Writing a dissertation on the subject was great and I put a lot of effort into 23 interviews from a survivor of the Stardust, Senior Officers from FDNY, who were through 9/11, the lady who introduced CISM to Northern Ireland during the troubles, the senior Army Officer who heads CISM in Ireland, a British Army Officer, Coast Guards, RNLI managers, Gardai, Firemen, Ambulancemen and many more. Each of these interviews had to be fully transcribed and agreed with each interviewee, which I did. I built up a huge resource from which to draw conclusions. However, CISM in Ireland exists in Silos. Each organisation does it differently. The Irish Coast Guard relies on the Defence Forces. I attended many seminars, in my own time over a number of years in efforts to unify the approach but it came to nothing. However the system is good and needs to be availed of by those experiencing trauma.

Royal National Lifeboat Institution

Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI):

The RNLI is an independent organisation but agreed to be co-ordinated by the Coast Guard in 1993 and this has worked extremely well. When we get a call we bleep the Operation's Manager and within a minute he is back by phone. In very urgent cases we can bleep the crew directly but always follow up with a call to explain. We request lifeboats to assist, whereas we task our volunteers and helicopters, deferring to the lifeboats independence.



Lifeboatmen:

Lifeboat people have a great ethos and are always ready to help and I have been lucky to visit many Stations over the years where there is always a cup of tea and a chat. Lifeboatmen are very committed and some I know have been with the lifeboat boy and man for over 40 years. An illustration of the Shannon Class lifeboat, the first to be called after an Irish River was the dream of one of their recently retired Operation's Managers for many, many years. It was designed by an Irishman. It uses waterjets rather than propellers.



RNLI PR:

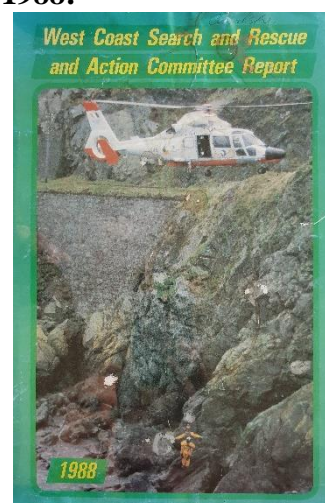
The RNLI are masters of PR and having been at naming ceremonies for lifeboats and the opening of new Lifeboat Stations I can say that they do things very well. When the new Dun Laoghaire lifeboat “*Anna Livia*” was named in 1995 the Lifeboat Operations Manager departed from their rule of not naming survivors by volunteering the information that he was rescued when only 14 years from a dingy in Dublin Bay. He said he would join the lifeboat when he could and as he only retired this year has given a lifetime of service. When Arklow named “*Ger Tigchelaar*” a couple of years later we sat on chairs on the quayside in puddles of water but the rain held off for the ceremony. The main benefactor was brought onboard to unveil a plaque to his late wife which has half of his and her wedding rings embedded. There was not a dry eye to be seen among those gathered. I got an opportunity to go onboard this lifeboat years later and took the photograph above.



Report on the need for Helicopters

West Coast Search and Rescue and Action Committee Report - 1988:

The following is extracted from an article by Lorna Siggins in the Irish Times of 19th July 1996. “On a clear winter's day just over eight years ago, something happened to change all that. A well-known Donegal skipper, John Oglesby, bled to death as a result of a deck accident within sight of the Mayo coastline. He was brought ashore at Ballyglass Pier in Broadhaven Bay. It was one accident too many for Derry born Joan McGinley, mother of four and wife of a fisherman. She held a public meeting, formed a committee and within three years a medium range helicopter was stationed at Shannon and an Air Corps Dauphin was deployed to Finner Camp. Within one year (1989), the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) opened Mayo's first offshore station. It seemed as if half the western seaboard streamed out over Gubaknockan Headland to greet the Ballyglass and Belmullet crew when their vessel steamed into Broadhaven Bay.”

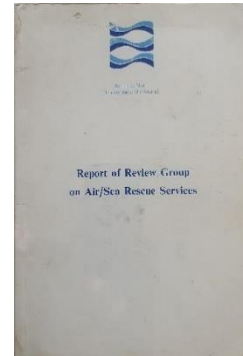


Report which set up the IMES

The Report of Review Group on Air/Sea Rescue Services - 1990:

Eamonn J. Doherty, retired Garda Commissioner chaired the group who produced the following report. It provided the parameters for moving Marine Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) Shannon to Dublin, opening a new Coast Radio Station in Dublin to cover the east and southeast coasts.

It set up the Irish Marine Emergency Service (IMES) which came into being in 1993 and was later renamed the Irish Coast Guard (IRCG) in 2000. Malin Head and Valentia Coast Stations who cover the northwest and southwest coasts were retained and devolved into Marine Rescue Sub Centres (MRSCs) in time. Pollution control was established. The RNLI, although maintaining its independence, agreed to be co-ordinated by the MRCC/SCs. Thus, a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) was established which meant no duplication and streamlined calling out resources during emergencies. Helicopter types and bases were established.



Sea Cave incident

Belderrig cave incident:

A German man, Will Ernest von Bellow, took a neighbouring family of 3 the Murphys on a trip to the cave at Horse Island in his motorised *currach* in October 1997. They ended up trapped in the cave, where Mr von Bellow lost his life, as well as one of the two divers, who endeavoured to save them. The Murphy's and their 11 year old daughter were saved. A posthumous gold medal was awarded to Michael Heffernan (40), who drowned, while trying to rescue the people from the sea cave. Gold, silver and bronze medals have been struck in his memory and are awarded for deeds of bravery. Our helicopters were used quite a lot in this incident and transported the Garda Underwater Unit from Dublin to the scene. I remember having a very long conversation with the pilot of R115 when it landed back in Shannon after one sortie. He needed to talk about what he saw.



R111 Tragedy

Rescue 111 tragedy:

The 24 hour cover Waterford Base was inaugurated on the 1st July 1999 and a Dauphine Helicopter was sent down from Baldonnell to commence this service. When I took over the watch that evening R111 was out on a "shout." A small boat with four adults and a child



onboard was missing in fog off Dungarvan. R111 located the boat and guided the *inshore lifeboat* to the scene. We launched the *Ballycotton lifeboat* as extra cover. R111 was then stood down as the weather was deterioration. It had difficulty landing at Waterford Airport and went back out to sea to do another approach. It clipped a sand dune and crashed with the loss of its four brave crew, Capt. David O'Flaherty, Capt. Michael Baker, Sgt. Paddy Mooney and Cpl. Niall Byrne. The picture shows a scene of utter devastation. Any people on scene have been

tippexed out. Pictured is DH247 a sister of DH248 which crashed. DH248 is pictured on the cover of the West Coast Search and Rescue and Action Committee Report.

Spain recognises Coast Guard assistance

F/V Arosa:

The Spanish Government has presented an award to the Irish Coast Guard for its response to a tragedy in which 12 crewmen died on 3rd October 2000. The award was presented to Mr Eugene Clonan (now Acting Director), a former Naval Service Officer with the Irish Coast Guard, by the Spanish Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Mr Miguel Arias Canete. He was given the Cruz de Oficial de la Orden del Merito Civil on behalf of the Spanish Government in recognition of the work done in the aftermath of the *Arosa* sinking. The British-registered Spanish vessel from Milford Haven was running for shelter when it hit the Skerd rocks 17 miles southeast of Slyne Head in Galway Bay. One crew member, Mr Ricardo Arias Garcia, survived and was winched to safety by an Irish Coast Guard helicopter. The 12 who died were from Galicia in Spain, Portugal and West Africa.



Coast Guard adopts change

In 2000 the Irish Maritime Emergency Service (IMES) became the Irish Coast Guard (IRCG). Another change soon happened as the pool of ex Radio Officers had dried up. Valentia and Malin Head Radio Stations had always been staffed by Radio Officers who had spent time at sea in the Merchant Navy or Royal Fleet Auxiliary. Radio Officers also staffed the Ocean Tracking Station at Balligirren near Shannon Airport guiding aircraft across the Atlantic. With the opening of Dublin Radio Station in 1993 some Radio Officers transferred from these three locations and more were recruited from seagoing ranks. To replace those retiring by 2000 the Department had to consider other seafarers and chose Mates, Trawler Skippers and Ratings from the Irish Navy. One of the first recruited was Mickey McCormick from Greencastle. When Mickey was studying for his Master's Certificate in Cork he was in a bad accident on the long trip from Donegal. He was to lose both legs but anybody who has met him will know that he is very determined. He worked well with his colleagues in Malin Head but moved on in due course. He has turned his hand to many things and at times was the relief Master of a *Pleasure Cruiser* on Lough Foyle. He also encourages people with disabilities and danced in the kitchen of a man who became depressed with his situation.



Safe pair of hands

Jack Kenny – a safe pair of hands:

I spent several months in Malin Head during the early 2000s when an asbestos problem at the Operations Room was being sorted in Dublin. It was good to work with people like Jack, who retired some years ago. He had a lovely soft Clare accent and was an avid Munster supporter, even though he spent his working life at Malin Head, where his house looks out on the broad Atlantic. His sunny outlook is encapsulated in his reply of “the best” to the enquiry, “how is it going?” Jacks were a safe pair of hands. Sadly, he died in February 2016.



Changes brought about by 9/11

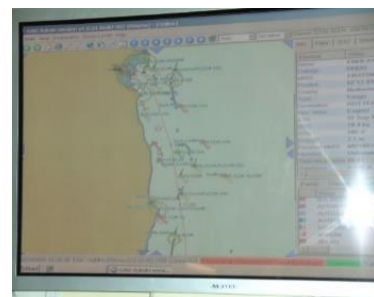
Coast Guard after 9/11:

Over the years lessons are learned after incidents. Bodies such as the Air Accident Investigation Unit (AAIU) and the Marine Casualty Investigation Board (MCIB) investigate accidents not to apportion blame but to learn lessons which can be applied. After the *Carrickatine* incident there was a big move to get fishing boats to use Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs) and that became a big success. However the greatest change in recent years came after the tragedy of the twin towers in New York on the 11th September 2001 (9/11). It brought about the introduction of the Automatic Identification System (AIS) fitted to all vessels over 300 grt and now many leisure craft, helicopters, lifeboats and naval vessels (who have the option of turning it off – if going covert) use this system which can be monitored at Marine Rescue Centres. Apart from vessels indicating problems it gives a picture of other vessels close by who can assist. Another outcome of 9/11 is the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS) where various security levels can be set on ships and at ports and an independent alarming system can be set off by designated Security Officers. Add to this the “Port State Control System,” which has been hugely modernised. This checks the state of ships entering our waters as they are inspected during their stay.



State of readiness:

The Coast Guard is always in a state of readiness. There are “state boards” which show the readiness of all four helicopters and any deficiencies are highlighted. If any Lifeboat or Coast Guard Team is unavailable for any reason it is noted. Otherwise we can assume that everything is ready to go. Our first Director Capt. Liam Kirwan could sum up these state boards at a glance and get up to date with a few well thought questions. His 2nd in Command Geoff Livingstone, Chief of Operations always said that “we must be ready when the big one comes”. With reference to the previous paragraph and



newer systems and inspections my contention is that this should now read “we must be ready if the big one comes.” This does not reduce the threat or our vigilance in any way, it just makes it seem less ominous.

R117 on Television

Rescue 117 - 2010:

On 17th September 2010 RTE screened the first of six programmes on the work of the Waterford Helicopter R117. They installed cameras on the helicopter and filmed for six months capturing dramatic rescues and talking to the crews back at base during their down time. Claire Byrne did these interviews and travelled on the helicopter to give some insights into their work. It became known to us as the “Dara and Neville show” as Dara Fitzpatrick, Chief Pilot and Neville Murphy a Winchman who also volunteers on the local lifeboat were foremost among the crew filmed and brought life and reality to the show. This was the first time such a programme had been undertaken in Ireland and the following year we had R115 which followed the exploits of the Shannon Helicopter. Sadly, Dara was to lose her life doing the job she loved in 2017.



French Admiral reunited with boat

Visit of Admiral Neilly – 2011:

A French Admiral Joseph-Marie Nielly anchored in Bantry Bay in 1796 on *La Résolue*. He sent some men to reconnoitre and these were captured and their boat impounded. This *Yawl* or *long boat* which was an *Admiral's Barge* stayed in Bantry at Bantry House until the 1940s when it was gifted to the State. On the 9th June 2011 the Irish Coast Guard hosted an Anglo/French meeting in Dublin. One of the two French Admirals attending expressed an interest in seeing the Bantry *long boat*. As it used to be in the Maritime Museum I was approached and found it is now in Collins Barracks where I arranged a viewing. Bruno Neilly on the right is the great grandson on Joseph-Marie. He told me he was very pleased to see the *boat* which his father and grandfather had told him about. His father was Jean an Admiral in WW1 and his grandfather was René an Admiral in WW1. The photo shows a painting of the *boat* as it might have looked in 1796 created by Cormac Lowth and presented by Peadar Ward, President of the Maritime Institute. In the second picture Bruno views the *long boat* conserved by John Kearon.



Skerries Sea Pole

The Skerries Sea Pole:

This rocket cart was exhibited at Skerries during the ceremony to open the Sea Pole on 29th September 2013. The Memorial was dedicated by President Michael D. Higgins. A Sea Pole is now permanently erected on the sea front. These poles were common close to Coast Guard Stations as they provided a method for crews to practice the use of breeches-buoys. At the base there are over 250 stainless steel plaques with the names of people who lost their lives in this area dating back to 1726 and include vessels from Ireland, Britain, Germany, Spain, Norway, France and others.



Mentoring

Mentoring is one of the oldest forms of teaching:

My first Mentor was my father, who taught me woodwork, which I enjoy to this day. At sea I single out Capt. Carl Diedricks, who had great interests and went into them in great detail. Carl passed away before he could fulfil a promise to drive my daughter Sara to her wedding in one of his two, 3 litre, Talbot open tourers (1929). When I saw him last he was crewing on a large *Yacht* enroute from Scotland to Kent, where he lives and he was popping a couple of seasickness pills before they let go in Howth. Yes, the former Master of many Super-Tankers suffered chronic seasickness. In recent years Capt. Vivion Gough and I have traded talents and he was a great help to me in understanding “stability,” the stability of ships. I have been mentored by colleagues and friends. You must take an interest. You have to be able to teach. You quickly learn that you can’t teach what you don’t know. Between working at sea and joining the Coast Guard I spent 15 years with McDonnell Douglas working on Computers and taught young Graduate Engineers how to fix corruption, dialled in, on live machines. You must know what you are doing. It makes you learn your subject. It is a very unselfish act.

Overview for Transition Year Students:

I became involved in this around 2004, when asked to accompany a transition year student, the son of a senior civil servant in Department of Marine, on our helicopter. We spent a morning flying out over the Wicklow Mountains to Avoca (Ballykisangel) and came back over the sea to the new windmills off Arklow. In the afternoon we saw the workshop, where every nut and bolt is certified. I gained as Mick Treacy one of the winchmen gave me a list of all their landing sites in the Dublin/Wicklow Mountains, which is used to this day. I produced a document for the students inspired by Albert Reynold’s single page of headings. It can take 30 minutes, an hour or all day depending on the requirement. It can equally be delivered to recruits or visitors. It forms a useful reference document and covers every aspect of what we do and has needed minimal alteration over 10 years. It covers the Operations Room,



Marine Emergency Room and Auto hover, which I cover next. The picture is of Plato and his student Aristotle. The mentee often outshines the mentor but it is not done to gain points.

Auto hover:

This is best explained with this photograph of an S61N hovering over a *lifeboat* with the winchman descending onto the deck of the *lifeboat*. When a helicopter travels out into the Atlantic it is not unusual to come across swells of 10m. That is over 30' (more than the height of a two-story house). How does a winchman step onto a F/V? Auto hover is a hydraulic system that was retrofitted on S61Ns at a cost of over £1m per aircraft 20/30 years ago. It enables the pilot to lock on to the vessel and maintain a constant height, say 50' or more above the vessel. The winch operator has a joystick that can effectively fly the aircraft slightly forward/backwards, up/down to compensate for his winchman. It means the winchman can step onto the F/V represented here by a *lifeboat*. Of course the winch operator has an interest in this as they reverse roles regularly, as do the pilots.



Transition Year Students – Where are they now?

The Irish Coast Guard has a long tradition of taking in students for a week or two during their transition year. They spend most of the time in the Operation's Room but get trips out to the Stores Depot in Blanchardstown where the Engineers are also based. Some are lucky to see or get a trip on the Helicopter. Peter Glynn was one of the first students I mentored and here we are kitted out in survival suits, as we were given permission to fly over the sea. It was difficult to prise Peter out of the hangar/workshop which the engineers made so attractive to him. Another of my early mentees is Rob Landers. He is one who makes a difference. Seen here 2nd from right he is a member of Dun Laoghaire Lifeboat and later became a Garda.



Yacht caught in storm

Assisting Yacht *Fast Wave 2*:

On the 19th March 2004 the 40' yacht *Fast Wave 2* was on its delivery voyage when it ran into storm force conditions off the Tuskar Rock. We received a very weak "PAN" message. We approached this incident on two fronts. I might have foundered or it was continuing on passage. We put the scenarios into our new SAR computer programs and eventually after hours made contact by mobile phone. They knew what we were doing but their aerial was broken off and they were out of phone coverage. They were racing up the Irish Sea under a storm jib and were outstripping our programme. We had the *Rosslare* and *Arklow lifeboats* out and when R116 arrived on scene the winchman told me that even at that stage the vessel turned around through 360 degrees twice before it was escorted into Arklow. The picture shows a similar yacht undergoing a survey.



Fishing under pressure

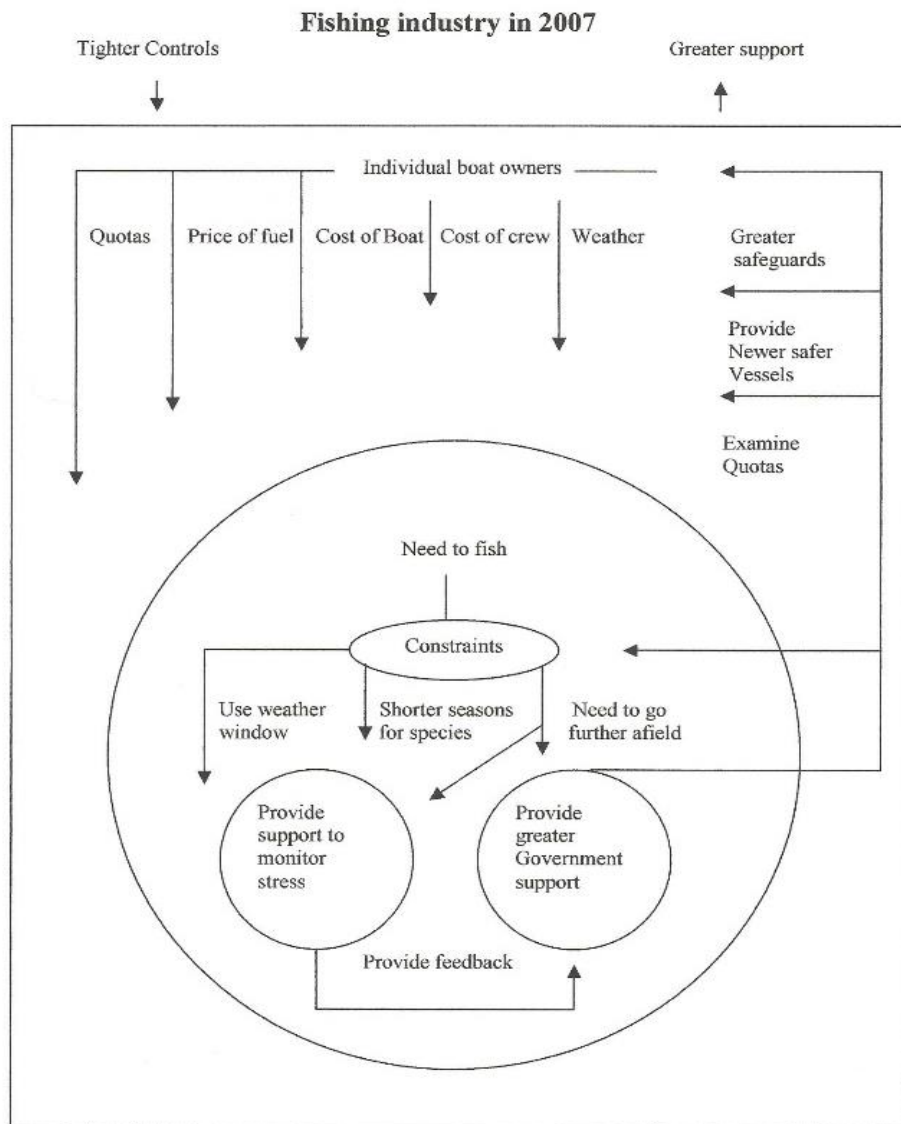
Three Fishing Vessels lost in a short space of time:

I was in the final stages of preparing a lecture for the Maritime Institute in January 2008 a year after the loss of 3 F/Vs on the southeast coast. It was well advertised for the Stella Maris Club where lectures were held over the winter months. In the photographs are fishing vessels *Pere Charles*, *Honeydew II* and *Renegade*. It was based on one I prepared for the North Atlantic MRCC Conference the previous year where it was Ireland's presentation to the conference delivered by MRCC Dublin's Divisional Controller. I got a call near midnight on New Year's Eve 2008 to ask me to cancel the lecture it due to possible litigation. I agreed to a postponement. It had to be cancelled for the same reason. The lecture I had prepared was only about the Search and Rescue phase of one of these incidents. It was based on a module I had to complete for my Diploma in Marine Surveying which required many inputs including newspaper clippings, weather reports, a Sequential Fact Diagram and the diagram which follows in which I set out the state of our fishing industry and the supports it required to sustain it.



Sequential Fact Diagram:

The only part of this document I have withdrawn, on reflection, is the Sequential Fact Diagram. It may be too controversial. It sets out the facts in interrelated boxes showing how we proceeded with the Search and Rescue Phase of this incident which started at 17:06 and finished at 21:33. Here are the steps we took. It includes known facts, assumptions, verified facts, SAR phases, liferafts found and intensifying the search. This included the need to fish with a well found vessel using a weather window, the fact that the weather got worse, that there was concern for the vessel. No Mayday had been sent or an EPIRB was not set off. After a communications search we broadcast a PAN message to which a Naval vessel responded and proceeded. We upgraded to Mayday and tasked a Helicopter and requested a Lifeboat. A further Lifeboat, Fishing Vessels and a Merchant Vessel joined the search. The Helicopter found the first liferaft and recovered two men alive. A Lifeboat found the second liferaft which was empty. All of the above was coordinated by MRCC Dublin.



Volunteering Overseas

Trips to the Townships of South Africa 2006-2008:

CHC Winchman Ciaran Smith went to South Africa to volunteer with the Mellon Trust in 2006 which has built 20,000 homes which benefit 115,000 people. In 2007 he was joined by Ed Shivnan, Pilot and another Winchman Derek Everitt and all three went again in 2008. They worked in the townships and their endeavours were much appreciated by President Nelson Mandela. The photograph shows Chippy, Sparks and Go4. Ed was a carpenter before he trained to become a helicopter pilot. Ciaran had a background as an electrician and I know Derek is a highly qualified paramedic but he adopted the role as “go for.” Colleagues have also helped in Rwanda and Kenya. Sadly, Ciaran lost his life on R116 in 2017.



Hosting important conference for the first time

North Atlantic MRCC Conference – 2007:

The Irish Coast Guard hosted this conference for the first time in Dublin in 2007 and delegates came from Canada, USA, Bermuda, Iceland and those countries bordering the Atlantic in Europe. It took place in Dublin Castle and adjourned to Howth Yacht Club for a SAR demonstration one afternoon culminating in a Banquet in Dublin Castle towards the end. This picture showing an S61N and the *Howth Lifeboat* was taken on a day with very little wind so the winchman Derek Everitt could not land on the deck of the *Lifeboat* under aviation regulations (it would have been permitted in an emergency). Instead he showed his dexterity by dangling upside-down on the “rope.”



Another casualty in Fastnet Race

Rambler 100: On 16th August 2011 *Rambler 100* was taking part in the Fastnet Race when it got into difficulty off the south coast of Ireland. This incident was coordinated by Valentia MRSC who used a reciprocal course to track the probable location of the capsized yacht and

locate 5 crew who had been thrown overboard during the capsizing which disabled its Global Positioning System (GPS) unit. It lost its keel in the incident.

There were 21 crew onboard including one woman. The 5 tied themselves together while awaiting rescue which took over 2 hours. 16 crew were taken onboard the *Baltimore Lifeboat* while a *diving vessel* retrieved the 5 in the water. The 16, some of whom were asleep when the incident happened, were none the worse and 4 of the 5 were reunited with the 16 at Baltimore. The final member was airlifted to Tralee Hospital suffering the effects of hypothermia which she soon overcame.



A very close bond

Hands Round the Coast:

“Hands Round the Coast.” I think this statement and the picture that goes with publicity for the lecture I gave in 2014 make a powerful image. Four of our Officers in Charge (OICs) from adjacent Stations at Skerries, Howth, Dun Laoghaire and Greystones are standing in front of our Video Wall in our new Operations room in Dublin, which has a picture of Brittas Bay displayed. The image portrays a very strong bond.



Hands Round the Coast – Origin of this statement in 1901:

Strand Illustrated Magazine in 1901 published an article with the title “Hands Round the Coast” saying how well England was prepared for War as Coast Guards linking together joining hands would defeat the enemy. They went on to say how each Coast Guard not only had a ship to go to but he knew his exact berth on that vessel and had been there on exercise. If war broke out he would take his kit and get the next train. Unfortunately, as we see from 1914 this did not work out and Coast guards paid a terrible price.



Hands Round the Coast – Salthill, Co. Galway:

However that linking and working together still goes on in the modern Coast Guard when adjacent units cooperate during large incidents. We took it a stage further at Salthill, Galway in Autumn 2013 at the OIC Conference. There are now 44 Units and some OICs did not make it and others had to leave early on the Sunday morning. However, 30 of them stood in a semicircle with Galway Bay in the background and linked arms.



Symbolically the missing semicircle is for members from Northern Ireland who cooperate with us during SAR. In that way we can close the circle as SAR knows no boundaries. Coast Guards do other work as previously mentioned and this is fine provided there is no conflict of interest.

Old meets New

R116 – S91:

In this picture taken in 2014 shortly after I retired the old met the new as R116 landed in Dun Laoghaire to brief the local Irish Coast Guard Unit and RNLI. Winchman Tommy Gannon took me around this new helicopter which was very impressive. It was not the same airframe which crashed as they move around from time to time. I have never flown on an S92 but got to fly on an S61N off Capetown in 1977 when my wife and I left a Super-Tanker by helicopter. I flew with Dara in 1995 when training with the Coast Guard. I was asked to accompany a transition year student in the early 2000s on an S61N and finally my wife, Margaret and I got an opportunity to fly over the Tall Ships in Waterford in 2011. My wife, who hates flying, could not get enough of her helicopter trip of about 2 hours. Before we left Waterford that day we met Dara who was coming on duty.



Tragedy for Coast Guard

Caitriona Lucas tragedy:

12th September 2016 was a very dark day for the Irish Coast Guard. On this day they lost the first Volunteer during a recovery operation. Prior to this a local Volunteer diver Michael Heffernan lost his life trying to rescue people in a sea cave at Belderrig, Co. Mayo on 25th Oct 1997 and the crew of R111 lost their lives on the 2nd Jul 1999. Fortunately, such incidents are rare but this was a young woman who was passionate about helping out in an area where tragedy is common but this time it was to take the life of an Irish Coast Guard person. She gave her life while conducting a search in a rigid inflatable boat in the hope of bringing solace to a family who were hoping for closure after a tragedy.



R116 Tragedy

R116 tragedy:

Everybody remembers hearing about the tragedy which befell R116 on the 14th March 2017 and pages have been written about it. A friend of mine, Clement McGann, runs a Maritime Website www.lugnad.ie and he allowed me to write the following short article which he carried on its home page for over a month at the time. It is still accessible under www.lugnad.ie/r116 and I hope it gives a contemporaneous glimpse of how I felt at that time.



“As a contributor to lugnad.ie and a former Irish Coast Guard I would like to say something about the devastating news which reached us early on Tuesday 14th March 2017. Words fail to convey such a tragedy yet words are all we have to deal with the trauma felt by all who are touched by this disaster. We have the capability to talk about it. I was in charge of the watch on the night of July 1st/2nd 1999 when R111, an Air-Corps helicopter, crashed returning from a successful mission to locate people missing off Dungarvan. Attending the funeral was of great comfort to me and also being the recipient of Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD). I did not know the four crew of R111 though I had probably talked to them from time to time. I know all of the crew of R116 very well having dealt with them during communications or briefing them prior to incidents. Our job at Dublin Coast Guard or MRCC Dublin was to task whatever resources were required to successfully conclude a mission. We knew their capabilities and we relied on them just as they relied on us. Each of the crew of R116 were dedicated and interchangeable as they rotated shifts and jobs from time to time. Many words will be written about each individual and they deserve the highest praise but they each contributed to the success of each mission. Fate and faith interchange in our lives. None of us know our fate but faith is a great source of comfort at times like this. As a coordinator who retired three years ago I am reminded of the idiosyncrasies of each individual and I miss Paul’s pronunciation of the word Dublin which always came out “double-linn.” Ar deis de go raibh a n’ainmeacha, dilis.



Joe Ryan (Irish Coast Guard, retired).”

R116:

The following poem by Fergus Sweeney has been used at memorial gatherings.

You are a rumble in the sky
 You are a flickering star
 You are hope in the darkness
 You are warmth in the cold
 You are a hand to reach for
 You are a face to behold
 You are Rescue 116

Booklet now Document

This Booklet - 2022:

This booklet which is now just a document has given me the opportunity to revisit a lecture I wrote for the Maritime Institute which became its key lecture in 2014. I have used much of this work but added to it where possible. Any opinion expressed is my own but I hope it concurs with that of the IRCG who I worked with for almost 20 years. The lecture grew out of a request from Dr. Liam Downey, formerly Director of Teagasc who became Emeritus Professor at Maynooth and UCD specialising in Archelogy. He needed a hand to research a Coast Guard Station at Ballydonegan on the Beara Peninsula and awakened an interest in me for the “old” Coast Guard. I had tremendous help from the late Tony Daly who



was behind the “Coastguards of Yesteryear.” I got great co-operation from colleagues in the Coast Guard, RNLI, CHC and many others just as I did when completing an MSc in Emergency Management in 2010-2012.

The Author

Joe Ryan:

Born in Dublin in 1949, I went to Westland Row School and Atlantic College, Leeson Park where I studied to become a Radio Officer. I spent 12 years at sea on all types of ships working initially for Marconi Marine, before going freelance and spending the final 6 years directly employed by a Super Tanker Company. I studied during that time and got a start as a Computer Engineer with McDonnell Douglas Information Systems Ltd., in Dublin in 1980. I was in charge of the first mirror-image computer installed by Aer Lingus and oversaw Quinns/Thomson (now Tesco) rolling out scanning in their Stores while Maynooth and Limerick Universities used our systems for their libraries. I became a System’s Software Advisor. Personal Computers were gaining a foothold when I heard about the opening of the Dublin Radio Station and the moving of MRCC Shannon to Dublin. I joined the Irish Marine Emergency Service in 1995 and stayed until retirement in 2014. I am married to Margaret and we have two children, both married and five grandchildren.



I have always valued learning and attended over 20 intensive courses at the McDonnell Douglas European HQ training centre in Hemel Hempstead, England. While with the IRCG I achieved a Diploma in Marine Surveying (Merit), Train the Trainer (Distinction) and an MSc in Emergency Management (Hons) among other courses. My dissertation for the MSc was on Critical Incident Stress Management which is close to my heart after R111 in Waterford. I like DIY, electronics, woodwork, caravanning, walking, reading and other pursuits. A year before I retired I joined the gym and go every morning. I was invited to join a group of yachtsmen after retirement and go sailing through the summer. I was a member of the Maritime Institute from 1995 – 2014 and that got me interested in giving lectures. I see myself as a facilitator and since 2014 I have helped to fundraise for Atlantic Youth Trust which hopes to replace *Asgard II* with a new tall ship to provide 10 day trips for youth development for all of Ireland, see www.atlanticyouthtrust.org or google www.atlanticyouthtrust.org > [adrian-ryan-bursary](#) for details of the first bursary set up for when the tall ship becomes a reality. I would love to see a memorial built to name all those who travelled on RMS *Leinster* on its final, fateful voyage in 1918.

Revisiting my notes for the lecture I did on the Coast Guard in 2014 has been revealing and I have rewritten many passages and added more content for this booklet. I hope it brings together a collection of stories, an ethos and an insight into a calling to help “those in peril on the sea.” Dedicated people have risked their lives over two centuries, some paying the ultimate price. Equipment, clothing, management and other resources have improved but we are often dealing with nature at its wildest when we are called to help. We are only human. The first priority is to make sure our people are safe, then to save lives in the search and rescue phase and ultimately in the recovery phase to try and bring home bodies where possible to bring closure to their families. The Coast Guard will continue to do their essential work and at 200 years they are only in their infancy.

Thank you

Acknowledgements and References:

I have referred to many people in the text of this booklet but I must also acknowledge them and others here and articles and sources from whence I paraphrased passages. I also acknowledge pictures which I have used to illustrate the various paragraphs which make up the story, over 200 years. I acknowledge many colleagues and friends who were the inspiration of my lecture and ultimately this ~~booklet~~ document. It is not a scholarly document so I have not used citing to improve the flow of this commemorative work for which there is no remuneration involved. If you are not included it is just like the document a sample of the story. In this section many of the people are deceased some after long lives, well lived and others taken far too soon. Ar deis de go raibh an anamacha, dilis.

Liam Downey, Tony Daly, Liam Kirwan, Geoff Livingstone, Criostoir MacCartaigh, Cormac Lowth, Eddie Bourke, Joe Varley, Pat Clery, Brendan Williams, Daire Brunicardi, Michael Lee, Vanessa Gaffney, Colin Murray, Kyron O’Gorman, John Ferns, Jim O’Dea, Ian Vickery, Ian Scott, John O’Sullivan, Shane Dillon, Micheal O’Toole, Jack Kenny, Mattie Shannon, Dave Courtney, Declan O’Donoghue, Charlie Cavanagh, Stephen Wynne, Robbie Evans, Jim Kennedy, Ed Shivan, Viv Gough, Michael O’Toole, Hugh Tully, Michael O’Reilly, Huw Morgan, Dave McMyler, Pat Lynch, Tom McSweeney, Derek Musgrave, Jim Griffin, Terry Kearney, Derek Everitt, George Manby, Niall Ferns, Robbie Brennan, Bruno Neilly, Rudyard Kipling, Mark Mellett, Tommy Gannon, James D’Ombrain, Paul Cullen, Edward Boxer, Ciaran Smith, Paul Ormsby, Mark Duffy, Dara Fitzpatrick, Ciaran O’Carroll, Edmond Symes, Philip Smyly, Seamus Heaney, Gary Gartland, James Murray, Napoleon Bonapart, Kevin Crothers, Conor Kirwan, Peter Glynn, Monica Daly, Martin Ryan, Carl Diedricks, Trevor Owen, Ger Hegarty, Eamonn Doherty, Eugene Clonan, Agnes Walsh, Ted Heath, Jack McGrath, Michael Kennedy, Ned Archer, Tom Casement, Thomas Woodley, John Rennie, John Rohu, Chris Reynolds, Henry Shore, Alfred Collins, Ted Heaslip, Catriona Lucas, Frank Murphy, Alfred Story, James Larkin, William Webb, Otto Weddigen, Derek Paine, Joan McGinley, Nelson Mandella, John McLoughlin, Lorna Siggins, Sarah Annett, David O’Flaherty, Michael Baker, Paddy Mooney, Niall Byrne, Michael Heffernan, Will Von Bellow, Mickey McCormick, John Oglesby, Neville Murphy, Mick Treacy, Maurice Foran, Jeffrey Mitchell, Clement McGann.

Lawrence Photography, Strand Magazine, National Folklore Collection, National Library, National Gallery, Greystones Pictorial History, Jstor, Maritime Institute, Maritime Museum, Irish Coast Guard, Coastguardsofyesteryear, HM Coastguard, My Heritage, Cornishman, Canadian Helicopter Company, Ely Restaurant, Royal Navy, Congested District Board, North Atlantic MRCC Conference, Fire Brigade Marine Emergency Response, Marine Ambulance Response Team, Kew Archives, Irish Shipping Limited, The Navy and Army Illustrated, Irish Naval Service, Niall Mellon Township Trust, RNLI, Hastings Chronicle, Civil Defence, Mountain Rescue, Air Corps, Inland Waterways, Gardai, Water Safety, Garda Underwater Unit, National Ambulance Service, Naval Divers, Huguenots, Smuggler’s Britain, Quakers, Epic, Irish Marine Emergency Service, The Irish Sword, National Archives, International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Illustrated London News, Various Historical Societies.

Sequel

The main body of this work was written during 2013/2014 but has been broadened out to include more detail in my recent preparation for this commemorative booklet. When I described the Irish Coast Guard (IRCG) as it existed in 2014 there were only three functions, SAR Operations, Pollution and Salvage and Voluntary Services and Training.

To bring things up to date you can consult the following links.

National SAR Plan:

The National Search and Rescue Plan was published in July 2019 following a major review of Search and Rescue (SAR) services in Ireland. The NSP created a new National SAR Committee (NSARC), bringing all key stakeholders in maritime, land and aeronautical SAR together, under an independent Chair.

[7aec819c614e4b9ba948fc06b52801d9.pdf \(assets.gov.ie\)](#)

National SAR Committee:

The National SAR Plan NSP created a new National SAR Committee (NSARC), bringing all key stakeholders in maritime, land and aeronautical SAR together, under an independent Chair. This first Annual Report from the NSARC is prescribed in the National SAR Plan under the terms of reference for the Committee.

[gov.ie - Publication of the first Annual Report on the National Search and Rescue Plan \(www.gov.ie\)](#)

National Maritime Oil/HNS Spill Contingency Plan:

The National Maritime Oil & HNS Spill Contingency Plan (NMOSCP) establishes a national framework and strategy to coordinate marine pollution preparedness and response. It addresses all oil and HNS pollution whether it originates from ships, harbours, offshore units or oil/HNS handling facilities and land-based sources.

[gov.ie - National Maritime Oil/HNS Spill Contingency Plan \(NMOSCP\) \(www.gov.ie\)](#)

The Coast Guard is a Division within the Irish Maritime Directorate (IMD) of the Department of Transport. The Irish Maritime Directorates mission is to have a safe, sustainable maritime sector that meets its international obligations and domestic needs, delivers a world class emergency response service and promotes and protects Ireland's economic interests as an island nation. The IMD is made up of five Divisions, Maritime Safety and Policy Division, Maritime Transport Division, Marine Survey Office, Coast Guard and Maritime Strategy and Governance Division.

The Coast Guards role is to discharge Irelands Search and rescue (SAR) obligations under the International Maritime Organisation Search and Rescue Convention by implementing the national SAR Plan for all incidents occurring in the maritime domain, or as otherwise requested by SAR authorities in other domains (aviation or inland).

In addition to Search and Rescue the Coast Guard has a role in responding to maritime casualty and pollution response. In relation to Maritime Pollution, there is a suite of legislation, The Sea Pollution Acts 1991-2006 under which the Minister has appointed officers of the IRCG as

authorised officers to enable them to carry out their duties in cases of maritime casualties to prevent or minimise damage from pollution where these casualties pose a threat of major harm to the Irish coastline and related interests. The Sea pollution Act also implements the framework for the International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation which establishes measures for dealing with marine oil pollution incidents nationally and in co-operation with other countries. The Sea Pollution Act requires a National Oil Spill Contingency plan along with County Council and Port Authority Contingency Plans along with the regime to facilitate the Oil Preparedness, Response and Cooperation Convention which the Coast Guard oversees.

Additionally, European Communities (Vessel Traffic Monitoring and Information System) Regulations 2010, give the IRCG powers to act in relation to Places of Refuge incidents and the monitoring of hazardous ships. The Coast Guard also provides a Maritime Assistance Service to vessels in need of assistance.

Under the Framework for Major Emergency Management, the IRCG is nominated as one of the State's Principal Emergency Services along with An Garda Síochána, the Fire Service and Ambulance Service.

To carry out these functions the Coast Guard provides:

- A marine radio distress listening service and broadcast marine safety information
- Coordinate Search and Rescue in the maritime domain
- Monitor maritime traffic within our Traffic Separation Schemes (Tuskar/Fastnet),
- Provide a Marine Assistance Service and respond to vessels in need of assistance and/or requesting a Place of Refuge
- Monitor the Irish EEZ and intervene as necessary in maritime casualties to prevent or minimise damage to the marine environment and
- Coordinate the States OPRC regime and in the event of an incident coordinate the at sea response to maritime pollution from ships and offshore installations and assist Local Authorities in the onshore response.
- Provide and maintain a marine radio infrastructure
- As competent authority for the National Automatic Identification system, provide a Nationwide coverage for AIS, for as required by Directive 2002/59 & 2009/17 (Feeds from the IRCG AIS go to : Navy, CIL, SEA-PT Shannon Estuary Anti Pollution Team, SSI/SSN, EMSA/SEG, MSSIS, Northsea server group, SILAS)
- Provide support on request to statutory bodies or agencies in emergency response.

The above functions are managed and supported by four sections within the Coast Guard.

Operations Section:

coordinates response to incidents through the Marine Rescue Coordination Centre and Sub Centres at MRCC Dublin, MRSC Valentia and MRSC Malin. Response on the coast is provided by Search and Rescue Units (SRUs) which include Coast Guard Helicopters, Coast Guard volunteer Units and declared resources such as the RNLI, Community inshore rescue boats, Marine Incident Response Group (DFB), Marine Ambulance Response Team (NAS), vessels of opportunity and Naval Service & Air Corps (on an as available basis).

The Coast Guard Unit & Support Section:

is responsible for the management, resourcing, and training of the volunteer Coast Guard Units on the coast. The Volunteer Coast Guard Units provide local maritime emergency response. There are 44 Coast Guard Units around the coast made up solely from the local communities. There are approximately 940 volunteers in all. Coast Guard Units provide a coastal search capability on the shore. In addition to coastal search capability some units are trained to provide a cliff rescue capability, boat rescue and support capability and also UAV search capability. Coast Guard Units are also available to enhance community resilience during emergencies such during inclement weather when requested by PRAs/PES.

The Coast Guard Engineering and Logistics section:

is responsible for the marine radio communications infrastructure to support the Marine Rescue Centres. The section maintains 19 VHF voice and DSC radio sites situated around the Irish coastline and a national digital paging system. In addition, there are two VHF repeater test sites, four MF radio sites and two NAVTEX transmitter sites. These resources are wireline connected through to the manned Rescue Coordination Centres at Dublin, Malin Head and Valentia. Engineering section also maintains the radio and IT infrastructure for the maritime A.I.S. system. Responsibility is also extended to the communications equipment in use by the Coast Guard volunteers around the Irish coastline. Engineering also manages the Coast Guard stores in Blanchardstown which supplies Coast Guard fulltime staff and CG units with equipment and PPE, radio equipment and also stores the national stockpile of oil spill response equipment.

The Coast Guard Safety, Quality and Compliance sections:

responsibility is to integrate all IRCG processes into a single management system, hereafter referred to as the Quality Management System (QMS) and to ensure the IRCG operates in compliance with each QMS component. Doing so aids in ensuring operational consistency and provides the IRCG's customers and stakeholders, assurance the organisation is being managed in accordance with the Safety Statement, pertaining legislative and its system requirements.

The Coast Guard is supported by Maritime Strategy and Governance Division (MSGD) within the Irish Maritime Directorate. MSGD supports corporate functions such as procurement, finance, IT, HR and administrative functions supporting the Coast Guard.

The Irish Coast Guard is a uniformed service comprising of 80 fulltime staff and 940 volunteers. It primarily provides a search and rescue service; it is not a law enforcement agency nor a military organisation.

Finally

Having spent many hours, over three months, working on this rewrite there is one thing which occurs to me. I spent over 30 years as a Radio Officer at sea and in the Irish Coast Guard (IRCG) and I think Radio Officers contributed a lot to the working of Search and Rescue Coordination as their training and reason for being on ships was primarily for the "Safety Of Life At Sea (SOLAS)" since the sinking of RMS *Titanic* until the GMDSS system was introduced towards 2000. The tradition was that the Radio Officer was the last man off the ship and the Captain went down with his ship.

I was often entrusted with training new recruits and one Mate who now has a senior position in the service worked with me for many weeks. During one of his first incidents we had a young man trapped on a cliff and we were in communication with him by mobile phone. We had his number and emphasised that he should conserve his battery. We updated him regularly about the progress of the Cliff Unit, the Helicopter and the Lifeboat.

We always prefer to use Marine VHF during incidents and Mayday incidents are conducted on Channel 16, the International Distress and callup and reply frequency. Even though we have private channels I always insisted on using Channel 16 or 67 which are both simplex channels so all involved can hear both sides of a conversation and everybody is updated simultaneously. In the absence of Marine VHF we rely mainly on mobile phones which were not as good in isolated places some years ago. We made sure we had numbers and alternates if there were other people onscene.

You deal in facts and encouragement but don't create false hope when dealing with casualties, their companions or relatives. The most important thing is to "keep the lines of communication open."

My colleague learned a valuable lesson that day and kindly told me so.

To return to my first paragraph there is always hope.

Joe Ryan IRCG (retired)

15th January 2022